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# Knowing Authority:

# Colonial Governance and Local Community

# in Equatoria Province, Sudan,

# 1900-1956

Cherry Leonardi

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Durham,
Department of History

2005



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## Abstract

Knowing Authority: Colonial Governance and Local Community in Equatoria Province, Sudan, 1900-56

Cherry Leonardi

With a current interest across Africa in the actual or potential role of 'traditional authorities' in local government, there is a need for further research into their historical background. Scholars have argued that the colonial period destroyed previous political traditions, replacing them with novel, and often despotic, forms of local government, which have contributed to the failures of post-colonial states. But in the largely unstudied region of Western Mongalla, Southern Sudan, chiefship was domesticated as well as created during the colonial period. The thesis therefore argues for the continuity and adaptation of local traditions by showing that chiefs remained constrained by their communities. Rather than being the invention of the colonial state, they represented an institution for mediating with foreigners which had evolved since the mid-nineteenth century. Authority was generated by the conversion of outside knowledge into community ways through the power of speech. The colonial government was only one source of such knowledge, and so the chiefs were restricted to a specific role, alongside multiple other forms of authority. The moral and political economies and traditions of communities were developing behind these gatekeeper chiefs in the realm of local politics and were shaped by popular discourse and public debate.

The thesis also contributes to the revision of Sudanese history by arguing that the Condominium was significant not so much in terms of creating north-south divisions, nor as a process of devolution, but rather in terms of the centralising momentum of the state and its production and changing utilisation of knowledge. This has been fundamental in shaping a popular view of the state as a distant and largely extractive entity – the *hakuma* – against which communities have sought to strengthen and protect their local autonomy. Only leaders embedded in the local landscape of social relations could be trusted to achieve this.

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# Acknowledgements

The experience of researching and writing this PhD has been profoundly shaped by its place within a joint project, and I would like therefore firstly to thank the AHRB for the funding of the project, and my supervisor Dr Justin Willis for its original design and for pulling together our individual ideas and findings into a larger whole. I have been spared the usual loneliness of writing a PhD thanks to the constant interaction I have been lucky enough to share with my colleague Anna Clarkson. My thanks to her for all our discussions (especially sharing our findings in the hot garden of the NRO in Khartoum!), and for her companionship and support in Sudan and Durham.

My research in Khartoum was greatly facilitated by the support of Professor Yusuf Fadl Hassan and other members of the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum. I thank the staff of the National Records Office for their patience and assistance, especially Ali Karrari, Ahmed Mohamed Adam Hanafi, Khalida Elsharief and Raja Al-Bashir. I am also grateful to Dr Babiker Badri of Afhad University for his kind welcome and help, and not least for arranging my research assistant, Rita Poni Loteka. Rita spent many hours arranging and guiding me to my interviews across the city, as well as inviting me to some wonderful social and cultural gatherings. I am extremely grateful for her assistance and friendship. My deepest appreciation goes to the people I interviewed for their often extensive time and hospitality, and their willingness to share their knowledge and memories with me. I also want to thank Paul Doubleday of the British Council, Khalid Bakheit, Dina and Dahlia Idris, Hind Abukana, Asma Abu Niab, Dick and Arwa Nauta, and Rose Lisok Paulino for all their generous assistance and friendship, which made my time in Khartoum so special as well as productive.

My visit to Yei in South Sudan was made possible by the generous assistance of Rainer Holstein of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. I would like to thank him and the other people who helped me with my research whilst there, especially Dusman Joyce, Jackline Nasiwa and Malual Ayom Dor. Again I am grateful to the individuals who

allowed me to interview them. I would also like to thank Daniel Large, Philip Winter and John Ryle for advice and encouragement on getting to South Sudan, and for the wonderful experience of the first Rift Valley Institute Sudan Field Training Course in Kenya.

In the UK, I would like to thank the staff of the Public Records Office in Kew, the Shetland Archive in Lerwick, the CMS Archive in Birmingham and Rhodes House Library in Oxford. Special thanks go to Jane Hogan and the other staff of the Sudan Archive in Durham, who have always been of utmost help. I am grateful for comments and questions at conferences and seminars, and especially from John Lonsdale, Douglas Johnson, and Wendy James. Thanks also to fellow postgraduates in our 'colonial and post-colonial' discussion group in Durham, especially Chris Vaughan, Chris Prior, Simon Mollan and Amanda Majisu.

My greatest thanks are to a few special people. Justin Willis has provided the most insightful, challenging and supportive guidance I could imagine receiving from a supervisor. I thank him for all his generous time, humour and meticulous analysis, and for so often bringing clarity to my confusions and uncertainties. Richard Reid has given me frequent inspiration, encouragement and friendship. Personal and heartfelt thanks go lastly to the friends and family who have given me deep support during the project, especially Chris Gibson, Anna Clarkson, Alona Armstrong, my sister Becky and, above all, my parents, Jean and Jeff.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AL | Annual Letter |
| AR | Annual Report |
| BGP | Bahr El Ghazal Province |
| CMS | Church Missionary Society Archive, University of Birmingham |
| CS | Civil Secretary |
| D.C. | District Commissioner |
| DK | Dakhlia |
| DMIR | District Monthly Intelligence Report |
| EP | Equatoria Province |
| EPMD | Equatoria Province Monthly Diaries |
| FS | Financial Secretary |
| *GGR* | *Report on the Finances, Administration and Condition of the Sudan* |
| GOS | Government of Sudan (post-independence) |
| IN | Intelligence Department |
| *JAH* | *Journal of African History* |
| JD | Juba District |
| *JRAS* | *Journal of the Royal African Society* |
| LA | Legislative Assembly |
| LS | Legal Secretary |
| MP | Mongalla Province |
| MPIR | Mongalla Province Monthly Intelligence Report |
| NRO | National Records Office, Khartoum |
| PRO | Public Record Office, London |
| RHL | Rhodes House Library, Oxford |
| SAD | Sudan Archive, Durham |
| SAL | Shetland Archive, Lerwick |
| SIR | Sudan Monthly Intelligence Report |
| *SNR* | *Sudan Notes and Records* |
| SPLM/A | Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army |
| UNP | Upper Nile Province |
| YDMD | Yei District Monthly Diaries |




Map showing area of study and province boundaries in 1933, based on map of Sudan at the end of Sir Harold MacMichael, *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1934).

# Introduction

## The Current Context

The old districts of Yei River, Amadi/Moru and Central/Juba which formed the western part of Mongalla Province, later Equatoria Province, during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of the Sudan are today mainly under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A).[1] Southern Sudan awaits the final signing of a peace agreement after two decades of war between the SPLA and the Government of Sudan (GOS), a complex conflict which also involved other Southern movements and militia groups, some of which were allied at times with the GOS. As a final peace deal seems to be within sight, there is currently much interest, both within and outside Southern Sudan, in bringing about local reconciliation and in rebuilding local government structures, and this in turn is raising questions about the historical, present and future roles of so-called 'traditional' authorities.

Occasionally people also mention that in some areas at least, chiefs were originally appointed by the colonial government. Yet there is still a frequent tendency, particularly among international observers, to assume that chiefs or kings represent a static institution that has existed since time immemorial and which embodies an uncontested set of traditions and customs. As in the historiography of Southern Sudan, which will be discussed in a moment, there is also much generalisation about the nature of these authorities across the region. Yet there has also been greater recognition more recently, and somewhat belatedly, that "local government is the key level for understanding the potential success or failure of post-conflict SPLA political consolidation, and ultimately, peace itself".[2] In this context, there is urgent

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[1] Mongalla Province was established in 1906 and its boundaries changed repeatedly before it was joined with Bahr El Ghazal Province in 1936 to form a giant Equatoria Province. Ten years later it was redivided and Mongalla retained the name Equatoria, though with a new western boundary. I therefore use the invented name 'Western Mongalla' to avoid confusion, since 'Western Equatoria' usually refers to the Zande area. The three districts also changed their shape repeatedly; the rough delimitation of this study has been based on their borders in 1935, including Kajo Kaji and Meridi.

[2] Zachariah Mampilly and Adam Branch, 'Winning the War, but Losing the Peace? The Dilemmas of SPLM/A Civil Administration', paper presented at the Sudan Studies Association Conference, Santa Clara, May 2004. An initial report reflecting this recognition is Daniel Large, 'Local Governance in

need for research into the varied, complex and changing forms of local authority that exist in the region, and for a deeper understanding of their origins and relationships to the state, if they are to be effectively utilised in the governance of Southern Sudan.

In a recent article on the Nuba Mountains, Willis asks why the forms of local authority developed under the Condominium proved "so unstable, and so ill-fitted to the demands of the post-colonial state".[3] But in the case of Western Mongalla, the area of study for this thesis, the key figure of local government under the Condominium – the chief – has played a surprisingly stable and resilient role in the provision of local-level justice, administration and protection since Independence. In 2004, chiefs and their supporters complain that their authority has been seriously undermined by military administration, which has interfered in their courts, administration and even appointment; chiefship is also criticised, especially by younger people and women, using the language of human rights, democracy and modernity. But there is also recognition from all sides of the key role that chiefs played during the wars in organising recruitment, provisions and aid distribution, and in arbitration. The SPLM held a conference of 'Kings, Chiefs and Traditional Leaders' in 2004 and the SPLM Local Government Secretariat has produced a Local Government Policy Framework recommending that "Traditional Authority should take a leading role in local government".[4]

This in turn connects with wider discussion currently about the 're-traditionalisation' of local government across Africa in the last decade. Modernisation and dependency

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South Sudan: Context, Condition and Change', unpublished Thematic Paper on Local Government in South Sudan (UNDP, Nairobi, 2004).

[3] Justin Willis, 'Violence, Authority and the State in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan', *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (2003), pp. 89-114, at p. 91.

[4] SPLM Local Government Secretariat, 'Local Government Framework for Southern Sudan, Fourth Draft', (Rumbek, 2004). My comments on the current situation and the role of the chiefs during the conflict are not based on thorough or widespread research, but on general observations in Yei and surrounding villages, and conversations with individuals working in the Yei County Administration, Yei Boma court and council, the Institute for the Promotion of Civil Society (IPCS), the Training of Boma Council Trainers Workshop run by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the SPLA Institute of Strategic Studies, and the South Sudan Law Society, all in Aug-Sept 2004; also the draft 'Baseline Survey on Chiefs, Elders and Traditional Leaders in the Counties of Yei, Maridi, and Mundri', by Jackline Nasiwa, IPCS, Feb 2004; Jane Namadi, 'Are Traditional Leaders Partners in Peacemaking?', *Sudan Mirror*, 9th-22nd August 2004, p. 20.

theories, from different perspectives, argued that chiefs, kings and priests would become outdated and irrelevant in the modern African state; yet the reality is that there has been not only a survival, but also a recent resurgence of their prominence in many areas. They are even being promoted as alternative, and African, models of accountable and democratic governance. Recognition of the capacity of such forms of authority to be accountable, dynamic and adaptable has also reawakened greater interest in the historical complexity of their origins and trajectories, especially in the colonial period.[5] In a recent conference paper, Nyamnjoh called for empirical studies of the diversity of "domesticated agency in Africa" in order to overcome the reductionist theories which have in the past subsumed the varied local realities of governance.[6]

So my questions at the outset are more about how far chiefship was a novel colonial creation, and consequently why it remains, or has increasingly become, key to definitions of community and custom, thus appearing to be an intrinsic component of local government structures today. The trajectory of chiefship since Independence lies beyond the scope of this study and is a topic for future research. But part of the explanation for its significance and survival also lies in the formation and evolution of chiefship in Western Mongalla during the Condominium. A further question, related to Willis', is why the relationship and means of interlocution between local communities and the state broke down at the time of, and after, Independence, resulting in two lengthy periods of rebellion and civil war. Again, some of the answers must be beyond this study; this is primarily a study of local government, not national politics. But nevertheless, there are clues in the relationship of local communities to the state during, and preceding, the Condominium, and, the thesis will argue, particularly in the *knowledge*-relationship. And again this touches on the wider issue in Africa of what can be "the massive gap between state agencies and diverse local communities", and the role of 'traditional authorities' in mediating across that gap.[7]

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[5] Olufemi Vaughan, *Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics 1890s-1990s* (Rochester, NY, 2000), esp. pp. 1-5.

[6] Francis B. Nyamnjoh, 'Our Traditions are Modern, Our Modernities Traditional': Chieftaincy and Democracy in Contemporary Africa', paper presented at the conference on 'Traditional Accountability and Modern Governance in Africa', University of Durham, July 2004.

[7] Vaughan *Nigerian Chiefs*, p. 5.

The thesis will therefore address these questions by exploring how local communities in Western Mongalla shaped the institution of chiefship, it will be argued, in ways which enabled them to maintain a degree of autonomy in their internal moral and socio-economic regulation, and to defend their systems of knowledge against the impositions of the colonial state. The nature of colonial rule in the area ensured that the state was viewed as a vague, distant and largely alien entity - the '*hakuma*' - made up of the '*turuk*' (foreigners, government), and historically experienced as a series of extractive and unwelcome impositions. The success of chiefs therefore relied on a balancing-act and effective 'gate-keeping' between state and people so as to keep the former at bay as much as possible.[8] The knowledge and skills required for this task would be less useful, however, when the people of the area were expected to become part of the nation of Sudan and participate in an arena of politics for which they felt ill-equipped and disadvantaged. The violence which ensued reflected the breakdown of trust in the ability of the mediators with the state to effectively defend the communities they claimed to represent, and hence the apparently irreconcilable disparity between "local integrity" and "national integration".[9] It has been difficult to conceive of representatives operating within the external realm of the *hakuma*, especially in Khartoum, without losing their rootedness in the local community. The civil wars in Sudan have been complex conflicts over rights, identities and resources, between central government and the peripheral regions (and within the latter); they have not been the result of the simplistic dichotomy portrayed endlessly in the Western media as the 'Arab and Muslim North' against the 'Christian and animist South'.[10] Yet too often even the academic scholarship has tended towards simplistic generalisations or polarised arguments regarding the role of colonial governance in the causes of war.

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[8] *Turuk* has been widely used in Southern Sudan to refer to the foreign rulers, be they Turks, Egyptians, Northerners or Europeans; the Bari alternative is *gela*: G. O. Whitehead, 'Suppressed Classes among the Bari and Bari-Speaking Tribes', *SNR* 34, no. 2 (1953), pp. 265-80, at p. 274; while the Dinka use the term *jur*: Francis M. Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford, 1973), p. 69.

[9] A disparity reconciled for a time by the Miri of the Nuba Mountains, through a process termed 'redintegration' by Gerd Baumann, *National Integration and Local Integrity: The Miri of the Nuba Mountains in the Sudan* (Oxford, 1987). For the breakdown in this process in the 1980s, see Douglas H. Johnson, 'Religion and Communal Conflict in the Sudan: The War against Paganism', *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 2, no. 2 (Autumn 2000), pp. 63-84, at pp. 73-4.

[10] See Johnson, 'Religion', pp. 63-4.

## The Historiography of Sudan

A large proportion of the scholarship on Sudan focuses on identifying the causes of the civil wars: this has produced two main schools of thought, one which sees a long-standing division between north and south, Arabs and Africans, exacerbated by the history of Arab slave-raiding in the south and later policies of Islamicisation; and another which blames British colonial policies for creating new divisions and disparities which made unity after independence almost impossible.[11] Nyaba combines the two approaches, arguing that historical "religious and cultural differences" between North and South were exacerbated by slave trading and later the Southern policy of the Condominium Government, and the consequent marginalisation of southerners by the northern politicians on the eve of independence. Non-Arabs, he argues, have been relegated by these processes to the role of 'apprentice', and have felt themselves to be 'outsiders' in the state of Sudan.[12] This latter point will be explored in the thesis, in terms of the crisis of confidence among Southerners in the 1950s about their ability to defend their local interests effectively in national political institutions.

More recently, the causes of conflict have been re-examined by Johnson in a book widely hailed as the authoritative interpretation of Sudan's wars. He sees a long continuity of patterns of governance since the nineteenth century involving a centralising and exploitative state with an ambiguous relationship to its peripheries. The latter were neglected in terms of development in the colonial period, and the nationalist movement and postcolonial governments in the north have sought to build a national identity based on Arab culture and Islam which has further alienated Southerners.[13] Viewing the conflicts as a question of the relationship between

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[11] For the former argument see Dunstan M. Wai, 'Introduction' to his (ed.), *The Southern Sudan: The Problem of National Integration* (London, 1973), pp. 1-3; Oliver Albino, *The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint* (London, 1970). For the latter view see Raphael Koba Badal, *Origins of the Underdevelopment of the Southern Sudan: British administrative neglect* (Khartoum, 1980). Mohamed Omer Beshir also argues generally for the unity of Sudan: *The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict* (London, 1968).

[12] Peter Adwok Nyaba, *The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider's View* (Kampala, 1997), pp. 15-20.

[13] Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2003).

central government and the regions or localities thus frees us from some of the dichotomies and sectarianism of previous interpretations.

But this state-local relationship has rarely been focussed upon. Another set of literature has examined the central state in Khartoum since the nineteenth century, beginning with the Turco-Egyptian regime in Sudan, established by the Egyptian Khedive, Mohamed Ali, in 1821, and its overthrow and replacement by the Mahdist state.[14] Woodward's history of the twentieth-century state describes local government in terms of the 'collaboration' of Sudanese elites, and the concept of 'clientelism'; a point to which I will return in discussing whether chiefs were simply 'clients' of the state.[15] In his major two-volume administrative history of Condominium Sudan, Daly largely restricts his discussion of local government to the changing policies of the British colonial government. The books are an impressive study of the Condominium government and its personnel, but do not draw out the longer-term continuities of Sudanese history, and nor do they look far into the actual nature of local government in the districts. Together with the concise history by Holt and Daly – which does adopt a longer historical perspective – they also give substantially less coverage to the Southern Sudan than to the north.[16]

The major works on the Southern Sudan by Collins provide a much more detailed account of colonial administration, economic development and high-level diplomatic and political manoeuvres. However, they are weakest when focussing on Southern Sudanese societies and local government; they rely heavily on British versions of history and tend to make sweeping generalisations about ethnic characteristics and the primitivism of Southern Sudanese societies before the colonial period. The first volume traces the period of colonial 'pacification', the incapacity of the Southerners to resist, and their resulting 'submission' to 'westernisation', and presents a very

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[14] E.g. Richard Hill, *Egypt and the Sudan 1820-81* (London, 1959); P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881-1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Oxford, 1958).
[15] Peter Woodward, *Sudan, 1898-1989: The Unstable State* (Boulder, 1990), p. 7.
[16] Martin Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934* (Cambridge, 1986), and *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1934-1956* (Cambridge, 1991); Peter M. Holt and Martin W. Daly *A History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 5 ed. (Harlow, 2000). The northern focus is apparent from the beginning of the latter; in their section on the 'tribes of Sudan' they only mention the Shilluk, Dinka and Azande, and otherwise the "bewildering variety of ethnic groups and languages" in Southern Sudan (p. 3).

simplistic picture of local governance: "the British were able to utilize their traditional institutions to maintain order and to rely upon the people's customary acceptance of authority to preserve security".[17] Chiefs who resisted were defeated and stripped of much of their power. The second volume continues this story, suggesting that, since pre-colonial leadership reflected the intrinsic violence of Southern society, Pax Brittanica further undermined the traditional authorities. After the interim provided by Indirect Rule, the emergence of the modern state by the 1950s ensured that "the days of the shaykh and chief were virtually over".[18] The books thus imply, albeit with much sympathy for the Southern Sudanese, a continuum from primitivism to modernity, and provide a narrative of colonial administration without exploring its nature or impact at a local level.

The Sandersons' history of educational policy in Condominium Southern Sudan also focuses more on government and missions than on the social and political implications of mission education for local communities.[19] Going back to the nineteenth century, Gray's study of the Southern Sudan between 1839 and 1889 does explore the interaction between the foreign traders, officials and soldiers and local society rather more, but he also contributes to Collins' stereotypes by depicting the south as unprepared for the foreign incursions due to its complete isolation before 1840, despite the evidence from that date of existing long-distance trade networks.[20] Collins takes up the story again from 1883 to 1898, but mostly narrates the military history of the Mahdist period in the south, arguing that initial good relations between the Mahdist forces and the 'negroids' were followed by a period of 'anarchy' as the 'tribal government' of the 'sovereign tribes' was destroyed.[21]

As Johnson puts it, "[t]he history of the southern Sudan has been written essentially as a chronicle of a succession of alien administrations, not as a set of internal

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[17] R. O. Collins, *Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918* (New Haven, 1971), pp. 207-8.
[18] Robert O. Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 3, 431.
[19] L. M. Passmore Sanderson and G. N. Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics in Southern Sudan, 1899-1964* (London, 1981).
[20] Richard Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan 1839-1889* (London, 1961).
[21] Robert O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan, 1883-1898: A Struggle for Control* (New Haven, 1962), pp. 71-3.

histories linked to broader regional patterns."[22] The relationship between state and local communities has been explored more by anthropological studies, such as that on the Nuer by Hutchinson, and that on the Miri of the Nuba Mountains by Baumann, demonstrating the ways in which economic changes and new ideas and forms of knowledge were debated by communities in the 1970s-80s, as they sought to balance and manage their relationship to the world beyond their neighbourhoods.[23] Johnson's own historical anthropology draws out the longer-term continuities of the Nilotic 'moral community', and the internal and dynamic role of the Nuer prophets. But while he locates the history of prophecy in the "continuing re-evaluation of the moral relations which exist between the Nuer and external authority", his study by its nature focuses on the prophets and not on the other mediators of these relations. He refers to the 'secularisation' and 're-organisation' of Nuer and Dinka administration and the simultaneous "fragmentation of the moral community" from the 1930s, thus implying an imposition from above that lacked the indigenous nature of the prophets (an argument also taken up less effectively by Beswick).[24]

The crucial question this raises of the political legitimacy of the novel forms of authority under the Condominium has been addressed more in relation to northern Sudan. Asad argues that in northern Kordofan the Kababish accepted these rulers because they were seen to have power, through their control of the means of administration.[25] Willis unpacks this virtually tautological argument further by focusing more on *why* the Kababish accepted the authority of this lineage, which

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[22] Johnson, *Root Causes*, p. xvi.
[23] Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley, 1996); Baumann, *National Integration*.
[24] Douglas Johnson, *Nuer Prophets:A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 339, 231, 268, 290, 296, 354-6. Despite substantial oral research, Beswick fails to really produce such an 'internal history' of the Dinka, and even takes their ethnic identity for granted. She raises key questions in describing the tendency of leaders and elders to appoint 'retainers' as 'chiefs' in the early colonial period; the rise in particular of ex-police as chiefs; the effects of changes in the political economy; and the continuation of multiple forms of authority. But she sees 'legitimation' as derived from connections to resources *outside* the community, and thus also fails to fully explore the internal legitimisation of new kinds of authority; instead it was the British who 'revolutionized' and 'secularized' Dinka leadership from above: Stephanie F. Beswick, 'Violence, Ethnicity and Political Consolidation in South Sudan: A History of the Dinka and Their Relations with Their Neighbors', PhD thesis, Michigan State University, 1998, pp. 258-98.
[25] Talal Asad, *The Kababish Arabs: Power, Authority and Consent in a Nomadic Tribe* (London, 1970).

was fundamentally linked to their attitude towards the colonial state, as well as by examining the limits and tensions of this acceptance.[26]

Returning to the south, Reining's study of the Zande development scheme in the 1950s also offers a more nuanced understanding of the changes in political authority under colonial rule, although his informants provided a particularly negative impression of the chiefs, which, in the context of the strain placed on their authority by the demands of the Scheme and the political changes of the 1950s, should perhaps not be taken as entirely indicative of the general experience.[27] But he highlights the failure of the Zande chiefs to be effective or legitimate channels between people and government, thus raising the significance of functions of interlocution and offering a useful contrast with my impressions of chiefs in Western Mongalla. Willis' articles on the Nuba Mountains, in discussing the encounter with the colonial state and Christian missionaries, also demonstrate the longer-term rise of local leaders since the nineteenth century, who became 'gatekeepers' with the "world beyond the mountains" through their role in trade and warfare, and later through their mastery of languages, literacy and the colonial state apparatus. But the eclecticism of local authority was not obliterated; and the position of these leaders was always uncertain and unstable.[28] I argue in the thesis that understanding of the nature of this kind of authority, its functions and its limitations, is key to understanding the articulation of the relationship between state and local, in Sudan and elsewhere.

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[26] Justin Willis, 'Hukm. The Creolization of Authority in Condominium Sudan', *JAH,* forthcoming (2005)

[27] Conrad C. Reining, *The Zande Scheme: An Anthropological Case Study of Economic Development in Africa* (Evanston, IL, 1966), esp. pp. 12-38.

[28] Justin Willis, "The Nyamang Are Hard to Touch': Mission Evangelism and Tradition in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan, 1933-1952', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (2003), pp. 32-62, at p. 46; Willis, 'Violence, Authority', esp. pp. 101-3, 110, 112-14. The term 'gatekeeper' was first used in the context of external brokerage and the caravan trade in nineteenth-century East Africa by John Lonsdale, e.g. 'The Conquest State of Kenya, 1895-1905', in B. Berman and J. Lonsdale (eds.), *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, (London, 1992), pp. 13-44, at p. 22; also Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa 1850-1999* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 77-94.

## Western Mongalla

This study will further the exploration of relations between central government and locality, by focusing on the ways in which communities conceptualised the state and the kinds of interlocutors that emerged to mediate with it. The western part of Mongalla Province was chosen, largely because the English records of the Church Missionary Society are available for this area, and also because of my initial interest in the impact of the sleeping sickness campaigns here. It is also a region which has attracted relatively little scholarly attention: while anthropologists and historians have long been drawn to the larger 'tribes' of the Nuer and Dinka and the kingdoms of the Azande, the smaller ethnic and linguistic groupings of Equatoria have received less attention, despite the nineteenth-century accounts by Samuel Baker, General Gordon and Emin Pasha. Simonse produced a lengthy historical anthropology of the Bari, Lokoiya and Latuka of the east bank, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.[29] Buxton's anthropological fieldwork among the Mandari in the 1950s resulted in two books on political traditions, religion and medicine; they provide a detailed account of the situation in the 1950s, but her discussion of historical change is limited to clan histories and current complaints about government impositions.[30] Otherwise there are briefer accounts of the sleeping sickness campaign, cattle and ecology, and ivory poaching, but very little examination of local authority or community in the region.[31]

These topics are discussed in the recent historical anthropology thesis produced by Leopold on the neighbouring West Nile district of Uganda.[32] As he shows, Western Mongalla is part of a region which is not simply peripheral to the central state in

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[29] Simon Simonse, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism and the Scapegoat King in Southeastern Sudan* (Leiden, 1992). The age-sets of the Pari in eastern Equatoria were also studied by Eisei Kurimoto: e.g. 'Resonance of Age Systems in Southeastern Sudan', in Kurimoto and Simonse, *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 29-50.
[30] Jean C. Buxton, *Chiefs and Strangers: A Study of Political Assimilation among the Mandari* (Oxford, 1963), and *Religion and Healing in Mandari* (Oxford, 1973).
[31] Heather Bell, *Frontiers of Medicine in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1940* (Oxford, 1999); Kjell Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies: A Study of Cattle Keeping in Equatoria Province, the Southern Sudan, 1850-1950* (Bergen, 1981); R. O. Collins, 'Ivory Poaching in the Lado Enclave', *Uganda Journal* 24, no. 2 (1960), pp. 217-28.
[32] Mark Leopold, 'The Roots of Violence and the Reconstruction of Society in North Western Uganda', DPhil thesis, Oxford, 2001,

Khartoum, but is defined by its location in the borderlands of Sudan, Uganda and Congo, with a long history of trade and cultural exchange, especially to the south and east. The land falls in elevation from the hilly country along these borders to the ironstone plateau, and then further towards the rivers and plains, broken by hills and the mountains east of the Nile; the rainfall also decreases from south to north, and from west to east. The region is mainly covered in woodland savanna vegetation, with small areas of tropical high forests along the rivers; the open plains stretch to the north and east with marshy flood-plains along the Nile.[33] The population fall into two main linguistic categories: the Lokoiya and Bari-speakers (including Kakwa, Kuku, Nyangwara, Mandari and Fajelu) belong to the Eastern Nilotic branch of the Eastern Sudanic subfamily; while the Moru, Madi, Luluba, Kaliko, Avukaya and Baka languages are classed as part of the Central Sudanic subfamily (all are part of the Chari-Nile branch of the Nilo-Saharan family). The few Makaraka Zande-speakers also represent the Adamawa-Eastern sub-family, part of the Niger-Congo branch of the Congo-Kordofanian family.[34] The Eastern Nilotes are believed to have migrated a few centuries ago into the region, which was inhabited by Central Sudanic people and probably also Western Nilotic Lwo east of the Nile. By the time of the Egyptian expedition, cattle were widespread across the region, the vegetation was therefore mostly open parkland savanna, and the population practised shifting cultivation, herding and hunting.[35] The extent of cultural exchange in the region probably gave rise to the theory of the 'Nilo-Hamitic' origins of the population; this heterogeneity has also become obscured by the more recent promotion of discrete ethnicities.[36]

## 'Tribal Purposes'

Throughout the colonial period, British administrators struggled to comprehend the nature of the societies of Western Mongalla. Influenced by the development of the European nation-state, they assumed that Africans belonged to 'tribes': territorially

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[33] Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 5-13; H. Ferguson, 'Equatoria Province', in J. D. Tothill (ed.), *Agriculture in the Sudan: Being a Handbook of Agriculture as Practised in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1948), pp. 875-918, at pp. 882-4.
[34] See Collins, *Land Beyond*, pp. 49-51.
[35] Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 7-8, 126.
[36] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 49-61.

discrete and linguistically and culturally homogeneous social and political units.[37] But in Western Mongalla they found no signs of identity or leadership corresponding to such a unit:

> Village communities have a certain corporate existence, but of the tribe as a whole, or even of the section, there seems to be little practical conception. The ease with which neighbouring tribes, even of apparently different stocks, can amalgamate by intermarriage is in certain localities remarkable.[38]

Linguistic categories did not work as definitions of 'tribe', and administrators resorted to rather ambiguous language to try to make sense of the heterogeneity of social and political organisation that they encountered: "[t]he Kuku speak a Bari patois but fraternise with the Madi, with whom they associate themselves for tribal purposes".[39] Repeatedly, reports and ethnographies emphasised the 'mixed' ethnic groupings and the local histories of successive migrations and segmentations.[40] There was reported to be no word for 'tribe' in any of the languages of Western Mongalla; Bari 'villages' were said to be "autonomous" territorial and political units.[41] There are parallels in this sense with Kipsigis society in western Kenya, where Komma argues that the 'neighbourhood' was and is the basic social unit, though identity of neighbourhood members was also cross-cut by multiple other domains such as age-sets, military units and the exogamous and dispersed clans.[42]

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[37] John Lonsdale, 'Globalization, Ethnicity and Democracy: A View from "the Hopeless Continent"', in Anthony G. Hopkins (ed), *Globalization in World History* (London, 2002) pp. 194-219; Igor Kopytoff, 'The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture', in Kopytoff (ed), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Indianapolis, 1987) 3-84, at p. 4.

[38] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.

[39] Jackson, Governor of Uganda, to Harcourt, 14 March 1912, PRO WO 181 236.

[40] Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 18-33; T. H. B. Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40; L. F. Nalder, (ed.), *A Tribal Survey of Mongalla Province, by Members of the Province Staff and Church Missionary Society* (London, 1937), pp. 10-11, 205. The significance of segmentation and migration to understandings of pre-colonial ethnicity is argued by Kopytoff, 'Internal African Frontier'; see also B. Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya, 1900-1950*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 4; Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 183-6.

[41] Nalder, *Tribal Survey*, p. 18; Margery Perham, 'Native administration book: draft chapter on the South' (1946) RHL MSS Perham 542/5; Lewis, 'Notes on Bari', SAD 600/7/1-49.

[42] Toru Komma, 'Peacemakers, Prophets, Chiefs and Warriors: Age-Set Antagonism as a Factor of Political Change among the Kipsigis of Kenya', in Kurimoto and Simonse, *Conflict*, pp. 186-205, at p. 193.

Since the colonial period, ethnicity in Africa has generated debate among scholars.[43] As primordialist assumptions about the historical cultural content of ethnicity have been challenged, and as the colonial ethnonyms have been deconstructed, it has become apparent that they could represent novel definitions of identity: the Lugbara and Madi of northern Uganda, for example, claim nowadays that these names were created and applied by Arabs and Europeans.[44] Yet if ethnic categories were entirely invented and imposed by colonial governments, the question remains as to how they appear to have gained so much meaning. As memorably articulated by Iliffe, for example – "Europeans believed Africans belonged to tribes; Africans built tribes to belong to" – instrumentalist and constructivist explanations have explored the ways in which ethnicities developed in response to the particular context of the colonial period. People discovered the value of membership of wider interest groups, especially in the new urban settings where migrant labourers needed new support systems.[45] People emphasised existing or new social identities in order to gain access to resources such as land through the colonial focus on 'custom'.[46] Political elites and educated intellectuals learnt to manipulate European assumptions about tribes in order to depict themselves as the holders of tribal knowledge and thus to advance their own interests; and they also sought to mobilise their own ethnic constituencies in the arena of national politics.[47]

Other studies have challenged the idea of colonial creation by re-focussing on pre-colonial ethnicities, and especially on the role of alternative means of production in

[43] The various explanations of ethnicity are reviewed in Thomas Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa', *JAH* 44, no. 1 (2003), pp. 3-27, at pp. 16-25; Bravman, *Making*, pp. 9-14; and Justin Willis, 'The Makings of a Tribe: Bondei Identities and Histories', *JAH* 33, no. 2 (1992), pp. 191-208.

[44] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 178-9; Tim Allen, 'Ethnicity and Tribalism on the Sudan-Uganda Border', in Katsuyoshi Fukui and John Markakis (eds.), *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (London, 1994), pp. 112-39, at p. 123-5; John Middleton, 'Myth, History and Mourning Taboos in Lugbara', *Uganda Journal* 19, no. 2 (1955), pp. 94-203. Worby also explores the power of, and resistance to, ethnic naming in a comparable "ethnic border zone" in colonial Zimbabwe: Eric Worby, 'Maps, Names and Ethnic Games: The Epistemology and Iconography of Colonial Power in Northwestern Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 3 (1994), pp. 371-92. In Western Mongalla, the Makaraka, Lokoiya and Kaliko all called themselves by alternative names in the 1930s, according to Nalder, *Tribal Survey*, pp. 114, 183, 223.

[45] John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 323-4.

[46] Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, 1993), pp. 40-1.

[47] E.g. Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, pp. 331-41; J. Lonsdale, 'Globalization', and 'Contests of Time: Kikuyu Historiography, Old and New', in A. Harneit-Sievers (ed.), *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 201-54.

encouraging ethnically-defined claims to resources.[48] But like the colonial construction arguments, these can seem overly materialist or functionalist. Lonsdale therefore distinguishes between the exterior and interior 'architecture' of ethnicity, arguing that while colonial structures and socio-economic changes may have helped to shape and politicise ethnic identities, these processes also involved the ongoing renegotiation of 'moral ethnicities' within communities, which drew on much 'deeper' historical traditions of political thought, socio-economic relations and 'civic virtue'. He thus sees the roots of ethnicity in Kenya in the pre-colonial networks of marriage and trade within areas of "linguistic, economic and social similarity". Such similarity did not automatically define ethnicity; rather it was strategies of building up relations of mutual obligation, or 'reciprocal bargains', which formed the "deep political language" that was later drawn upon in the arena of high politics to define and mobilise ethnicity.[49] James explores in more detail this underlying language in the case of the Uduk, through the idea of a cultural archive of moral knowledge.[50]

Lonsdale also points out that in much of pre-colonial eastern Africa, this kind of moral ethnicity was wider than the small political units within which people operated in their daily life. His analysis does not quite fit Western Mongalla; here it was true that political units were small, but the wider kinds of network did not correspond very clearly to any past or present definitions of ethnicity. This thesis will refer to 'community' in the sense of these smaller social and political units of 'neighbourhood', village or chiefdom. Their members also belonged to numerous wider networks of trade, marriage, ritual protection, spiritual welfare and social relations – the latter usually articulated through the language of kinship and clan - which would all have been especially important in times of crisis.[51] But none of these networks necessarily corresponded to ethnic groupings, and nor should the

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[48] See examples in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (London, 1993), although in his 'Introduction' Spear also notes the power of ethnic ideology: p. 16.

[49] J. Lonsdale, 'The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought', in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, pp. 315-504, esp. pp. 317-55, 466.

[50] Wendy James, *The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion and Power among the Uduk of Sudan* (Oxford, 1999).

[51] Feierman warns of the danger in discussing community formation, of depicting the outside world as external to localised communities, when in fact there were endless linkages: Steven Feierman. *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, 1990), pp 34-7. One informant described ceremonies, funerals etc when relatives from a distance of 10-20 miles away would be invited: Interview with Festo Limi Sominda, 14.1.03, Khartoum.

social formations of the region be seen as a 'short-lived' frontier stage in a process of ethnogenesis.[52] Instead, people belong primarily to the local community and then to a much wider regional arena, as Leopold argues in relation to West Nile: "it is important to emphasise that local people share a common history, and notwithstanding linguistic distinctions, are part of a regional culture zone which extends deep into southern Sudan and the north-east Congo".[53] Since Independence, a Southern Sudanese, or at times an Equatorian, identity has had more salience than the smaller ethnic categories; people have also operated even more in the zone Leopold refers to, through trade, education and general migration and interaction.[54]

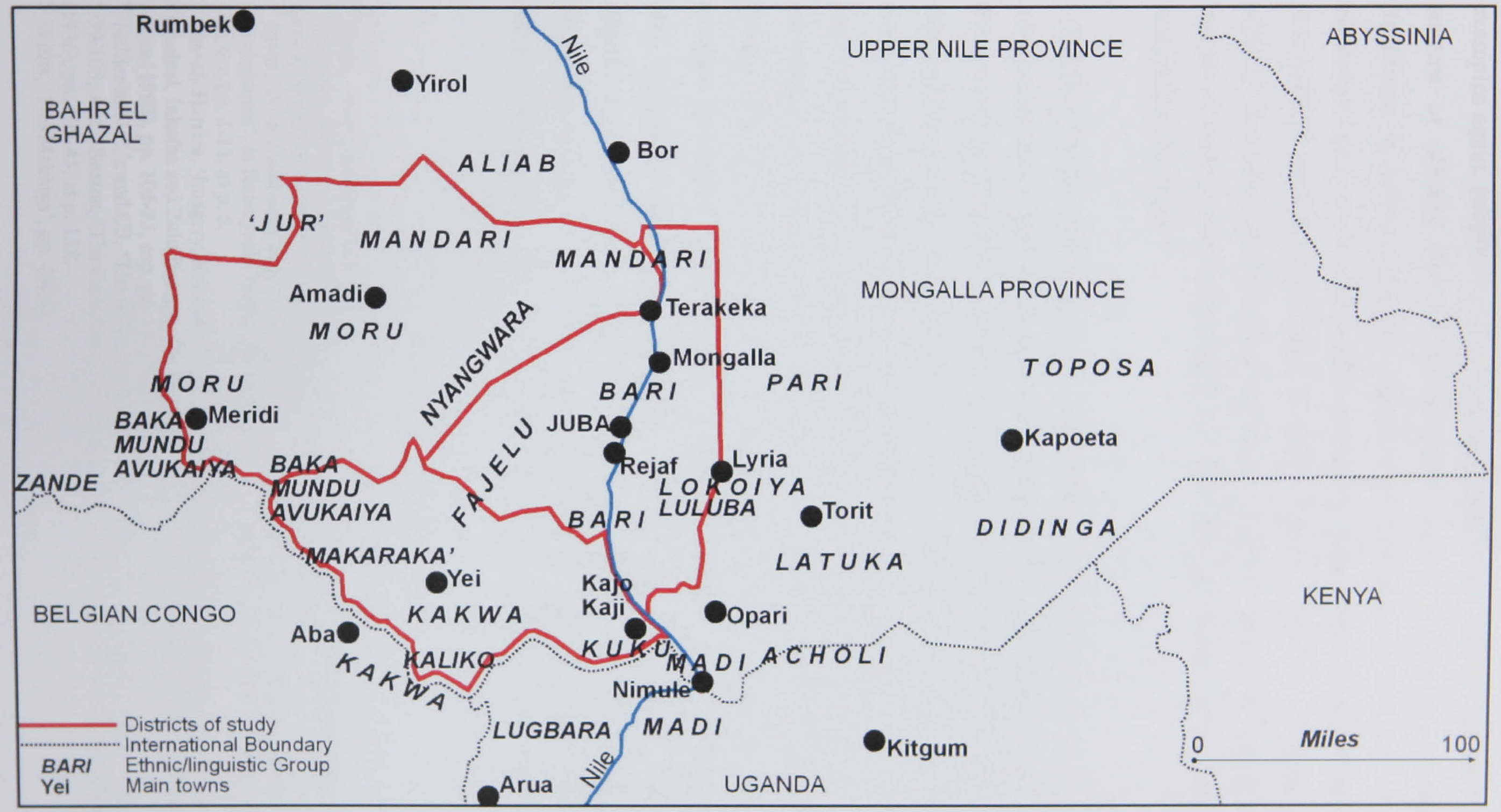
This is not to say that ethnicity is, or was, meaningless, but rather to argue that the commonalities of experience across Western Mongalla, in the colonial period at least, outweighed any ethnic distinctiveness. I include the ethnographic map in order to guide the reader as to the particular geographical areas associated with the ethnic labels, but it is important not to impose any rigid boundaries between what were overlapping and fluid groups. The colonial administrators sought to demarcate such boundaries, but even they occasionally had to admit the inherent difficulties:

> The Baka, Mundu, Avokaya, some Zande and Buguru and a few Morokodo and Moru Agi... inhabit a compact area in haphazard confusion such as it would be hard to parallel anywhere in the Sudan... It is essential to realise that there are no areas or localities however small that can be said to belong to any of these tribes. In this respect my tribal map is perhaps misleading, but in it I have tried to indicate tentatively the areas in which any given tribe tends to predominate... Not even at the subchiefship level do the tribes keep separate.[55]

The ambiguity and multiplicity of identity in Western Mongalla is of more interest in terms of the debates *within* local communities over moral knowledge. Spear sees ethnicity as both a dynamic historical social process, and a process of historical

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[52] This is the view taken by Kopytoff, in 'The Internal', p. 5, although he usefully highlights the fluidity and successive migrations inherent in African social formations.
[53] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', p. 3. Compare also with the Rift Valley zone of economic interdependence and cultural similarity: Spear, 'Introduction' to *Being Maasai*, pp. 1-18.
[54] See Johnson, *Root Causes*, pp. xvi-xvii, 18 on Equatorian identity.
[55] M. F. A. Keen, 'The tribes of Meridi Sub-district', 1946, NRO DK 112/14/95.




Map showing approximate locations of ethnic/linguistic groups, based largely on 'Equatorial Province: Mongalla Tribal Map', in L. F. Nalder, *Equatorial Province Handbook*, Vol. 1 *Mongalla* (Khartoum, 1936). (Quotation marks indicate ethnonyms no longer in normal use.)

representation, drawing on the past to explain current identities.[56] To use Kenyan examples again, people living in localised communities increasingly drew on wider sources of identity during the twentieth century, as they renegotiated older 'traditions' to define community values in the face of wider changes.[57] In a sense, ethnicities have been continually reinvented since before colonialism, through processes of exclusion in order to claim 'insider' status.[58] As Harries argues, ethnicity is a result of the general *need* for a sense of community, especially during periods of socio-economic upheaval; it is therefore generated from below as well as manipulated by elites.[59]

I therefore interpret ethnicity in the colonial period as one means by which claims to a particular origin, history and set of moral values and rights were asserted, either to the colonial government, or within the local community. In the latter case, it was a subject of negotiation and debate, not a definitive tradition, and clan-based identities could also be used to make similar claims. As one administrator put it, clans and age-sets provided some of the apparatus "by which the individual's rights and duties are regulated", but they largely functioned *within* the village communities even though their members might be dispersed across an area.[60] Ethnic and clan-based versions of identity drew on history to assert particular claims to rights and status, and through processes of "recursive" debate and conversation they became important to a sense of tradition and culture (a point to which I will return in discussing sources below).[61] But they existed as an inter- or intra-neighbourhood identity, cross-cutting the fundamental moral and political domains within which

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[56] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism', p. 21.
[57] Bravman, *Making*; Charles H. Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1988).
[58] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism', p. 22; Allen, 'Ethnicity and Tribalism, p. 129. Fukui refers to 'we consciousness', in Katsuyoshi Fukui and John Markakis, 'Introduction', to their *Ethnicity and Conflict*, pp. 1-11, at p. 5.
[59] Patrick Harries, 'Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition in a South African Bantustan: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha and Zulu History', *History and Theory* 32, no. 4, Beiheft 32: History Making in Africa (1993), pp. 105-25, esp. pp. 107, 113, 124.
[60] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105; A. C. Beaton, 'The Bari: Clan and Age-Class Systems', *Sudan Notes and Records* 19, no. 1 (1936), pp. 109-45, at p. 132.
[61] Willis, 'The Makings', pp. 192-3.

(ideally) disputes were settled, collective decisions were agreed, the moral economy was debated, and the well-being of the community was managed.[62]

## Political Institutions

These small-scale social and political units fall into the category of 'acephelous' or 'stateless' societies. Geschiere warns against these simplistic classifications, and certainly the terms are misleading if they are taken to mean the absence of any kind of authority or government, if they are treated as egalitarian or 'democratic', or if they are treated as static and ahistorical.[63] Tosh argues against Southall's negative definition in 1968 of stateless societies as lacking "political institutions or roles", adopting instead a definition of societies in which "political authority is widely diffused; such authority positions as do exist touch only a limited area of the lives of those subject to them; the unit within which disputes can peacefully be settled is small, and it tends to lack constant membership and fixed boundaries".[64] But the continuum between the categories of states and stateless societies is also apparent from the evidence of the first Egyptian expedition to the Equatoria region in 1841, which reveals the centralised ritual and commercial role of the Bari 'rain-kings' as Simonse calls them; he argues that through a structural opposition between king and people, they functioned as sovereign kingdoms. But his suggestion that the societies to the west also functioned as segmentary kingdoms is more debatable; the evidence is limited to the period after the arrival of the foreign interlopers, but suggests multiple and flexible forms of authority based on gerontocracy, meritocracy and patronage.[65] Rather like Lango in Uganda, the societies of Western Mongalla could be considered "amorphous" in the sense that they were organised on the basis neither of segmentary lineage systems nor of age-groups (except the Lokoiya

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[62] Lonsdale defines 'moral economy' as the set of rights and obligations negotiated between genders, generations and classes: 'Globalisation', p. 196. See James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Subsistence and Rebellion in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 1976).

[63] Peter Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chiefship, French and British Style', *Africa* 63, no. 2 (1993): 151-75, at p. 151.

[64] John Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society C. 1800-1939* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 1-3, citing A. W. Southall, 'Stateless Societies', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 15 (New York, 1968), p. 157.

[65] Simonse, *Kings*, e.g. pp. 7-8, 47-8. Sovereignty can be diffuse, as Donald I. Ray argues in 'Divided Sovereignty: Traditional Authority and the State in Ghana', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38 (1996), pp. 181-202, at p. 182.

*monyemiji* age-sets); although both clans and age-sets were found in the region, they were not usually political organisations.[66] But this also reflects the mixed economic strategies pursued in the region and hence the mixed forms of organisation of the relations of production.[67]

I argue that it is still possible to discuss political 'institutions' before the colonial period, firstly in the sense of the kind of diffused or multiple forms of authority, which will be discussed more below in relation to knowledge; and secondly in terms of the ongoing process of institutionalisation of functions for mediating with the foreign traders and governments. And it was from these roots that the chiefs – identified and backed by the colonial state – underwent a process of further institutionalisation over the colonial period. I use 'institutionalisation' partly in the sense of the definition given by Kasfir: "the process through which most active participants in a polity come to value highly a set of basic procedures for solving disputes".[68] But I also argue that another aspect of chiefship became highly valued as a necessary institution, that is the role of gate-keeping; indeed, it was their ability to perform this role effectively that earned the early colonial chiefs their initial legitimacy, as well as their identification by the colonial administration. It was when the balancing-act required for the successful performance of this function was threatened by the increasing government demands from the 1930s that the role of solving disputes also became increasingly significant in the ongoing institutionalisation of chiefship. It is also important to emphasise that the chief was not the only institution with such functions; the participants in the polities of Western Mongalla observed more than one 'set of basic procedures' for the maintenance of stability and cohesion. Rain and earth chiefs or priests also represented long-standing institutions for mediating with external forces and for maintaining the internal cohesion and survival of communities; the fact that their roles could also adapt and alter does not obviate their significance as institutions.

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[66] Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, p. 241.

[67] Spear's 'Introduction' to *Being Maasai* discusses the link between means of production – pastoralism, agriculture and hunting – and the relations of production as embodied in age-sets, lineages or flexible forest groups; he also shows that the relatively recent development of highly specialised pastoralism in the Rift Valley caused greater economic and ethnic differentiation, albeit of an inclusive and accessible nature.

[68] Nelson Kasfir, 'Southern Sudanese Politics since the Addis Ababa Agreement', *African Affairs* 76. no. 303 (1977), pp. 143-66.

Above all I argue that authority relied upon the popular consensual perception of its necessity and utility and therefore upon the demonstration of the knowledge and attributes that gain such recognition.

## Colonial Governance and Local Authority

Like the topic of ethnicity, the nature and impact of local governance under colonial regimes has generated an ongoing historical debate. It has long been shown that the British colonial rhetoric of 'Indirect Rule' – the reliance on 'traditional' local forms of authority – masked complex indigenous renegotiations of power and tradition, as individuals and groups within societies manipulated the colonial officials' assumptions about African authority and custom to profit and exert control over other sections of society. Ranger's phrase, 'the invention of tradition' has been somewhat misleading if taken to indicate a straightforward process of construction by colonial powers, removing the agency or critical faculties of colonial subjects; as Ranger himself emphasised, the colonial state was less hegemonic, and the processes more interactive and contested than this.[69] They have been explored in more detail by, for example, Chanock, whose study of the invention of customary law demonstrates the way in which male elders and chiefs manipulated the colonial courts to shape a version of customary law that asserted their own control over women and younger men, in the face of the socio-economic changes of the colonial period, a point also made in Ranger's original article.[70]

These arguments thus suggest that the colonial period heralded a fundamental break with the past in enabling tradition and authority to be reshaped by those Africans who saw the advantages of operating within the colonial systems. This is argued most vociferously by Mamdani, who depicts native administrations under colonial rule as "decentralised despotisms": chiefs who collaborated with the colonial

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[69] Terence Ranger, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa', in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 211-62; see also his self-revision in 'The invention of tradition revisited: the case of Africa', in Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa* (London, 1993), pp. 62-111.

[70] Martin Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia*, (Portsmouth, NH, 1998); see also John Iliffe, *Africans: History of a Continent* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 198-9.

regimes gained control of coercive force and of access to resources; traditional restraints on individual power were removed by the colonial state, enabling chiefs to act as the authoritarian 'clenched fist' of state power, answerable only to higher state authority.[71] Other writers have also argued that the imposition of colonial rule saw the removal or destruction of pre-colonial political traditions and constraints.[72] Willis criticises the "sweepingly judgemental" account by Mamdani, but nevertheless highlights the innovative kinds of authority that developed under colonial rule and that had "profound political consequences". He also draws attention to the general isolation of Sudan from studies of this "reshaping of African authority under the guise of colonial conservatism".[73]

But while it has clearly been important to demonstrate the innovative nature of much of the so-called traditional authority in colonial Africa and to apply such arguments to Sudan, it is equally important to show the continuities in political tradition and the limitations on the ability of either the colonial state or the chiefs themselves to entirely reinvent such traditions. There is a tendency to ascribe to elites and intellectuals the power to shape coherent traditions, which risks the neglect of popular discourses, evaluations and constraints: the 'deep' moral and political language of communities.[74] Instead Feierman draws attention to the long-term continuities and transformations of political traditions by focussing on the role of local "peasant intellectuals".[75] As Harries argues, traditions cannot be imposed unless they strike a resonant chord locally and bear a semblance of repetition.[76]

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[71] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, 1996). Berman and Lonsdale also depict the personal accumulation by colonial chiefs with state backing and the use of their retainers: "the bully boys of colonial control", in 'Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State 1895-1914', in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, pp. 77-100, at p. 87.

[72] J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison, 1990) pp. 245-8; Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', p. 200; Jan-Bart Gewald, 'Making Tribes: Social Engineering in the Western Province of British Administered Eritrea, 1941-1952', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* (online) 1, no. 2 (2000); Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, pp. 182, 248; Holly E. Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), pp. 17-18; Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime, 'Introduction', to their (eds.), *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence* (Ife-Ife, 1970), pp. vii-xxix.

[73] Willis, 'Violence, Authority', p. 90.

[74] Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', p. 317. Examples of an intellectual/elite-centred approach include Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983); Gewald, 'Making Tribes', esp. paragraph 2.

[75] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*.

[76] Harries, 'Imagery', pp. 106-7, 113, 124.

Vaughan also reveals the way that the various elite manipulations of tradition were effective only because they "resonate in the collective imagination of local communities".[77] The Zande chiefs failed to retain legitimate authority because neither their versions of tradition nor of development corresponded to those of their people.[78] Thus 'resonance' is clearly an intrinsic requirement of traditions, constraining those who attempt to construct their own versions of customary ways and authorities, and ensuring a degree of continuity that even the violence of colonial conquest could not entirely shatter.

In a comprehensive recent review article, Spear therefore argues that scholars should question *why* the intellectuals credited with inventing tradition were believed, and by whom.[79] The contested nature of tradition has been demonstrated by, for example, research into the ways in which the courts and customary laws of the colonial period were also used by women, and other groups considered marginalized in Chanock's study, to challenge the dominance of male elders and chiefs.[80] Similarly, claims to authority, identity and history were and are the subject of political competition in western Cameroon.[81]

Spear also highlights the "fine line" that chiefs had to tread between colonial demands and the obligations that they had to fulfil in order to retain legitimacy. Legitimacy does not have to rely on written laws and constitutions, and nor should it be taken to mean that authority is popular; it rather represents the narrow limits within which individual power is tacitly, and no doubt grudgingly, accepted as a somehow *necessary* form of authority. Clough emphasises the balancing-act required of colonial chiefs in Kenya if they were to meet the demands of colonial

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[77] Olufemi Vaughan, 'Chiefship Politics and Communal Identity in Western Nigeria, 1893-1951', *JAH* 44 (2003), pp. 283-302.
[78] Reining, *Zande Scheme*, esp. pp. 36-8.
[79] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism'.
[80] Brett L. Shadle, 'Bridewealth and Female Consent: Marriage Disputes in African Courts, Gusiiland, Kenya', *JAH* 44 (2003), pp. 241-62; and "Changing Traditions to Meet Current Altering Conditions': Customary Law, African Courts and the Rejection of Codification in Kenya, 1930-60', *JAH* 40 (1999), pp. 411-31; Kristin Mann, and Richard Roberts, 'Law in Colonial Africa', in their (eds.), *Law in Colonial Africa* (London, 1991) pp. 3-58.
[81] Mitzi Goheen, 'Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs and Local Control: Negotiations over Land, Struggles over Meaning', *Africa* 62, no. 3 (1992), pp. 389-412.

officials and satisfy the popular requirements of legitimate authority.[82] Bravman demonstrates the vulnerability of chiefly power in Taita to the disapproval of elders and the wider populace, particularly as here the chiefs were usually younger Christian men appointed by the colonial government, with no precedent locally.[83]

This thesis will provide a further example of the limitations of chiefly power, but the case of Western Mongalla will also differ somewhat from these other studies. Firstly, the colonial chiefs were not an entirely novel form of authority imposed from outside by the colonial administrators, but had instead evolved gradually since the mid-nineteenth century in relation to the foreign incursions into the region. Secondly, the chiefs appear to have been ultimately rather more successful at (or perhaps their communities more effectively enforced) the balancing-act required of them. In this sense the area has more parallels with chiefship in some parts of West Africa, where chiefs have more successfully tapped into versions of history and communal identity to redefine their importance in the postcolonial as well as colonial periods.[84]

## The Domestication of Chiefship

In fact recent work on post-colonial chiefship – in particular the collections edited in 1996 and 1999 by van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal with Ray and van Dijk respectively[85] - has offered some of the most useful theoretical analysis, by exploring in more depth the idea of the dual role of the chief, as the "double gate-keeper".[86] The latter collection argues that the mediating functions of 'chiefing' can be understood as 'mutational' or 'conversion' work, translating between the modern state and local

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[82] Marshall S. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs and Politicians, 1918-1940* (Niwot, Council, 1990); also for Tanzania, see Thomas Spear, *Mountain Farmers: Moral Economies of Land and Agricultural Development in Arusha and Meru,* (Oxford, 1997), esp. pp. 112, 195; and for Mayotte, Michael Lambek, *Knowledge and Practice in Mayotte: Local Discourses of Islam, Sorcery and Spirit Possession* (Toronto, 1993), p. 82.

[83] Bravman, *Making*, esp. pp. 231-8. See also Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule', p. 152.

[84] E.g. Vaughan, 'Chieftaincy Politics'; and *Nigerian Chiefs*.

[85] Special Issue of the *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 37-38, (1996); E. Adriaan B. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, and Rijk Van Dijk (eds.), *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (Leiden, 1999).

[86] Donald I. Ray and E. Adriaan B. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 'The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38 (1996), pp. 1-38, at p. 8.

interests, the latter expressed as 'tradition'.[87] The value of the focus of these collections on the brokerage role, and the dynamic nature, of chiefship is, however, somewhat diminished by the tendency to assume that these are more recent or novel developments, and to refer to a static concept of the 'tradition' from which chiefs derive their 'sacred' or 'customary' powers, just as some of the colonial studies imply a unitary 'pre-colonial' tradition.[88] Thus the transformation of the "administrative chieftaincy" of the despotic colonial and post-colonial states into a "civil chieftaincy" is sometimes assumed to be a recent, or even projected future development.[89] This thesis will argue that such a transformation – the '*domestication*' of chieftaincy as van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk term it - was in fact part of the processes of change going on in Western Mongalla during the colonial period, as popular pressures forced the chiefs to adapt their role in order to retain legitimacy, which in turn involved mobilising the deeper elements of local political thought. I argue that there were, and are, powerful popular political traditions in Western Mongalla, which were evident in the nineteenth century and which have evolved through the colonial and postcolonial periods. In the face of individual ambition and exploitation by the central state, these traditions - or "peasant political discourse", to use Feierman's term - do not necessarily represent a reality, but rather a commentary on power, which can in itself exert a considerable influence and restraint upon local authorities.[90] This is only the case, however, if those authorities remain answerable to and dependent upon their local communities.

The van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal collections also highlight the role of the chiefs in defending and advancing the interests of the local community, which raises this important question of the location of chiefs: were/are they conceptually situated within or outside the state? As we have seen, many of the studies of colonial chiefs see them as the agents of a despotic state; even the less critical studies view them as

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[87] Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk, 'Introduction: The Domestication of Chieftaincy in Africa: From the Imposed to the Imagined', in their (eds.) *African Chieftaincy*, pp. 1-20.
[88] E.g. Ray, 'Divided Sovereignty', p. 198; Karen E. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 31, 72-3, 248: references to a 'customary order'.
[89] E.g. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk, 'Introduction', p. 10: the public *now* has a "stricter moral gaze" on chieftaincy and seeks to 'domesticate' it; Trutz Von Trotha, 'From Administrative to Civil Chieftaincy: Some Problems and Prospects of African Chieftaincy', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38 (1996), pp. 79-107.
[90] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, e.g. pp. 3-9.

part of the colonial state apparatus, albeit at the lowest level.[91] But the pattern seems to have varied across Africa, contributing to the diverse, contingent and complex nature of chiefship.[92] Colonial chiefs in Lango, Uganda, for example, were often 'outsiders' transferred from place to place, who hence acted despotically, unrestrained by kinship reciprocities.[93] Those in West Nile, Uganda were symbolically pushed outside the community by the curse of the elders on anyone who worked with the government.[94] Hutchinson describes political struggles in Nuer communities in 1980s Sudan over the locus of chiefly power, whether in the local community or in the world of the '*turuk*' or government.[95] In a comparative study of French and British rule in Cameroon, Geschiere shows that those chiefs who, under the French, situated themselves outside their own societies lacked legitimacy and have since become marginalized; whereas British uncertainties created more scope for chiefs to develop legitimacy and to be seen as rooted *within* local society and outside the state, so that they have become a rallying-point for local identities, in the face of an influx of migrants to the area.[96] 'Traditionality' might better be measured then, not in terms of chiefs' pre-colonial institutional roots, but in terms of "the degree to which their power is rooted in local societies".[97]

Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and Ray suggest that chiefs, if not totally 'uncaptured' by the state, may at least have considerable room for manoeuvre, operating in "the shadow of the state".[98] This is explored in the colonial period by Pels, who argues

[91] Examples of the latter include Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', p. 363; Fields, *Revival*, p. 31; Peter Pels, 'Creolisation in Secret: The Birth of Nationalism in Late Colonial Uluguru, Tanzania', *Africa* 72, no. 1 (2002), pp. 1-28.

[92] David Gordon, 'Owners of the Land and Lunda Lords: Colonial Chiefs in the Borderlands of Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 2 (2001), pp. 315-38, at p. 337.

[93] Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, pp. 206-7. Tosh notes that this 'outsider' status of the chiefs was the exception rather than the rule in colonial Uganda, but Burke also comments on the frequent transfers of chiefs, and their resulting lack of local knowledge: Frederick G. Burke, *Local Government and Politics in Uganda* (New York, 1964).

[94] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 153, 207, 216-7.

[95] Hutchinson, *Nuer Prophets*, esp. pp. 271-83, for.

[96] Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule', pp. 156-7, 166-7. A similar comparison is made in passing by Reining between the unpopular Zande chiefs of Sudan, seen as agents of the government, and their counterparts over the border in Congo who had more autonomy and hence a better relationship with their people: *Zande Scheme*, p. 35.

[97] Peter Geschiere, 'Chiefs and the Problem of Witchcraft: Varying Patterns in South and West Cameroon', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-8 (1996), pp. 307-28, at p. 307. For an example of the former approach, see Crowder and Ikime, 'Introduction'.

[98] Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 'New Relevance', pp. 7, 25.

that chiefs in Uluguru operated in an intermediate 'pidginised realm' of local government, satisfying the British administrators, and at the same time concealing a hidden realm of local politics.[99] Hatt similarly describes the role of chiefs in Morocco, who, like those in Western Mongalla, lacked a long history of hierarchical political structure but came to play a central brokerage role:

> The practical authority of chiefs lies in their ability to mediate between two political systems which operate in two completely different styles and through different political idioms – one bureaucratic and hierarchical and concerned with the implementation of policies mainly generated elsewhere, and the other personalistic and bound up in the subtle politics of reputation in the tribal sphere.[100]

But the development of the intermediate sphere of local government – and the intermediary role of the chief – in turn reflected the popular desire for a means by which to deal with the state. As Willis shows, people in northern Kordofan, Sudan, were often more willing to put up with the novel or arbitrary judicial and administrative practices of a sheikh or chief than to invite the interference of the colonial state. Like Pels, he uses the term 'creolised' rather than Bhabha's 'hybrid' to evoke the in-between language, institutions and practices of colonial governance, that were created more by antagonisms than by mimesis.[101] The 'creolised' practices of local government under colonialism thus reflected local strategies for obtaining protection against the state, rather than simply the creation of novel kinds of authority by that state or its local agents.

In Western Mongalla the chiefs had to be seen to inhabit the realm of the local and function at its creolised threshold, drawing in benefits from beyond but not becoming part of the world outside. The thesis will show that this balancing-act required chiefs to possess particular skills if they were to be successful. They had to be seen by both their own communities and the colonial government to know the

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[99] Pels, 'Creolisation in Secret, esp. pp. 10-12.

[100] Doyle G. Hatt, 'Establishing Tradition: The Development of Chiefly Authority in the Western High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, 1890-1990', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38 (1996), pp. 123-53, at p. 137.

[101] Willis, 'Hukm'. See also John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 2: *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago, 1997), p. 59: 'hybridisation' implies that creolisation only occurs along some frontiers, when it is an ongoing process everywhere.

ways of the *turuk* - to understand their languages, diplomatic techniques, rituals and methods - in order to be useful as negotiators and intermediaries; it was this knowledge that earned them their position in the first place.[102] Yet at the same time, their authority and effectiveness would also increasingly rest on knowing the ways of the community and drawing on political skills with a longer tradition than their own institution: listening, arbitration and consensus building, oratorical and persuasive abilities, adjudication and decisive leadership. Particular kinds of knowledge thus formed the structure of the varied agency of individual chiefs, and the political traditions of Western Mongalla involved the maintenance and ongoing popular evaluation of knowledge.[103]

## Knowledge and Power

The thesis will argue that both the changing rhetorical policies of the colonial government, and the debated discourses of local communities can be understood as commentaries on the value and application of different kinds of knowledge. The debate over the invention of tradition is also a debate over the relationship between knowledge and power; the ability of states, elites and intellectuals to impose a hegemonic episteme in order to reinforce and recreate their own authority.[104] Much of the early postcolonialist writing, like some of the interpretations of the invention of tradition, credited the colonial state with the ability to impose hegemonic epistemologies which destroyed the knowledge systems of the colonial subjects.[105] I argue that while the colonial project did involve the imposition of European scientific expertise and moral-religious ideas, this does not mean that it was effective in obliterating or replacing indigenous understandings and systems of knowledge, as

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[102] See also Gordon, 'Owners', p. 325: "[e]ven though the authority of chiefs in the Congo was tenuous and localized, villagers recognized that they needed someone 'clever enough' to deal with a cunning *umusungu* (white person)".

[103] On the structure *of* agency, see Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, p. 34.

[104] Ronald Inden defines 'episteme' as "a way of knowing that implies a particular view of existence", e.g. the Western belief in a single factual reality accessible through scientific knowledge: 'Orientalist Constructions of India', in P. J. Cain and M. Harrison (eds.), *Imperialism: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, Vol. 3 (London, 2001), pp. 94-136.

[105] E.g. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1978); Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', in Cain and Harrison, *Imperialism*, pp. 3-29; G. C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cain and Harrison, *Imperialism*, pp. 171-219; also J. I. Guyer and S. M. E. Belinga, 'Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa', *JAH* 36 (1995), pp. 91-120, at pp. 94-5, 118.

discussion of land-use and medicine will show. Communities in Western Mongalla evaluated and selectively appropriated new kinds of knowledge, but they also maintained multiple sources of expertise that were not seen to be as mutually exclusive as the Christian missionaries and European administrators, scientists and technicians might have intended. In addition, as has been emphasised in more recent studies, the latter encountered the uncertainties and limitations of their own knowledge through the colonial experience, and by seeking to appropriate tradition in order to create legitimate forms of useful authority, they also found themselves subject to local discourses over which they had little control.[106]

The relationship between knowledge and power has of course been highlighted by the work of Foucault. In a sense, this thesis is an attempt to produce what Foucault calls a 'genealogy': to uncover the relationship between local communities and the colonial government through "the claims to attention of local… knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse".[107]

It will therefore examine the 'centralising powers' of the colonial state: its production and reproduction of knowledge through inspections, mapping, resettlement, registries, prisons and medical campaigns, its application of that knowledge to the landscape and bodies of the colonised, and its categorising "apparatuses of knowledge" through which it attempted to effect "disciplinary normalisations".[108] However, without entering too much into the debate over defining hegemony, the thesis will argue that such normalisations in Western

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[106] Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', pp. 6-7, 13; Emily Lynn Osborn, 'Circle of Iron': African Colonial Employees and the Interpretation of Colonial Rule in French West Africa', *JAH* 44 (2003), pp. 29-50; Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, 1993); Jens A. Andersson, 'Administrators' Knowledge and State Control in Colonial Zimbabwe: The Invention of the Rural-Urban Divide in Buhera District, 1912-80', *JAH* 43 (2002), pp. 119-43.

[107] Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (Harlow, 1980), pp. 78-108, at pp. 83-5.

[108] Foucault, 'Two Lectures', pp. 106-7.

Mongalla should not be taken to demonstrate the hegemony of the colonial state.[109] The 'contradictory consciousness' of the people of this region encompassed their tacit accommodation to the dominating colonial state (normalisation), and their simultaneous 'everyday' resistance to its hegemonic worldview. In this liminal space, highlighted by the Comaroffs, between explicit ideological resistance and unconscious reaction, the colonised recognised and sought to control the colonising process through forms of experimental practice with alternative sources of knowledge.[110]

The 'normalisation' of chiefly authority should also be viewed in this context, not as the result of colonial despotism, but as the outcome of a collective (in between conscious and unconscious) conception, and strategy for management, of the colonising process. It was a very specific form of Foucault's 'contract power', in which people gave up power as an original right, in order to create an institution of local sovereignty.[111] And therefore, as Foucault also argues, power did not simply originate from the state; the latter was instead superstructural, and operated on the basis of these power relations at the local level. Power "needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression".[112] This is a study of 'capillary' power in its "local forms and institutions".[113] The chiefs were channels of power, but not so much in terms of the application of state force upon the people, as in the dialectical circulation of power/knowledge between the colonial government and local communities, reflected back and forth through their partial recognition of each other.

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[109] On Gramsci's usage of 'hegemony' see Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, Vol. 1: *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 18-27; Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley, 2002).
[110] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-32. For 'everyday resistance' see James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985).
[111] Foucault, 'Two Lectures', p. 91.
[112] Foucalt, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 109-33, at pp. 119-22.
[113] Foucault, 'Two Lectures', p. 96.

## Knowledge Objectified

As Fardon argues, broad theories of knowledge such as Foucault's tend to subsume individual agency, rendering power relations intentional yet anonymous, revealed only by the analyst, and denying the reflexive awareness and agency of the subjects of the analyst.[114] This thesis is based on evidence which does not allow for deep exploration of the linguistic terms and contemporary concepts of knowledge, but it nevertheless suggests that people in colonial Western Mongalla objectified 'knowledge', both in terms of the implicit knowledge or culture gained over a lifetime by elders, and of the multiple forms of esoteric or professional knowledge that earned profit, prestige or power, whether to the benefit or harm of the community.[115] The former was expressed, for example, in the Bari word for child, which translates as 'one who does not know'; the socialisation of children thus involved imparting knowledge, which was inseparable from social relations, as Mandari youth 'training' camps demonstrated.[116] Elders are described as those who 'know' history and customs. The latter kind of expertise was similarly expressed in the Bari category of those who 'know water'; like the Dinka, people "see a linkage between knowledge and religious wisdom".[117] Political traditions emphasise the way in which the political economy rested on popular recognition of certain skills and attributes, so that knowledge was a key resource. And there is also evidence of an ongoing comparison of local and outside knowledge; the encounter with Europeans is often expressed in these terms, involving the assertion of indigenous knowledge and at the same time the awareness that it might be judged as inadequate by

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[114] Richard Fardon, 'Sociability and Secrecy: Two Problems of Chamba Knowledge', in Fardon, (ed.), *Power and Knowledge: Anthropological and Sociological Approaches*, (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 127-50, esp. pp. 147-8.

[115] See also Fardon, 'Sociability', pp. 147-8: secrecy is a European term but does describe Chamba notions and demonstrates their reflexive awareness. For a discussion of the difficulties of, and need for, greater focus on the self-understanding of the "tangible, knowing subject", see James, *The Listening Ebony*, esp. pp. 143-56.

[116] Interview with Gajuk Wurnyang Lupaya, 28 Nov 2002, Khartoum; C. G. Seligman, and B. Z. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (London, 1932), p. 262: "the Bari seem to judge maturity by stages of ignorance or knowledge".

[117] Lewis, 'Notes on Bari', SAD 600/7/1-49.; Seligman and Seligman, *Pagan Tribes*, p. 250; Deng, *The Dinka*, p. 73.

outsiders.[118] In the lead-up to Independence, Southern politicians expressed a sense of inadequate skills for national political participation and their need for more 'learning' and 'understanding', in a clear equation of knowledge and empowerment.[119]

The objectification of knowledge more widely in Africa has been highlighted by the work of Guyer and Belinga: building on the earlier 'wealth-in-people' theories of the value of human capital, they argue for the deliberate and differentiated *composition*, rather than simple accumulation, of multiple forms of knowledge within societies, and of the role of knowledge as a primary resource in the political economy.[120] The thesis will also treat knowledge as a resource productive not only of power but of economic profit; knowledge was accumulated and demonstrated by individuals for professional rewards, and multiple kinds of knowledge were incorporated and invested in by communities. As Strathern writes, "[k]nowledge was a principal medium for social differentiation".[121] But as Berry argues, the production of knowledge in Africa, like other forms of wealth and power, defied concentration and generated social process and debate.[122]

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[118] E.g. Interview with Chief James Josea Ramadalla, Yei, 31.8.04: before Christianity, "we were only knowing *Nun* [God]"; and before the Europeans came, "we knew each other, we knew our boundaries"; also G Janson Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination 1941: Extracts from essays', NRO DK3 1/6/29: "My people although good at cultivation, as it is their chief occupation, do not know it in the way wanted by the white men".

[119] 'Proceedings of the Juba Conference on the Political Development of the Southern Sudan, June 1947', appended in Wai *The Southern Sudan*, pp. 185-205.

[120] Guyer and Belinga, 'Wealth in People'. For earlier wealth-in-people theories see Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830* (London, 1988); S. Miers and I. Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, 1977).

[121] Marilyn Strathern: 'Knowing Power and Being Equivocal: Three Melanesian Texts', in Fardon, *Power and Knowledge,* pp. 61-81, at p. 68. Michele Wagner shows, for example, that nineteenth century caravan trade in Tanzania further inflated the economic value of priestly ecological and environmental knowledge: 'Environment, Community and History: 'Nature in the Mind' in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Buha, Western Tanzania', in Gregory Maddox, James L. Giblin and Isaria N. Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania*, (London, 1996), pp. 175-99, at pp. 190-2.

[122] Sara Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896-1996* (Oxford, 2001), pp. xxii-xxxi, 7-8.

## The Morality of Knowledge

The evidence from Western Mongalla suggests that people asserted the multiplicity of the objects and relations of 'power-knowledge' in their communities. The thesis will demonstrate a key difference here between European and African approaches to knowledge. Both clearly valued knowledge as a political and economic resource, but in the European and colonial states, knowledge was increasingly being controlled and managed by the state, in an attempted centralisation and rationalization of knowledge resources. In Western Mongalla, knowledge was instead deliberately diversified. The difference between states and stateless or segmentary societies thus lies not in the existence or absence of political institutions, nor in the unity or separation of ritual and political authority, but rather in the control and management of knowledge.[123] Guyer and Belinga highlight something of this difference in describing the 'inclusive' and diffuse composition of knowledge in African societies, but they do not fully address the complex management of these different kinds of knowledge, and particularly the role of secrecy. They thus fail to discuss the negative or dangerous aspects of knowledge, which are highlighted by Lambek in terms of the "morality of knowledge".[124] But this is key to understanding why knowledge and power in such societies was not centralised; the public perception of the potential of esoteric or specialist knowledge to be used in amoral or anti-social ways helped to limit its capacity to generate power, or the desirability of monopolising it.[125] The cultural moral ambiguity of knowledge thus limited how

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[123] Aidan Southall describes segmentary states as made up of small political cores within a wider ritually based zone: 'The Segmentary State and the Ritual Phase in Political Economy', in Susan Keech McIntosh (ed.), *Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa*, (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 31-38. Such a pattern is partially applicable to Western Mongalla, except that I do not perceive such a difference between 'ritual' and 'political' authority. Instead I argue that these different spheres represent different forms of knowledge, each of which generated political authority too. As Miller writes, just because rain kings or other specialists might not exercise "direct supervision", they nevertheless built up 'wealth in people', in terms of *potential* labour or tribute, in the pre-colonial political economy: *Way of Death*, esp. pp. 47, 60.

[124] Lambek, *Knowledge and Practice*, esp. pp. 220-26, and also p. 379 for the force of public opinion.

[125] Geschiere shows that in parts of West Africa, the more egalitarian the society, the more that wealth and power were linked to forces translated as 'witchcraft'; and that chiefs' handling of witchcraft was a measure and reflection of their moral authority: 'Chiefs and the Problem', esp. pp. 320-23.

productive it could be in terms of social relations, and, as the wealth-in-people theories demonstrated, it was social relations that were the ultimate locus of wealth and power.[126]

Knowledge is also not inseparable from power, but rather exists in opposition to, as well as within, power relations. Strathern poses the question: "when a category of persons *claim* particular powers (through displayed knowledge, ritual engagement) is it because they *have* or because they *do not have* comparable powers in other terms (in daily life, in politics)?"[127] The thesis will show the ways in which various claims to knowledge were made in order to challenge power as well as to produce or reinforce it; 'witchcraft' for example could be a weapon of the weak or poor.[128] All such claims were subject to constant popular evaluation, both in terms of their authenticity and of their morality and positive value to the community. Knowledge was therefore intimately linked not only to power relations, but also to social relations; popular debates over witchcraft and illness were also commentaries on the proper use of knowledge, and how to deal with lack of knowledge. And while starting out as gatekeepers with foreign governments, the chiefs increasingly came under pressure to obtain other kinds of protection for their communities, either by mediating with the experts who could establish the commonly unknown, or by guiding the collective uncovering of that unknown. By the end of the colonial period the role of gatekeeper would thus come to involve the management of the conversion of different kinds of knowledge between the outside and inside of the community. Neither political complexity, nor accountability, were lost during colonial rule; but rather worked through changing institutions.[129]

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[126] See also Berry, *Chiefs Know*, p. 200: "individual accomplishment is inseperable from interaction with others".
[127] Strathern, 'Knowing Power', p. 62.
[128] Geschiere, 'Chiefs and the Problem', p. 313.
[129] Hanson argues that in Buganda, colonial rule and economic change destroyed heterarchal and accountable forms of authority by eroding personal obligation: Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, pp. 17-18.

## Sources

The extent to which these claims and counter-claims to knowledge can be illuminated in this study is partially limited by the nature of the sources. There is very rarely any indigenous writing in any of the British records, and none elsewhere from the colonial period. I therefore rely almost entirely on European-authored texts, with all the attendant problems of viewing societies through a lens that was tinted, blinkered and short-sighted, when it was not entirely blind. But taking the nature of the lens into account, it nevertheless offers recurrent glimpses of the complex negotiations over authority and community. The monthly reports and diaries produced by D.C.'s provide particularly detailed snapshots of the more mundane or minor events and gradual changes within districts, while the bigger or more disturbing episodes (such as witchcraft trials or Christian revivalism) generated reports that can be surprisingly revealing. Evidence from missionaries or visitors to the Province also presents a different angle; sometimes the various distortions of these different lenses create a clearer picture when combined. And sometimes European amusement or ethnographic curiosity led to more direct reporting of a local voice, even if its meaning was not fully comprehended by the reporter. The serious ethnographic studies of the area relied on information by missionaries and administrators; only the anthropologist Jean Buxton spent any length of time in participant observation fieldwork with the Mandari in the 1950s. But ethnographies garnered a different kind of information from D.C.'s or missionaries to that of official reports, and so provide yet another angle. Finally, one or two D.C.'s also wrote down oral histories for the clans or villages of their districts and even attempted to date them; these are less useful if taken as chronological histories than if interpreted in terms of their contemporary meaning and use as 'traditions' at the time they were recorded.

I also conducted around twenty interviews with individuals from Western Mongalla, mostly in Khartoum in 2002-3, and a few in Yei in 2004. Most had been born in the 1930s or '40s, most were men, and nearly all spoke English and had had university-level education. They were in a sense self-selecting, in that they mostly knew each other and there was a general consensus among younger people (including my

research assistant) that they were the elders who knew about the British time, about local traditions and histories, or about local government. They are therefore interesting in themselves as representatives of a particular group: they were mostly among the first self-styled 'intellectuals' or 'politicians' of Southern Sudan, and many of them were also prominent in the Southern Regional Government in the 1970s. They have mostly been living and working more recently in Khartoum or sometimes elsewhere in East Africa. Though clearly respected and influential, most are no longer prominent in the political or military leadership of Southern Sudan; their status rests on their historical role and on their claims to be the leading elders, with knowledge of history and tradition. In Khartoum they regularly come together to formulate and exchange this kind of knowledge, to advise in marital and financial disputes, and generally to impart customs to the communities of migrants or refugees from their home areas. In the case of the Bari at least, they have formed councils, usually on an ethnic basis, and hold cultural and community events.

These informants therefore tend to emphasise ethnic distinctiveness as well as a Southern Sudanese identity; they seek to uphold and strengthen a set of moral and cultural values in the face not only of the threat of the northern Islamic government, but also the perceived homogenising and disintegrating effects on younger people of living, studying and working in Khartoum, Uganda, Kenya or beyond. They are also presenting themselves as interlocutors with foreigners like me; they often drew on the European written ethnographic accounts to tell me about the kind of traditions they expected me to be interested in. Their evidence will therefore be treated as a body of oral histories which have been negotiated among a certain section of older, largely male, Southern Sudanese, and presented to me to explain and justify their paradigms of identity. In other words, as Willis writes, they demonstrate "history as negotiated identity" and as "recursive" process, edited partly according to the nature of the audience.[130] I have used their accounts as straightforward narrative only when it is corroborated by written sources; usually they are more interesting in revealing a particular set of ideals and interpretations.[131]

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[130] Willis, 'The Makings', pp. 192-3, 207-8.
[131] For the difficulty of equating oral histories with chronological narratives see Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 188-9.

They are without exception committed to the institution of chiefship, and rarely uttered any negative statements about chiefs in the colonial period, which they naturally look back on as something of a golden age in contrast to what followed.[132] But although their view of the colonial period has obviously been shaped by subsequent history, I nevertheless treat some of their evidence as indicative of the way that the educated elite of the late-colonial period supported ideas of 'tradition' - which included an ongoing role for chiefs, elders and community authorities like rain priests - and have continued to invest in such ideas throughout the post-colonial period.[133] I also see this as a reflection of the strong sense of the need to protect and defend the local against the state. The informants present a repeated depiction of certain idealised 'traditions', but these in themselves can reveal something of the longer or deeper popular traditions in Western Mongalla upon which they draw.[134] As Shaw writes, memories cannot simply be reduced to present interests alone; the present is viewed through the lens of history as well as vice versa.[135] The informants are therefore vital to the attempt to uncover something of the 'traditions' - in the sense both of the deep resonant language or the cultural archive of moral knowledge, and of the long-term processes of institutionalisation - that underlie political thought and action in Western Mongalla.

## Structure

The relationship between knowledge and government is examined firstly in terms of the colonial administration of Sudan, in order to provide the context for the story of local government in Western Mongalla. Chapter One argues, with specific references to Mongalla Province in particular, that the standard narrative of the main phases of Condominium administration has ignored its fundamental continuities:

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[132] See also Tim Allen, 'Violence and Moral Knowledge: Observing Social Trauma in Sudan and Uganda', *Cambridge Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (1988-9), pp. 45-66, at p. 50.

[133] Unlike, for example, in French Cameroon or Zande area, where there was more lasting and greater hostility and distance between chiefs and the educated: Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule', p. 156; Douglas H. Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy: The Case of the Zande 'Secret Societies'', *Past and Present* 130 (1991), pp. 170-200, at p. 194.

[134] See also Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', pp. 321, 332, on the problems of accessing unrepresented voices but the possibilities for nevertheless recovering some aspects of pre-colonial political thought through evocative symbols and language.

[135] Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*, (Chicago, 2002), esp. pp. 12-15, 246.

pragmatic devolution of functions to local authorities alongside an increasingly centralised direct control through the colonial hierarchy. Instead the Condominium should be periodised in terms of the changing relationship between knowledge and colonial governance. Initially the local knowledge of the district official – the man on the spot – was elevated in order to justify the pragmatic and expedient local alliances formed in the first two decades of colonial rule. By the 1920s and 1930s, the loose theory of indirect rule provided the ideology and broad template for accumulating and ordering this local knowledge, and justifying greater government intervention in local life. From the late 1930s, the central government increasingly sought to control the transmission of knowledge to and from the local level through its own departments of expertise, to create uniformity and regularity across Sudan, and to subsume local specificities in the state-directed project of development and modernisation.

This centralisation of knowledge was never complete; local officials retained a degree of autonomy, and they in turn could not exercise hegemony in their districts. The next two chapters argue against the simplistic idea of chiefs as colonial creations or agents of the state. Chapter Two looks back at local authority in the nineteenth century, establishing certain political traditions in the region, and focussing on the development of local institutions for mediating with the *turuk*. In line with the plurality of authority in the region, a new kind of political office emerged alongside existing ones – the chief of the foreigners – which evolved through the popular recognition of the necessity for particular kinds of knowledge: diplomatic skill, linguistic knowledge, and experience of working with the foreign traders and governments as soldiers, interpreters or trading agents. Outward displays of trade goods and 'Nubi' culture did not demonstrate economic change and commoditisation, so much as symbolise this knowledge of the foreigners; they certainly helped to mark out 'chiefs' when the British and Belgian colonial officers arrived in the region. A recurring motif in the early colonial reports, as in some of the nineteenth-century accounts, was that of the 'scapegoat' chief, which I argue represents an important local strategy for deflecting government demands, the popular awareness of the vulnerability of 'chiefs' as gatekeepers, and the continuing multiplicity – and even deliberate separation - of forms of knowledge and authority

in the region. The period from *c.* 1850 to 1920 thus saw the foundation of a pattern in which communities sought protection from the *turuk* through a kind of moral compact formed between people and gatekeeper chiefs.

Chapter Three continues the story of the chiefs, showing that their power peaked in the 1920s and early 1930s, as they monopolised relations with the government, and were invested with some of its coercive force; their authority nevertheless relied on continuing recognition of their specialist knowledge of government ways, which increasingly required understanding of bureaucratic practices and even basic literacy, and which reproduced their authority through the repetitive ritual and practice of administration. From the later 1930s, however, the chiefs faced something of a crisis of authority, due to growing, if limited, competition from other interlocutors with the state, and increasing popular resistance to government demands. As the utility of their knowledge of government was partially eroded, the chiefs appear to have reinvented their role, both to emphasise their knowledge of the community and its traditions, and to revive their gatekeeper functions of concealing the local realm and simultaneously accessing state resources. In the last decade of the Condominium, the identification of the chiefs with their communities became more apparent as the newer forms of mediation between state and locality failed to win popular trust.

I then turn in chapters Four and Five to the interaction of state and local, European and indigenous, knowledge, by exploring the contested territories of land and bodies. Chapter Four demonstrates the resilience of indigenous knowledge of the landscape and its uses in the face of largely unsuitable government interventions. It also argues that the chiefs did not simply benefit from the colonial coercion of labour or control of land. Instead, land issues placed the greatest strain on their authority, while their opportunities for accumulation remained limited. Independent household economic strategies generated renegotiation of the moral economy, which in turn led to debates over history and tradition. The limits of coercion are also discussed in Chapter 5, which argues that physical force was not necessarily the most threatening sanction; it was the unknown and secret exertion of forces upon the body that was most feared. Government medical interventions, together with forced

labour, were partly experienced as extractions and penetrations, in the face of which people also needed means of protection. The authority of those with knowledge of the body – in the full sense of its place in the physical, social and spiritual landscape – was therefore maintained and even enhanced during the colonial period. Both human bodies and the land were the embodiments of social relations, and so claims made upon them had to draw upon deeper knowledge of history and society, which in turn ensured that elites had to engage in popular debates.

Chapter Six examines in more detail the internal negotiation of knowledge within local communities, through accounts of 'poison' trials and a Christian 'revival' in particular. It argues that the chiefs' courts became one arena for community debates, especially over marriage issues; far from being the vehicle of dominance by chiefs and headmen, they became a channel for claims and grievances that could instead exert pressure on these authorities. But there were other arenas for such debates, in which local intellectuals and knowledgeable individuals defined community ways; Christianity and education also formed a new source of claims to moral knowledge. Definitions of morality involved evaluation of different kinds of knowledge and their use; this was particularly charged when it came to secret practices, which were hence morally ambiguous and were categorised according to their necessity and utility to the community. I argue that 'witchcraft' can be treated as a particular – changing - category of secret knowledge, forming a discourse that could be used to challenge and limit power (either because leaders feared witchcraft attacks or because they feared being accused of it or of failing to deal with it), and increasingly to enforce norms of social behaviour and personal obligation. Thus political and social relations and definitions of the moral community were all shaped by claims to, and evaluations of, knowledge. This internal negotiation and management of knowledge was in turn vital to the maintenance of local autonomy and the failure of the colonial state to impose a hegemonic episteme.

# Chapter One

## Knowing the Native:

## Colonial Governance and Knowledge

### Introduction

"Knowledge is power, in Africa as elsewhere", wrote General Wingate in 1918.[1] The centrality to the colonial state of the Foucauldian link between knowledge and power has been frequently reiterated: "knowledge was what colonialism was all about".[2] The pragmatic need of colonial governments for information and understanding in order to rule effectively was coupled with more psychological or moral desires to 'know' the colonized 'Other' in order to both define and justify 'Self'.[3] The colonisers assumed that they possessed greater knowledge of an objective and 'true' reality encompassing the colonised themselves.[4] This in turn reflected the development in Europe since the Enlightenment of a belief that a true reality exists externally, and that knowledge of this reality can be gained through empirical, scientific enquiry.[5] The half-century before World War One saw the growing utilisation by governments of a rationalised, systematised knowledge, mastered by bureaucrats and experts.[6] The collection and categorisation of information was an intrinsic part of government, and was urgently necessary in the colonies where administrations had so little knowledge to begin with of their territories and peoples.

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[1] General Sir F. R. Wingate, Foreword to *Sudan Notes and Records (SNR)* 1 (1918), p. 1.
[2] N. B. Dirks, Foreword to Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, 1996).
[3] Said, *Orientalism*; G. Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' in Cain and Harrison, *Imperialism*, Vol. 3, pp. 230-55; Inden, 'Orientalist Constructions'.
[4] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'; Inden, 'Orientalist Constructions'; F. Fanon, 'On National Culture', in Cain and Harrison, *Imperialism*, Vol. 3, pp. 3-29.
[5] See Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, 'Introduction', in Cooper and Packard (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 1-41, at p. 5; Inden, 'Orientalist Constructions'.
[6] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, pp. 107-9.

Colonial information-gathering also naturally followed on from the interaction in the nineteenth century between science and empire. Europeans in Africa, whether 'amateurs' or 'experts', sought to increase their individual and national banks of 'scientific' knowledge through the collection of information and 'specimens', and used their belief in the value of such knowledge to justify missions and conquest.[7] Knowledge also imparted a sense of control and power over landscapes and societies. Studies of geography or cartography and empire for example have shown how the science of surveying was utilised in the appropriation of territories by colonisers.[8] Similarly a study of geology in the nineteenth century demonstrates the links between the Geological Society and colonial expansion: "knowledge created was also power to be applied for the control of economic, political and ideological processes".[9]

The European belief in the existence of a factual truth did not imply the absence of disagreement or debate. There were different ways of accessing or acquiring knowledge of this single reality, which could lead to very different versions of it being promoted. The ranking of these differing versions came down to issues of methodology, and here there was room for dispute. All methodology had to be shown to be empirical and rational, but it could vary from direct observation or experience to the use of proven theories. Bernard Cohn examines the forms of colonial knowledge in India through a set of what he terms 'investigative modalities', each of which identified the need for, gathered and presented appropriate knowledge.[10] These ordered categories of knowledge were used in turn to re-order India: "[i]n the conceptual scheme which the British created to

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[7] J. M. MacKenzie, 'Introduction', in MacKenzie (ed) *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester 1990), pp. 1-14.
[8] J. B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power', in D. Cosgrove & S. Daniels (eds), *The Iconography of Landscape: essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 277-312; Thomas J. Bassett, 'Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-Century West Africa', *Geographical Review* 84, 3, 1994, pp. 316-335; Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The geographical construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago, 1997).
[9] R. A. Stafford, 'Annexing the landscapes of the past: British imperial geology in the nineteenth century', in MacKenzie, *Imperialism*, pp. 67-89
[10] Cohn, *Colonialism*, p. 5.

understand and to act in India, they constantly followed the same logic: they reduced vastly complex codes and their associated meanings to a few metonyms."[11]

This idea of a constant logic assumes that these modalities were static in their conception or ranking; instead colonial knowledge was differentiated through time as well as by category. Throughout the Condominium, the Sudan Government had to reconcile different sets of knowledge, particularly those of 'experts' or theorists, and those of administrators with more practical or direct experience. But the result was a changing relationship between different kinds of knowledge and colonial governance. The Condominium government has generally been viewed in terms of a standard political narrative that characterises the first two decades or so as 'direct rule', followed by a period of 'indirect rule', which was then modified by 'dilution' in urban and central areas and more institutionalised 'local government' structures. However, while the policy rhetoric of the central government might follow this pattern, the reality was the broad continuity of a pattern of devolving functions to 'native administration' whilst increasing central state control. What really changed was the conception of the role of knowledge in the working of the colonial state, and the prioritisation, transmission and utilisation of that knowledge, especially in relation to the fundamental task of managing local specificities within the centralising state. The changing rhetoric of governance therefore reflected the periodic self-examination by administrators and the contradictions and crises of the colonial conscience.

A more useful periodisation of Condominium rule might therefore see the early period (*c.* 1898-1918) as a time when the training and local experience of officials was idealised as the most valuable kind of knowledge, making possible the justification of ad hoc, pragmatic local alliances with whichever individuals or groups appeared most suitable to the man on the spot. The founding of *Sudan Notes and Records* in 1918, prompting the above quote by Wingate, marked the beginning of a turning-point away from prioritising experience alone. Instead there was an increasing emphasis on a more systematised and transmissible knowledge that could be accumulated and banked by the colonial state, and that could be used to fit the

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[11] Cohn, *Colonialism*, p. 162.

eclectic local compromises of the earlier period into a more rationalised and widely applicable template. Knowledge was to assist and inform local practice and to articulate it within a single basic theory of governance, though not to direct or homogenise it. By the mid-1930s a second major change was gradually emerging as some experts and administrators began to advocate the translation of knowledge more directly into practice, and to search for a more comprehensive, uniform model of government that would facilitate both the maintenance of colonial control and the evolution of modernity. Local particularities were therefore by the 1940s being subsumed by systems and standard institutional structures; at the same time knowledge was categorised less by locality and more by departments of scientific expertise.

This chapter will discuss these three broad phases of the Condominium, and the changing role of different kinds of knowledge in ideas of governance. The periodisation was not clear-cut - the individualities and disagreements of colonial officials ensured overlaps and continuities – but there were certain landmarks in the gradual evolution of thinking. It will also use Mongalla Province as an example of the working-out of government theory and policy by administrators at the provincial or district level, in one of the most peripheral and confusing regions of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Administrators here had to mediate between central government directives and the demands of the local situation. They frequently complained about the ignorance and lack of interest shown by the Khartoum Government in relation to the South, as well as the shortage of resources they were given. The incomprehension demonstrated by Khartoum towards the province reflects the confusions long experienced by Europeans regarding the environment and populations of this region. Mongalla was therefore a particularly vivid example of the difficulties of integrating local specificities and wider theories, and of what Cell highlights as "the persistent structural tension between centre and periphery" throughout the British Empire.[12]

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[12] John Cell, 'Colonial Rule', in Judith M. Brown & Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 232-54, at p. 243.

## 1. Local Knowledge and Experience, c. 1898-1914

### *1.1 'Direct Rule' and Decentralisation*

Early colonial administrations have been described as 'holding operations'; military governments concerned primarily with preventing resistance and requisitioning taxes and labour.[13] The basic ideology of colonial rule at this stage rested on the notion of Pax Britannica and the suppression of perceived cruelty and barbarism among Africans.[14] The administration of the Sudan was initially largely in the hands of British and Egyptian military officers, who used considerable force to ensure submission where necessary, especially in the south.[15] Apart from military dominance, this was to be accomplished through judicial intervention and the administration of law.[16] At the beginning of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of the Sudan, the first Governor-General, Kitchener, laid down the aims of government as being the establishment of basic law and order, and gaining the respect of the population for 'good' government in contrast to 'despotic' Mahdist rule.[17]

Iliffe argues that in northern Sudan the fear of Mahdist loyalties led to reliance on Egyptian or Sudanese educated elites known for anti-Mahdist sympathies, until the 1924 mutiny and assassination of Governor-General Stack forced a reaction in favour of 'tribal chiefs'.[18] In reality, however, the use of Egyptian army officers and some educated northern Sudanese should not obscure the real basis of the early Condominium administration. Kitchener, his successor Wingate, and the British Consul General in Egypt, Cromer, established a decentralised system of provincial administration, intended to be geared to local circumstances, under officers with local experience and knowledge.[19] The latter in turn relied on local allies or

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[13] Iliffe, *Africans*, pp. 196-8.
[14] Bravman, *Making*, p. 83.
[15] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 8-9. British civilian graduates were also recruited from 1905, but remained in the minority until the First World War.
[16] Bravman, *Ethnic Ways*, p. 198.
[17] Daly, *Empire*, pp. 71-2.
[18] Iliffe, *Africans*, pp. 200-1.
[19] Gabriel Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate: Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1916* (London, 1971), p. 70; Governor-General, *Report on the Finances, Administration and Condition of the Sudan (GGR)*, 1904.

intermediaries to create a basic administration "suitable to the people".[20] There is evidence of mistrust of educated Sudanese or Egyptian officials well before 1924, and a preference for rural notables as the more natural link between government and people.[21] The emphasis on the local reflected the self-awareness of the early colonial state of its intrinsic ignorance; perhaps within a small local unit of administration knowledge could be obtained and accumulated more easily. This echoed the focus on village communities in India as the units through which the people could be studied, known, understood and thus controlled and governed.[22]

Decentralisation therefore reflected the limited resources of the early colonial state, and also the absence of a centralised body of information about the Sudan: "[t]he impoverished Sudan was not in a position to afford highly specialised officials".[23] The government defended this weakness by emphasising the quality of the officials: "[a]ll they require, to supplement any want of knowledge or experience on their part, is technical advice on professional subjects".[24] The Sudan Political Service, as it later became known, was begun by Cromer to employ civilian administrative officials and ensure greater continuity of administration.[25] It became characterised by a belief in the superiority in "tradition, taste and training" which equipped its members to rule, and "a sense of expertise" heightened by their service in Sudan, distinct from the Colonial Office.[26] In reality local experience was limited, as long periods of service in one district were rare, especially in the north. This rarity only increased the status of veteran officers, thus explaining the misplaced deference to the Inspector-General, Slatin, in all tribal and religious affairs: as Cromer explained, Slatin's "thorough knowledge of its inhabitants enable him to speak with an authority which is altogether exceptional".[27] Thus lengthy experience earned the greatest authority in the prefectural system of colonial rule; the belief that the 'man

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[20] Warburg, *The Sudan*, p. 70.
[21] See Holt, and Daly, *A History*, pp. 111, 114, on the use of Mahdist and Sufi leaders to encourage loyalty to government during World War One.
[22] Cell, 'Colonial Rule', pp. 244-6.
[23] Warburg, *The Sudan*, 79; Sara Berry neatly sums up the colonial "hegemony on a shoestring" in *No Condition*, Ch.2.
[24] *GGR* 1904.
[25] Collins, *Land Beyond*, p. 229.
[26] Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, pp. 14, 238; see also Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 325.
[27] *GGR* 1903.

on the spot' knew best justified the autonomy of individual officials in identifying and utilising local authorities.[28]

### *1.2 Early Categories of Knowledge in Mongalla Province*

The first administrators in Mongalla were particularly autonomous and distant from supervision; not until 1920 would the Khartoum Government become concerned about their methods of administration under the long-serving Governor, Owen.[29] They were all military officers until 1929; few members of the political service which dominated the central government had any knowledge of Southern Sudan.[30] The officials in Mongalla were most concerned in this early period with acquiring geographical and historical knowledge of the region; the former to establish greater control and the latter to justify the methods of control utilised. The province was established in 1906, access to the region having been hindered until then by the sudd blockages on the Nile. The perceived inaccessibility of the region was emphasised in the early reports of administrators, and their most urgent need was to survey and map the territory; they frequently drew sketch maps of their districts in the absence of more expert surveys. The links between cartography and imperialism have been explored by scholars to show not only the obvious utility of maps in the service of colonial conquerors and early administrators, but also the relationship between European knowledge, as embodied in the map, and colonial power. Triangulation surveys seemed to Europeans to provide accurate representation of territory, thus making the map a form of scientific 'truth'. Further it was a privileged product of European science and thus contributed to and reinforced a sense of superiority and difference in relation to the 'natives' inhabiting the mapped territories. The creation of maps involved the defining, measuring, ordering and appropriation of territory, and was thus an intrinsic aspect of imperialism.[31]

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[28] B. Berman, 'Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence: Colonial Administration and the Origins of the 'Mau Mau' Emergency', in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, Vol. 2, pp. 227-64, at pp. 232-5; Cell, 'Colonial Rule, p. 242.

[29] Daly, *Empire*, p. 151.

[30] Collins, *Land Beyond*, p. 230; J. Winder, 'Differences between the Northern and Southern Sudan and the administrative problems these raised', in D. Lavin (ed.) *The Condominium Remembered*, Vol. 1, *The Making of the Sudan State* (University of Durham, 1991) pp. 17-24.

[31] Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power'; Bassett, 'Cartography and Empire Building'; Edney, *Mapping*; Worby, 'Maps, Names'.

However, as Edney argues, it was not the case that maps did present truth, only that Europeans believed them to. Surveys were limited in their accuracy by the limited resources of the colonial state and the flaws inherent in their methodology. In addition they were the product of negotiation and contestation with local informants.[32] European officials and surveyors found the environment in Mongalla very problematic in terms of moving around or mapping the country. They consistently complained about the high grass, thick bush and deep valleys, which made it extremely difficult to get a view, find any landmarks or "understand the lie of the land".[33] And their need to map and name was further confounded by their confusions over tribes and place-names. The response of administrators was not only to survey the landscape, but also to seek to re-order it. They imposed a variety of boundaries, international, provincial and district, and sought to define territorial units of administration, thus attempting, as in Tanganyika, to create "a new political geography".[34] Their success was limited however and confusions remained. In the 1940s the central government requested the regularisation of court names for its maps of Equatoria, as it was still unclear whether they referred to chiefs, tribes or place names.

As well as accumulating geographical knowledge, colonial officials also sought to gain local historical knowledge. Initially this meant constructing a version of the region's history which would justify their own presence and intervention. They emphasised the destructive effects of slave trading and Egyptian and Mahdist rule on a region which had formerly been densely populated and prosperous. One official explained in 1906 that 'Dervish' raiding had left the Bari as, "a small remnant of their former strength".[35] The terrible experiences of preceding decades were also used to explain hostility or passive resistance, particularly by the Bari, towards government and foreigners, allowing the British to express patient and paternal

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[32] Edney, *Mapping*, pp. 25-6.
[33] E.g. 'Extracts from a diary of El Bimbashi Mackenzie, Nile-Congo Railway Survey', *SIR* 154, June 1907, PRO WO 106 229.
[34] Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 324
[35] Alwyn Jennings Bramly, 'The Bari Tribe', in *MAN* 1906, No. 65, p. 101. Such depictions remained prevalent, see in 1948: Ferguson, 'Equatoria Province', p. 914.

understanding for the traumatised Africans.[36] They could claim that the 'tribal' structures of power had been destroyed, leaving a political void. This gave early administrators considerable leeway to construct new forms of authority more suitable for 'the modern world', which in turn fitted well with Wingate's approach to the aims of administration as being a simple establishment of good government, from which progress would then follow.

Initially administrators in Mongalla had admitted that they were deliberately building up the authority of their chosen chiefs.[37] However, from around 1910, it is possible to detect something of a shift in British thinking, as officials began to justify their reliance on these chiefs in terms of recovering and restoring 'tradition' and hereditary authority for people who were perceived to lack knowledge of their own history.[38] This recovery of tradition was especially employed where there were no 'large' chiefs, as among the Bari of Rejaf District: "[i]t has been the endeavour of the Sudan Government to amalgamate these small communities under a few recognised chiefs, by finding out who were the most important in former times and actively supporting their present representatives.[39] 'Finding out' such information was of course a less straightforward task than this statement suggests; the results would be shaped by the particular members of communities on whom the colonial administrators relied for such information, as later chapters will show.

The use of dubious historical narratives to legitimise to any higher authorities the construction of chiefs by early administrators in Mongalla reflected the general hegemony of the local knowledge of the latter in the first two decades of the Condominium. There was no one who could question their version of events, and in the absence of any other articulate ideologies, their knowledge provided a useful justification for expedient and pragmatic methods of establishing colonial rule.

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[36] See Governor-General Wingate's speech at Rejaf, 1911, NRO CI 10/12/53
[37] Eg. *GGR* 1907.
[38] For comparison see Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 322
[39] C. H. Stigand, *Equatoria, The Lado Enclave* (London, 1923), p. 42

## 2. Knowledge and Indirect Rule, c. 1918-38

In Wingate's introduction to the first edition of *Sudan Notes and Records* in 1918, he admitted that "our knowledge of the country and its people requires to be extended in many directions", and he expressed hope that the new journal would "be the means of recording and disseminating information that will conduce to a clearer outlook on the country and a better understanding of its natives, their past history, social conditions and future development".[40] This desire to accumulate a more centralised bank of knowledge in Sudan reflected wider trends in colonial governance, as Berry writes:

> After World War 1, colonial regimes across Africa moved to codify customary law and formalize the structures of indirect rule, in keeping with the general trend towards rationalization and professionalization of the colonial service.[41]

The confusions and variations of decentralised government led to the search for "common rules by which to interpret customary practices and apply them to the business of governance".[42] Over the next decade and a half or more, the local knowledge previously valued for its particularity was increasingly gathered, recorded and transmitted in more systematic ways, and used to link local administrative practices to wider theories of colonial governance.

### *2.1 Indirect Rule*

After the First World War, as Brown writes, "the focus of colonial interest moved from the acquisition to the maintenance of control, and the first stirrings about 'development' as a consciously induced policy began."[43] In 1922, Frederick Lugard published his *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, which became the first handbook of colonial administration. It essentially idealised and theorised his own pragmatic use of the old emirs of the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria as agents

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[40] Wingate, Foreword to *SNR* 1, pp. 1-2.
[41] Berry, *No Condition*, p. 35
[42] Berry, *No Condition*, p. 30.
[43] R. Brown, 'Anthropology and Colonial Rule: The Case of Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia', in T. Asad (ed), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London, 1973) pp. 173-97.

of colonial administration. He advocated "a single Government in which the native chiefs have well-defined duties and an acknowledged status equally with British officials", and argued that all institutions and methods must be deep-rooted in the people's 'traditions and prejudices', unless the latter were 'repugnant' to Western morality.[44] As Fields writes, 'direct rule' had in fact never existed; indirect rule was a legitimising theory which "aimed to give the present and future actions of the rulers consistency and order".[45]

Though advanced in idealistic terms, indirect rule was thus essentially a pragmatic system of government, which advocated detailed knowledge of local societies and institutions of authority. If anything it required a greater degree of power and deeper penetration of local societies in order to investigate and organise this information, revealing the ongoing centralisation by the colonial state.[46] Similarly, though it rested on the claim that colonial rulers would act as mere advisors and supervisors to native authorities, the institutions created or utilised in indirect rule were in fact more like channels than units of government.[47] Chiefs, courts and councils were used as a means to communicate policy to the people and to extract information about them, so that they were often conduits in a system of, if anything, more direct rule by the colonial administrations. It was therefore a system designed to generate the production of knowledge to enable greater, not less, control by the colonial state.

The Government of Sudan was one of the earliest to adopt indirect rule more formally as policy and ideology (though generally using the terms 'devolution' and later 'native administration'). The 1921 Milner mission had attributed the growth of the Sudanese nationalist movement to the failure of paternal British rule, and urged a greater promotion of traditional forms of authority, together with the development of education and modern councils. Governor-General Stack favoured this dual policy, but increasingly it was the development of traditional authority in the form of native

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[44] F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London, 1922).
[45] Fields, *Revival*, p. 41.
[46] See Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 325. See also Peter Pels, 'The Pidginization of Luguru Politics: Administrative Ethnography and the Paradoxes of Indirect Rule', *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 4 (1996), pp. 738-61, at p. 741.
[47] This is a criticism made with specific reference to Lugard's own system, e.g. by I. F. Nicholson: see Helen Lackner, 'Social Anthropology and Indirect Rule. The Colonial Administration and Anthropology in Eastern Nigeria: 1920-1940', in Asad, *Anthropology*, pp. 123-51, at p. 128.

chiefs which was prioritised. This was exacerbated after Stack's assassination in 1924, which seemed to finally prove the untrustworthiness of not only Egyptians, but also educated Sudanese.[48] Most prominent among the advocates of indirect rule was Reginald Davies, who believed that his experience in Kordofan fitted well with the Nigerian system. Opinion increasingly swung their way, culminating in the 1927 memorandum by Governor-General Maffey rejecting dual policy by favouring devolution over bureaucracy, and urging the division of Sudan into 'compartments' within which traditional authority and tribal custom could be protected and utilised.[49] The Powers of Sheikhs Ordinance of the same year, the Chiefs Courts Ordinance of 1931 for the south, and the 1932 Native Courts Ordinance for the north were designed to provide the formal recognition and enhancement of 'Native Administration'.[50] At the same time the 'Southern Policy' was formalised in 1930, following on from the Closed District Ordinances of the 1920s, which excluded northern traders from the southern provinces, to protect perceived southern tribal systems from outside, particularly Islamic, corruption; the south was thus treated as a huge compartment in itself.[51]

### *2.2. Ethnography and Administration*

In practice, as will be seen in the next two chapters, this legislation did not so much mark a fundamental turning-point in policy as another step in a long process of incorporating the local authorities who had been relied upon since the beginning of the Condominium. But in terms of the relationship between knowledge and governance, the adoption of indirect rule as the ideology of the Sudan Government marked a more significant shift towards the formal research and recording of information as the means by which to mould the locally specific into the general template. As Maffey wrote of the Chiefs Courts Ordinance in 1931: "[s]ympathetic

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[48] See CS to Governors, 20 Oct. 1924 and 6 Dec. 1924, NRO CS 50/2/10, for removal of mamurs and promotion of chiefs. For relations between Egypt and Britain, Egyptian nationalism and the expulsion of Egyptians from Sudan, and later negotiations over Independence, see Douglas H. Johnson, 'Introduction', to the *British Documents on the End of Empire Project (BDEEP)*, series B, vol. 5, *Sudan* (London, 1998).

[49] Minute by J. Maffey, 1 Jan. 1927, NRO CS 1/39/104; *GGR* 1926.

[50] *GGR* 1926. The term 'Native Administration' was adopted in the 1930s: Holt and Daly, *A History*, p. 124.

[51] On Southern Policy see Johnson, 'Introduction' to *BDEEP*; Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 165-96, 249-66.

study of social organisation and tribal custom will in the course of time enable the provincial authorities to fit their local courts into the wide framework provided by the ordinance".[52]

Indirect rule also marked a shift from the 'local' to the 'tribal' as the ideal unit of administration. An intrinsic aspect of 'devolution' policy in the Sudan (as elsewhere), voiced by both Maffey and MacMichael, was the creation of "nicely balanced compartments", or "self-contained racial or tribal units".[53] 'Tribal custom' should then be utilised to form barriers between these units, keeping out corrupting influences. The British thus sought to tidy up the political and social geography of Sudan to create a 'chequer-board' pattern which was more understandable and ordered.[54]

These were also the units within which knowledge was to be collected: "the study and interpretation of African custom was becoming institutionalised as part of the routine activity of colonial administration".[55] At the same time there was a growing belief that the accurate collection and organisation of such knowledge required not merely practical experience, but more specialist training. It was here that the emerging discipline of anthropology would become significant in the colonial project. In particular it concurred with the emphasis on tribal units, by treating each local society as "a distinct scientific specimen".[56] Indeed it was the need of colonial administrations for specific kinds of knowledge related to native authority, law etc., which stimulated the more functional approach of social anthropology under the leadership of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. British African administrations increasingly began to employ trained anthropologists to conduct surveys.[57] Often

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[52] *GGR* 1931.
[53] Minute by J. Maffey, 1 Jan. 1927, NRO CS 1/39/104 ; MacMichael, 'Memorandum on Southern Policy', enclosed in CS to Southern Governors, 25 Jan. 1930, appended in M. Abdel Rahim, *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan: A Study in Constitutional and Political Development 1899-1956* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 244-9.
[54] Paul Nugent, 'Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa', in Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju (eds), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London, 1996), pp. 39-40.
[55] Berry, *No Condition*, p. 31.
[56] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, p. 136.
[57] Lackner, 'Social anthropology', p. 147; S. Feuchtwang, 'The Discipline and Its Sponsors', in Asad, *Anthropology*, pp. 71-100, at p. 84. See also George W. Stocking (ed.), *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualisation of Ethnographic Knowledge* (Madison, 1991).

this was to address a particular issue or problem: for example disturbances in Nigeria in 1929 led the Secretary of State for the Colonies to instigate a campaign of anthropological research there.[58] In the 1930s, Lugard welcomed the 'modern school of Anthropology' and its research into "the social constitution, the beliefs and the methods of maintaining internal discipline in the tribes of Africa", as providing "invaluable information and suggestions which the meagre cadre of officials in the earlier years had neither the training nor the time to acquire".[59] He, Margery Perham and Lord Hailey were the most influential links between colonial administration and anthropology, promoting the latter as essential to the successful implementation of indirect rule.[60]

The administration in Sudan was particularly receptive to the work of anthropologists, with a number of leading figures actively supporting it. In 1908 Wingate had invited Oxford and Cambridge anthropologists to train SPS recruits, and in 1918 he further urged research into 'primitive tribesmen', as "contributing to that sympathetic comprehension of the people and their mentality which is so essential to a successful administrator".[61] The Seligmans carried out the earliest ethnographic research in the south, published in their huge *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*. Administrators themselves also undertook such research, published in many cases in *Sudan Notes and Records*. However, in 1929 MacMichael urged the employment of trained anthropologists, partly in response to the recent Nuer 'troubles' which he blamed upon "the lack of expert knowledge", especially in the South; this resulted in the now-famous work by Seligman's student, Evans-Pritchard.[62] In 1938 Nadel was asked to research the Nuba, again a result of 'pressing problems' there.[63] Anthropological methods of acquiring knowledge were thus increasingly valued by the colonial administration, above all because they appeared to offer a way to both 'sympathetically' understand specific societies, and to integrate them into wider theoretical frameworks.

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[58] C. K. Meek, *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe: A Study in Indirect Rule*, (London, 1937), p.332.
[59] F. D. Lugard, Foreword to Meek, *Law and Authority*.
[60] Brown, 'Anthropology', p. 176.
[61] Wingate, Foreword to *SNR* 1, pp. 1-2; Feuchtwang, 'The Discipline', p. 82.
[62] Abdel Ghaffer M. Ahmed, 'Some Remarks from the Third World on Anthropology and Colonialism: the Sudan', in Asad, *Anthropology*, pp. 259-70, at p. 267.
[63] J. Faris, 'Pax Brittanica and the Sudan: S F Nadel', in Asad, *Anthropology*, pp. 153-70, at p. 156.

### *2.3 Local Governance and Expert Knowledge*

Despite this marriage between anthropology and colonial administration, there were tensions regarding the practical application or use of anthropological knowledge and theory. James shows that anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard were often critical of administrative policies and attitudes for their ignorance and lack of understanding of native society and institutions.[64] In turn administrators could be sceptical or derisory towards anthropologists, particularly in response to such criticism. They could even view them as a threat, suspecting them (sometimes rightly) of radical tendencies and support for African nationalism. This led anthropologists to try to defend their work as neutral, detached and above all as scientific, producing knowledge that was of value to administrators: "[s]cience represented to the crude colonial mind a great achievement of the modern west, and the idea of its application to native peoples, as objects, was promising."[65] Yet 'practical men' could, like P. E. Mitchell, provincial commissioner in Tanganyika and later Governor of Kenya, question the value of anthropological knowledge if it was that of a 'laboratory scientist', lacking implementable uses.[66]

In Sudan there were similar difficulties regarding the practical utilisation of anthropological knowledge. Evans-Pritchard complained in 1946 that neither he nor Seligman had ever been asked for advice on matters of administration or government policy, despite their extensive research in Sudan.[67] MacMichael, whilst promoting scientific expertise, also warned of the danger that anthropologists would "sink the practical in the recondite and lapse into over-elaboration".[68] In Mongalla Province, Evans-Pritchard was criticised by one D.C. for his methods in 1927 of acquiring 'confused and inaccurate' knowledge through 'unreliable' local informants, thus asserting the continuing belief that long service in one district produced the most accurate and useful knowledge.[69] The preference for practical experience in the earlier period thus continued alongside the ethnographic research

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[64] W. James, 'The Anthropologist as Reluctant Imperialist', in Asad, *Anthropology*, pp. 41-69.
[65] James, 'The Anthropologist', p. 46.
[66] James, 'The Anthropologist', pp. 53-6.
[67] James, 'The Anthropologist', p. 48.
[68] Ahmed, 'Some Remarks', p. 268.
[69] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.

in the 1920s and 1930s; the practice of leaving the implementation of indirect rule to officials in the provinces and districts ensured that local specificities and pragmatism remained the main determinants of the shape and direction of administration.[70] This was still being reiterated in 1935, when the Khartoum Government warned against allowing the substitution of "judgements by 'parrot' lawyers" for decisions based on "accurate local knowledge".[71] As Shadle shows in the case of Kenya, there was a lasting aversion among British administrators to the rigid codification of customary law and a preference for supervision of courts by district officers who "knew the African".[72] But the idealisation of 'local knowledge' was also a way of justifying the continuing authoritarian role of the British district administrator. As Badal writes, native administration and Southern Policy functioned essentially as an amalgam of direct and indirect rule in the 1930s, with a paramount D.C. relying on chiefs and elders for advice.[73]

In Mongalla Province, Native Administrations were formed on a local basis; the 1920s saw the development by individual D.C.'s of chiefs' courts. In 1925 the three southern governors rejected any idea of regularising these: "as there is a considerable divergence in the way they are conducted, due mainly to different local conditions, no special legislation...is at present desirable or necessary."[74] During subsequent discussion of the Chiefs' Courts Ordinance, administrators voiced their concerns at any prospect of imposing uniformity or codification:

> A very large number of Chiefs' courts are already functioning in a satisfactory manner but under a great variety of conditions... It would be a thousand pities to impose upon these courts any cast-iron system or indeed any attempt at uniformity... the widest powers must be left to the Governor to sanction and, where necessary, to control all these varieties of Courts by ad hoc regulations which can be easily modified.[75]

Governor Skrine drew on his observations of chiefs' courts in Uganda in formulating the Ordinance in the late 1920s, suggesting that the population there

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[70] See Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, p. 29.
[71] CS to Governors, 25 June 1935, NRO EP 1/1/3.
[72] Shadle, 'Changing Traditions', p. 413.
[73] Badal, *Origins*, p. 15.
[74] Southern Governors Meeting 1925, NRO MP 1/9/61.
[75] 'Chiefs Courts Ordinance, explanatory note', 1930, NRO CS 1/13/42.

were "generally similar in race and mental outlook to the natives of the Southern Sudan", thus reflecting the new use of wider theoretical knowledge. But it was being used to explain and justify the existing local developments, rather than to direct practice: "I should point out that the proposals made out are practically tantamount to regularising the system actually in force at present in this Province".[76] Skrine was a more vociferous proponent of wider indirect rule theories than his successor, Balfour, who was emphatic about the need to preserve local and tribal variation: "I think it is most important to keep the new Ordinance as elastic as possible and to confine it to legalising the judgements of Courts and laying down rules for guidance within the widest possible limits".[77]

The continuing preservation of local variations was also still the result of government self-awareness of its ignorance: "[v]ery great difficulty was experienced in finding out what native custom amongst the various tribes was: so we gave up the idea of telling them what to do, and merely told certain chiefs to go and hold courts in their own way."[78] In Mongalla Province, indirect rule proved as problematic and contradictory as it was anywhere. Administrators were saddled with the idea that the natural and traditional state for the population was to belong to tribes governed by tribal leaders and laws, and yet they were increasingly admitting that such a pattern was not visible in Mongalla. Identity and allegiance did not correspond to the ethnic groups identified and delimited. As Governor Nalder wrote of political organisation in 1935:

> Here lie our greatest difficulties and our greatest possibilities, we have no ready made unit (the shadowy conception of a tribe can hardly be called one) such as the Nigeria Emirates or the Uganda Kingdoms and we have to decide what we propose to create.[79]

Another administrator later recalled the difficulty of identifying an 'executive' authority around which to create Native Administration units: "Southern society did

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[76] Governor Skrine to CS, 5 Jan. 1927, 'Proposals for Chiefs Court Ordinance', NRO CS 1/39/104.
[77] Governor Balfour to CS, 14 Dec. 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104. See also *GGR* 1933; and (anon.) 'The Future: Selection of Chiefs' (1935) in 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6: "it is impossible to lay down a hard and fast rule".
[78] Governor MP to Governor UNP, 7 Sept. 1932, 'Notes on native courts', NRO CS 1/13/42.
[79] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.

not work on those lines: tribal obedience was due to lineage heads, rain makers, land chiefs and so on".[80]

The paradox therefore arose that administrators had to try to construct the very traditions and tribes upon which indirect rule relied, a problem which has been repeatedly identified by scholars.[81] By 1938, it was admitted, apparently with no sense of the irony, that chiefs had had to be taught their own customs: "[m]uch propaganda has been done… to educate the chiefs up to dealing fairly with their own people according to their own customs."[82] The 1931 Annual Report neatly encapsulated the value placed on ethnographic and historical knowledge, the limits and uncertainties of it, and the contradictory idea that custom could be rediscovered and constructed by the government:

> Deeper study of native institutions… has greatly added to our knowledge of the tribes. The disruptive effects of the changes of the past 100 years, slave traders, Egyptians, Dervishes, Belgians, Uganda, the advent of the present administration, and that of the missions, become increasingly apparent. To what extent the old tribal life can be rebuilt and remoulded is still uncertain.[83]

Administrators contradicted themselves and each other in trying to explain the basis of local authority. For example, Governor Nalder argued that the executive chief was an alien idea, and that early colonial chiefs were scapegoats or opportunists, and yet he also claimed that the chiefs by the 1930s mostly held 'hereditary or tribal claims' to their position.[84] There was a growing emphasis on chiefly families as the 'natural' rulers, and yet amalgamations and depositions bypassed some of these.[85]

In the 1930s, partly in recognition of these confusions, Nalder made a determined effort to collect and order ethnographic and general information about the Province. The Seligmans had also been working on the former, but Nalder relied on responses from administrators and missionaries rather than professional anthropologists or

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[80] Winder, 'Differences', 21.
[81] Ranger, 'Invention'; Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism'; Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, pp. 323-41.
[82] EPAR 1938, NRO CS 57/25/103.
[83] *GGR* 1931.
[84] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', NRO CS 57/35/131.
[85] See Pels, 'Pidginization', pp. 742-3 on British preference for hereditary succession.

ethnographers. His *Tribal Survey* and *Province Handbook* thus embody the continuing respect for the local experience and knowledge of the man on the spot, together with the developing desire to collect, categorise and transmit that knowledge.[86] It also illustrates the way in which the resulting body of knowledge could be used to translate local administrative practice into more widely understood and respected theoretical templates. Nalder strongly subscribed to wider theories circulating in the 1930s about the need to preserve 'social solidarity' and community, because "the African has an instinctive and essential need of 'membership'".[87] He was particularly influenced by the Pym report on taxation in East Africa, which warned that poll tax and resulting wage labour was having an individualising impact on society.[88] He therefore announced with excitement that the tribal survey had revealed the crucial importance of the clan in indigenous society, and that consequently taxation would become a collective tribute payment, to be worked out by clan elders.[89] History began to be reinterpreted to emphasise the clan: for example Yei district was reported to have "reverted to the indigenous method of democratic rule of pre-Belgium days, whereby clan leaders meeting in Council exercised jurisdiction over their clans".[90]

Yet the new focus on the 'clan' essentially reflected the absence of 'tribal' units, and the recognition by administrators that local authority was plural and varied: it was an attempt to come up with a more suitable model of native administration that would enable these variations to be encompassed and yet provide a 'system' for understanding them. There was confusion as to what exactly a 'clan' was, and in one or two districts it was claimed that "the structure of society was so destroyed between 1840 and 1900 that the family or clan group has virtually ceased to exist" and that a purely territorial village-like community would have to be fostered instead.[91] Nalder and other administrators were using these theories about clans to

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[86] L F. Nalder, *Equatorial Province Handbook,* Vol. 1: *Mongalla* (Khartoum, 1936); and *Tribal Survey*.
[87] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[88] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99; and 1938, NRO CS 57/25/103.
[89] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105; Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', NRO CS 57/35/131.
[90] Liversidge to Governor, 28 Oct 1938, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[91] EPAR 1938, NRO CS 57/25/103.

create an ideology of rule, which camouflaged and idealised the continuing pragmatic reliance on native authorities with a wide variety of characteristics, methods and origins. The importance of hereditary chiefship also continued to be emphasised alongside the newer preoccupation with public opinion and collective forms of authority. As in Cameroon, the search by British administrators for new policies reflected the chronic uncertainties of 'indirect rule', which unintentionally also left more room for local authorities to develop in their own ways.[92]

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[92] Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule', pp. 160-3.

## 3. Knowledge and Development, c. 1938-56

Governor Nalder wrote after completing the *Tribal Survey* that, "it is no use acquiring knowledge unless it is put to use, and the hope is that it can now be made the starting point for estimating the lines along which the Native Administration will and should develop in this province".[93] Thanks to the word 'estimating', this was still a tentative statement, but it reflected a gradual shift in colonial thinking from the later 1930s towards viewing information and expertise as more functional and seeking to use them more actively and directly. Nalder's survey still elevated local knowledge and experience, but increasingly there was less state interest in such particularities. Instead there were efforts to lift this kind of knowledge out of its local compartment and reorganise it into departments of expertise, which could then be drawn upon to formulate more homogenous policies. As Margery Perham wrote in a 1946 draft of a handbook on Sudan:

> Govt. aware... of obscurity and variety of indigenous customs – that these must be understood before foundation of any genuine IR [Indirect Rule] can be laid, but that *isolated and casual observations of DCs will not suffice.* Need for a) *systematic* study by all DCs, and b) help of trained anthropologists outside Govt. Importance of *scientific* method.[94] [My italics]

As Lewis writes, this belief in the transformatory potential of technical and scientific knowledge, together with the growing international pressure to confer the benefits of modernity upon the colonised, resulted in a model of development in the colonies that was "profoundly state-centric".[95]

### *3.1 From Knowing the Native to Knowing Science*

In the foreword to Lord Hailey's 1938 *African Survey*, Lord Lothian explained that this compilation of information was designed to also contain a review of "the extent

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[93] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[94] Perham, 'Native Administration Book, draft chapter on the South', RHL MSS Perham 542/5.
[95] Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925-52* (Oxford, 2000), at p. 19.

to which modern knowledge was being applied to African problems".[96] As Pearce writes, the survey, though still quite conservative in its recommendations, highlighted the growing belief that an all-encompassing 'African strategy' could be developed.[97] The Second World War then generated rapid socio-economic change, accelerating the growth of nationalistic politics, and forcing colonial governments to seek new justification for their rule, through promises of development. In addition by the end of the war the economic crisis faced by Britain, especially in terms of the balance-of-payments, forced a greater attempt to generate profit from the colonies.[98] In 1940, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act was passed, providing funds for services, especially for urban workers.[99] But increasingly, with the rise of universalistic development economics, planning took on the aim of improving living standards more fundamentally through agricultural projects, education, housing and health provisions, local industries and so on.[100]

Cooper argues that the development initiative involved the application of European expertise as never before: "[p]ostwar imperialism was the imperialism of knowledge".[101] Worby similarly argues that the gap between the production and actual use of knowledge closed in the 1940s.[102] But it also involved a shift in the kinds of knowledge being prioritised, as well as in the way that knowledge was used. The theories of the 1940s marked a fundamental move away from local specificities as a starting-point, towards a more teleological vision of an end-point. Africa was treated as a static and single object to be developed; Africans were to be reconstructed and their lives altered, as they were led from tradition to modernity with the aid of advanced Western science.[103] This project involved not only an accelerated acquisition of knowledge, but also an increased emphasis on Perham's 'scientific method'. Colonial governments were creating or expanding departments

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[96] Foreword by Lord Lothian, to Lord Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (London, 1938).
[97] R. D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938-48*, (London, 1982).
[98] Keith Jeffery, 'The Second World War', in Brown and Louis, *The Twentieth Century*, pp. 306-28, esp. pp. 323-7; David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, 'Introduction', to their (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War* (London, 1986), pp. 1-19.
[99] Frederick Cooper, 'Modernising Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept', in Cooper and Packard, *International Development*, pp. 64-92.
[100] Lewis, *Empire*; Cooper, 'Modernising Bureaucrats'; Cooper and Packard, 'Introduction'.
[101] Cooper, 'Modernising Bureaucrats', p. 64.
[102] Worby, 'Maps, Names', pp. 384-5.
[103] Cooper, 'Modernising Bureaucrats', p. 65; Cooper and Packard, 'Introduction', pp. 17-19.

of technical expertise within which knowledge could be collected, organised and utilised, marking "a redirection from the district administrator who 'knew his natives' to the specialist who knew his science".[104]

District officials were thus being subsumed within a technocratic regime.[105] Van Beusekom and Hodgson similarly emphasise this shift towards bureaucracy and experts, together with the enlargement of scale of development interventions following the Colonial Development and Welfare Act:

> A related development was the newfound belief in the organizational and administrative abilities of bureaucracies to manage such large projects; the days of itinerant district officers haphazardly implementing small projects was long gone. Scientific and technical expertise was harnessed to the colonial mission through the enlargement or creation of government departments… The distinct duties and knowledge of administrators and technical experts were brought together through the formation of committees and the languages and procedures of planning.[106]

Knowledge was to be gathered and organised, and then used directly to formulate an overall strategy. Even anthropology, with its focus on the specificities and variations of culture and society, was harnessed to the overarching development project. In 1944 Hailey called for greater government intervention in the economic and social life of indigenous communities, assisted by anthropologists.[107] The Ethnographic Survey of Africa was launched in the same year by the International African Institute in "recognition of the need for collating and making more generally available the wealth of existing but uncoordinated material on the ethnic groupings and social conditions of African peoples, particularly in connection with plans for economic and social development". Despite the "unsystematic nature of the available information", the Survey's aim was to "present a concise, critical and

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[104] Cooper and Packard, 'Introduction', p. 13.
[105] Worby, 'Maps, Names', p. 387.
[106] Monica M. Van Beusekom and Dorothy L Hodgson, 'Lessons Learned? Development Experiences in the Late Colonial Period', *JAH* 41 (2000), 29-33.
[107] Feuchtwang, 'The Discipline', p. 87.

accurate account of our present knowledge".[108] It was unprecedented in terms of the standardised format of its volumes and the sections within them, reflecting the belief that compartments of knowledge could be created, within which peoples could be compared.

The new development agenda also led to revisions in policies of governance in British Africa. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Creech-Jones, called for "systematic arrangements for the compilation and exchange of information, including special studies of particular branches of local government".[109] During the 1930s the tensions and contradictions inherent in indirect rule had begun to generate criticism in Sudan and elsewhere. Its critics increasingly argued that Native Administration, under conservative European administrators, was preventing transformation and progress and instead seeking to preserve a static and backward version of Africa. As the rhetoric of development began to be wielded as a tool by African nationalists too, a younger generation in the Colonial Office, headed by Andrew Cohen, began to advocate rapid constitutional change in the direction of decolonisation.[110] Colonial policy therefore shifted gradually in favour of educated Africans and more representative politics. The aim of progress and 'modernisation' was thought nevertheless to be realised most promisingly through a continuing reliance on 'native institutions', albeit improved and enlightened ones.[111] But the model changed in the mid-1940s from the authoritarian and individual 'tribal' units of indirect rule to an English 'Local Government' structure, with a greater emphasis on elected rural and municipal councils.[112]

Yet once again the rhetoric of government policy could be illusory: devolution and Local Government masked the continuity of institutions, and the ongoing expansion and centralisation of the state.[113] 'Development' increased central government

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[108] Daryll Forde, Foreword to G. W. B. Huntingford, *The Ethnographic Survey of Africa: East Central Africa*, Part VI: *The Northern Nilo-Hamites* (London, 1953).
[109] Pearce, *The Turning Point*, p. 150.
[110] R. F. Holland, *European Decolonisation 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey* (London, 1985), p. 66.
[111] Feuchtwang, 'The Discipline', pp. 91-4.
[112] Pearce, *The Turning Point*, p. 147.
[113] Lewis, *Empire*, esp. pp. 314-6; Killingray and Rathbone, 'Introduction', pp. 7, 10-11.

intervention and functioned as a "framing device through which colonial regimes tried to respond to challenges and reassert control and legitimacy".[114]

This continuity is particularly apparent in the case of Sudan, where the Second World War was not a sudden turning point in government. The heyday of straightforward support for indirect rule theory was already over by 1935 when Governor-General Symes led the criticism of present policy as aiming at a 'stationary condition': "[w]e must be builders, not mere caretakers".[115] He promoted a policy of 'functional dilution' in recognition of the need for educated Sudanese to play a role in administration, especially in 'sophisticated areas'. Fears of Egyptian influence or Mahdist revivalism also led to efforts to accommodate the educated and politicised Sudanese, fostering the creation of the Graduates' General Congress in 1938.[116] The 1937 Local Government Ordinances marked the beginning of attempts to regularise native administration in both rural and urban areas, and from 1942 councils with executive powers began to be created. In 1944 the first advisory province councils were formed, as was the Advisory Council of Northern Sudan. The 1949 report on local government in Sudan by Dr Marshall was critical of the patchy and limited development of local authorities, especially in the south, and his recommendations were implemented in the 1951 Local Government Ordinance, which established a more uniform system of warranted councils. However, this was once again not so much a radical change in the practice of local government, as the formalisation of existing trends and the adaptation of earlier institutions:

> The apparent changes of the 1940s in local administration can be seen merely as the latest manifestation of the uncertain desire in certain governmental quarters for decentralisation, and the latest way to accommodate the educated in governmental structures, rather than either as some grand departure or natural evolution from previous policy.[117]

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[114] Cooper and Packard, 'Introduction', p. 18.
[115] Governor-General Symes to Nalder, Erkowit, 23 March 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[116] Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, p. 82.
[117] Chris M. Vaughan, 'The 'Great Experiment': Conciliar Local Administration in Late Colonial Sudan, c. 1942-1956', M.A. thesis, University of Durham, 2003, p. 9.

### *3.2 The Application of Knowledge*

In Mongalla Province, the significance of changing government policy in the 1940s and 1950s did not lie in the fundamental transformation of institutions or units of native administration, but rather in the changing knowledge relationship between local government and central departments, as development became the driving ideology of the state. This relationship was explained by Marshall in 1949 in terms of:

> the impossibility of giving the technical central departments – agriculture, education, veterinary etc., elaborate local organisations of their own. They must rely upon some generalised local machinery… the central departments should continuously place at the disposal of the local authorities expert knowledge and the experience of other local authorities.[118]

Southern councils, as the head of the Local Government Department emphasised, were still ultimately where "the professional knowledge, experience and training of D.C.'s" was combined with "the leadership, pride and local knowledge of the local people".[119] This was always the basic system of colonial governance in Sudan; it was a system of pragmatic decentralisation together with steadily increasing centralised control through the D.C.[120] But local knowledge was no longer seen to be sufficient; it required integration and improvement by central government departments of expertise. Native Administration had worked, in the view of Marshall and others, for implementing tasks "for which an intimate knowledge of tribal life was the main requisite"; it was not considered suitable as it stood for the provision of technical services such as education and agriculture.[121]

Daly argues that the British administrators in Sudan hindered development, especially in the south, due to their conservative preference for the rural Sudan and

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[118] A. H. Marshall, *Report on Local Government in the Sudan* (1949), pp. 4, 16.
[119] L M Buchanan, 'Local Government in the South', (1953) SAD 797/1/51.
[120] E.g. in Upper Nile, plans for Nuer confederacy in the 1940s, with the professed intention of devolving legislative powers to councils, entailed the referral of all legislative rulings initially to the committee of Nuer district D.C.'s, a committee formed to regularise Nuer law and administration: D. H. Johnson, 'Judicial Regulation and Administrative Control: Customary Law and the Nuer, 1898-1954', *JAH* 27 (1986), pp. 59-78, at p. 75.
[121] Marshall, *Report,* pp. 6, 44.

their deliberate isolation from the rest of the colonial world; only the Civil Secretary, Newbold, stood out "for trying to acquaint himself with wider colonial thinking and practice and applying that knowledge in Sudan".[122] Yet this conservatism was also a reflection of old tensions between the locally specific and the wider theories, and the attempts or failures of administrators in the districts to integrate the two. In fact by the 1940s, even in southern Sudan, the local knowledge of administrators was increasingly being subsumed by the attempts to impose regularised structures and systems, and by the increase of expert departments and personnel.

This trend can be seen, for example, in relation to law and local government. Where in the 1920s and early '30s administrators had resisted any efforts to impose uniformity, by 1937 the Local Government Regulations were passed to consolidate Native Administration and to "coalesce in one body of local government law the heterogeneous sets of regulations made by governors".[123] And by the 1950s, a Law Commission had reorganised the *Laws of the Sudan* into eleven smaller volumes, with the aim of "collecting as far as possible in each volume all, and no more than all, the legislation likely to be required by any particular Government Department or other person or body".[124] Thus where much government administrative law had been formed on a provincial basis, it was now being organised by department, reflecting the new compartments of knowledge.

As well as pushing the consolidation of existing laws and practices, the various Local Government regulations were also significant in making territoriality the basis of local administration.[125] This in turn reflected the difficulties described above in identifying suitable group definitions in a region such as Western Mongalla, where native authority units did not correspond to any one criteria such as ethnicity, clan or village, but had grown up on an ad hoc basis in different districts. This was increasingly unacceptable to governments seeking a uniform pattern upon which to build a regularised hierarchy of administration on the English model. Where, under the indirect rule model, knowledge could be gathered and utilised *within* individual

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[122] Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, pp. 29, 255.
[123] *GGR* 1938.
[124] Sir Charles Cummings for the Laws Commission, *The Laws of the Sudan* (London, 1956).
[125] Holt and Daly, *A History*, p. 124.

units, now it should be extrapolated to generate uniform structures through which development could be directed. The metaphor of building was used not only by Symes but also by Parr, whose Governorship of Equatoria from 1936-42 bridged the transition towards ideas of more regularised Native Administration. Parr was a firm believer in the principles of indirect rule, but he also sought to create more uniform practice within the Province. For example, in relation to financial devolution:

> I think we should take steps to see that our informal procedure… is put on a proper basis. For instance <u>all</u> districts could arrange for direct taxes to be collected by Native Administration, also for court fees and fines to be retained and all routine payments to Native Administration personnel could be made and accounted for by individual B courts [appellate courts composed of around six chiefs].

His letter was cautious with regard to the development of councils, again advocating greater regularisation of existing institutions first:

> [T]here are I think certain things to be done preliminary even to the formation of a council, namely the proper organisation of the village units composing each chiefship… In other words we must make sure that the bricks of Native Administration are properly prepared before we can start building a (considerable) edifice.[126]

D.C.'s were therefore working towards the formalisation of such units; the Yei D.C. in 1939, for example, began the replacement of 'capricious' and 'uncoordinated' lists of population held by chiefs with "one comprehensive register", in order to impart 'cohesion'.[127] Such enumerative knowledge was significant in India too, as Cohn shows: it categorised and ordered the population, thus increasing the sense of power and control of administrators.[128]

By the 1940s, these units were increasingly being described as territorial rather than clan, family or tribal: "we are rapidly passing over the stage of tribal organisation to territorial and Local Government administration".[129] Yet the units were essentially

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[126] Parr to CS, 7 April 1938, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[127] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[128] Cohn, *Colonialism*, p. 8.
[129] Governor Skeet, 'Notes based on Parr's handing over note to Skeet of 1943', May 1945, NRO DK 57/1/1; Skeet to DC's and CS, 'Note on Southern Policy', 10 Sept. 1943, NRO EP 1/1/2.

the same as those of Native Administration; territoriality simply provided the latest convenient concept by which to describe them and to convey an impression of uniformity and order.[130] The structure was therefore not radically changed, but the pressure for uniformity began to permeate more into the aims of policy in the Province. In 1945, the Moru D.C., Keen, detailed the increasing use of the three B courts as "embryo local District councils" but explained that their value was still limited, because "decisions taken are ad hoc and not embodied in any code of rules, procedures and orders such as the Zande Red Book."[131] Three years later, Governor Marwood similarly complained at the unbureaucratic nature of such institutions: "at present there is next to no staff available for running really authentic local Govt.'s".[132]

Much of the pressure to regularise local government in Southern Sudan was coming from the Khartoum and British Governments by the mid-1940s, as the Civil Secretary, Newbold, emphasised:

> [A] policy of more intensive and rapid economic and educational development of the Southern Sudan was desirable and should now be planned and executed... We have a moral obligation to redeem its inhabitants from ignorance, superstition, poverty, malnutrition etc... Lastly I must stress that, apart from moral or economic reasons, there are strong political reasons to adopt a more positive policy in the South. The eyes of Egypt and of the Northern Sudanese are on the South, and our Southern Policy (or lack of policy) has been heavily criticised both in Cairo and Omdurman.[133]

In 1942, Governor Parr argued that the route to development and a higher standard of living in the Province lay in "a policy of autarky"; six years later, however, Governor Marwood emphasised that "[t]he idea of complete autarky and keeping the north at arm's length is dead".[134] By 1948, the future of the south had been decided as lying with the north, and efforts were being made to integrate the southern

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[130] Vaughan, 'Great Experiment', p. 16.
[131] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[132] Marwood, 'Notes for Mr Nicholson', 20-25 April 1948, NRO DK 57/1/1.
[133] Newbold to Council, 3 April 1944, NRO EP 1/1/2.
[134] Parr, 'Note for Mr Skeet', 20-30 Aug. 1942, NRO DK 57/1/1; and Marwood, 'Notes for Mr Nicholson', 20-25 April 1948, NRO DK 57/1/1.

provinces, as well as the rest of Sudan, into more uniform patterns of government and development.

There was therefore a growing emphasis on *cohesion* and on the role of D.C.'s in particular in achieving this; by the 1950s one of the new 'Local Government Inspectors' argued that only the D.C. could "know the law, be fully in touch with central government policy".[135] Annual reports, monthly diaries and district reports required detailed sections on food and cash crops, weather, public health and medicine, well and road building, trade, herds and veterinary medicine, erosion and soil fertility, forestry and so on. The proliferation of specialist departments to employ experts in these fields did not remove the need for D.C.'s to be able to converse on a wide range of such topics. However, increasingly they were also acting as the point-men for qualified specialists; for example the 1937 Equatoria Annual Report began by welcoming the visits of a substantial number of 'experts' to the province, including a soil scientist, a soil chemist, an economic botanist, an agricultural researcher and a number of medical doctors or researchers. In addition, "[m]uch literature has also been received detailing the dangers to which this area is liable, soil impoverishment, soil erosion, dessication, over-stocking, forest and grass fires, malnutrition."[136] Conservation was one of the principal justifications for increasing government interventions in the lives of Africans in the 1940s and 1950s; it also embodied some of the disparities in knowledge and priorities between administrators and experts, as Chapter Four will further discuss.[137]

Another area of disagreement was that of education. The Mongalla Province Government had left educational provision largely to the Christian missionaries, and intervened only to warn them to ensure that the curriculum was suitable for Africans rather than disruptive of community life.[138] Such concerns had persisted, and administrators had referred, for example, to the Phelps-Stokes commission in East

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[135] McComas, 'Memorandum on Local Government', 11 Jan. 1954, SAD 798/1/4.
[136] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99.
[137] See David Anderson, 'Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation in East Africa During the 1930s', *African Affairs* 83 (1984), pp. 321-43; M.Leach and R. Mearns, 'Environmental Change and Policy', in their (eds.), *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (London, 1996), Ch. 1.
[138] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99; Hillelson, 'Report on education in Mongalla Province', 22 April 1922, NRO CS 17/1/2.

Africa, which emphasised the need for education to make pupils "useful members in their own community life".[139] In 1939, Parr referred to Elspeth Huxley's book on the Kikuyu, *Red Strangers,* to emphasise the importance of preserving "the bonds of family and community life" in the face of the potentially "alien and disruptive force" of education.[140] As late as 1947-8, administrators were urging the continuing necessity of 'protecting' the Southern Sudanese from too much education or influence from the north: "it is not customary to expose immature seedlings to the fierce rays of a tropical sun".[141] But in 1946 a five-year education development plan had been drawn up for the south, as it also became clear that both economic and political development required a redirection and expansion of educational provisions.[142] Thus the protection for the local autonomy of mission education was swept away as part of the centralisation and integration of knowledge for development.

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[139] Cited in Iliffe, *Tanganyika,* p. 338.
[140] Governor Parr to Heads of Missions, 8 Nov. 1939, NRO EP 1/4/17.
[141] Governor Marwood to CS, 2 Jan. 1947, NRO EP 1/10/52.
[142] EPAR 1946, NRO DK 57/10/32; Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 231-46; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, pp. 256-90.

## Conclusion

Throughout the Condominium, the Sudan Government struggled with the need for *delegation* of functions in order to effectively implement administration in diverse local areas using a limited number of direct government officers; and its own *centralising* momentum to gather and apply knowledge, and to control, exploit and develop, based on a Western model of scientific expertise and modernising progress. In Mongalla Province, the units of local government grew up haphazardly, and, as will be seen, were often shaped by local people more than by the state, but they were conceptually framed within different templates over the Condominium. Those templates were in turn the reflection of changing notions of knowledge, from a grassroots-driven, experientially-based pragmatism; to an accumulation for the purposes of illumination and translation; to a centrally-driven re-ordering through universal scientific expertise. It was this process of transforming concepts of knowledge into the motive and means for central state control which drove changing rhetorical systems of local government. It was a process which led ultimately to the subsuming of local knowledge to wider categories of expertise, which in turn legitimated subordination. According to Spivak, colonial rule involved an 'epistemic violence', in which the knowledges of the colonised were subsumed by the hegemonic modernising world-view of the colonisers.[143] But the colonisers themselves were not a monolithic unanimous body, and the responses of local communities to the centralisation of knowledge by the colonial state were more complex, and their own knowledge systems more resilient, than Spivak suggests, as the rest of the thesis will show.

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[143] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'

# Chapter Two

## Knowing the Foreigner:
## The Emergence of the Government Chiefs, c. 1841-1920

### Introduction

This chapter will trace some of the changes in the nature and basis of authority in Western Mongalla that occurred between around 1841 and 1920, as a result of the interventions of foreign traders and 'governments'. It is also possible to see significant continuity which distinguished this period from the years after 1920. It was characterised by a substantial degree of violence in the form of warfare and raiding, and by the extractive nature of foreign interventions. Local communities, particularly along the Nile, were responsive to the opportunities and goods offered by trade and employment; trade goods and foreign influences had long been sought after in the region. But in the face of the often threatening foreign incursions, they also needed to adapt their structures and methods for protecting themselves. The difficulties presented by the activities of ivory and slave traders, the soldiers of the Turco-Egyptian and Mahdist governments, and later the Belgian and British colonial administrators, demanded new skills and strategies: military, economic and diplomatic. In turn this generated new kinds of wealth, status and power. This is not simply the story of opportunistic individuals gaining power by manipulating changing circumstances, but also of communities recognising the value of certain kinds of knowledge and leadership. The result of both processes was the emergence of the 'chief of the foreigners'.

This region provides a distinctive model of the political economy compared to other models put forward for east and central Africa. Firstly, the idea of 'wealth-in-people', though relevant here, is only part of the story. Guyer and Belinga suggest that patrons in Africa have generally sought to collect followers or allies with multiple forms of knowledge in order to maximise potential solutions to problematic

situations.[1] But while their angle on this subject is top-down, communities also sought 'owners' of suitable knowledge to perform certain functions. Secondly, the expansion of commodity and slave trades in nineteenth century Africa has been shown to have had a profound impact on the political economies of many regions, by offering new opportunities for individuals to gain wealth and power through their control of military and luxury goods.[2] In Western Mongalla, commoditisation did not occur to this extent; new trade goods and guns were brought into the region, but did not fundamentally shape the political economy. The ivory and slave trades ensured that military power was more important than wealth in commodities, though the latter did come to symbolise prestige. And that military power was based less on the possession of new weapons than on the ability to mediate with external coercive force (traders, soldiers and governments), and thus to attract followers with the promise of protection.

The only detailed history of political power in this region is Simonse's subtle and complex study of kingship among the peoples east of the Nile, which offers insights into the antagonistic relationship between people and rain-king, the dualistic balance of power held between them through the mutual threat of violence, and the way in which the scapegoat king nevertheless acted as a centralist force of community unity and identity. However, he suggests that by the later nineteenth century, especially among the Bari, this balance had been lost, and new 'chiefs' had gained power at the expense of both rain-kings and people. He thus concurs in this sense with Vansina's argument that the colonial period heralded the destruction of political traditions in Central Africa. Simonse also argues, following Sahlins' model, for a distinction between the power of the rain-kings, which was *ascribed*, and that of 'Big Men', which was *acquired* by individual endeavour.[3]

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[1] Guyer, and Belinga, 'Wealth in People'.

[2] Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (Portsmouth, NH, 1995); James L. Giblin: 'The Precolonial Politics of Disease Control in the Lowlands of Northeast Tanzania', in Gregory Maddox, James L. Giblin and Isaria N. Kimambo (eds), *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (London 1996) pp. 127-51; Lonsdale, 'The Conquest State', pp. 22-25; Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*, pp. 102-5.

[3] Simonse, *Kings*; Vansina, *Paths*, pp. 245-8: "The equatorial tradition finally died in the 1920s". See also Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', p. 200: the "catastrophic impact" of the 'contact period' had "broken decisively the traditions of the past" in West Nile, Uganda.

This chapter does not intend to question Simonse's depiction of the scapegoat-king. However, it does argue that there was greater continuity and adaptation of elements of this institution, and others, beyond the mid-nineteenth century. Chiefs were a new institution of authority, but this did not preclude the transfer to them of aspects of the political tradition, including the shifting balance of power between people and king. Chiefs emerged from a variety of origins, and thus the extent of their authority and status *within* their communities varied. But more important was their role in *external* relations; they became the gatekeepers of their communities, managing relations with outsiders. This was a role that they might have acquired themselves in the hope of personal advantage, but it was also a function ascribed to them by their people, in recognition of their abilities and in the hope that they would minimise the extractive impact of the foreigners. By the end of the period the 'foreigner's chief' had become a largely hereditary position, with knowledge embodied in the chiefly families. The chiefs had also gained a degree of coercive power, but this was the result of a moral compact made between them and their communities. Thus the distinction made by Simonse between kings and Big Men, in terms of ascribed or acquired power, is blurred.[4]

As well as requiring certain kinds of knowledge, chiefship was also about being known, reflecting the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and recognition that was intrinsic to authority. In selecting chiefs, communities are said to have relied on the fact of candidates having been known, observed and evaluated since childhood. It was thus not enough to possess expertise, abilities or qualities; these had to be displayed in order to earn recognition from people. At the same time, the 'foreigners' chief' had to be recognised by the foreign visitors. While initially this might have happened accidentally or mistakenly, individuals soon adopted symbols which had meaning to the foreigners, as well as to their own communities; hence the significance of the new commodity goods. And the foreigners were easily

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[4] Mair also argues that pre-colonial authority was both ascribed and acquired, and that followings could be built up only by the ability to reward and protect. Tentatively she relates this to knowledge, "Possibly this can be thought of as the possession of a special skill": Lucy Mair, 'New Elites in East and West Africa', in Victor Turner (ed.), *Colonialism in Africa, Vol. 3, Profiles of Change: African Society and Colonial Rule* (Cambridge, 1971) pp. 167-92, at p. 167.

convinced, preconditioned as they were to seek out the 'chief sheikh'.[5] The result was that the foreigner's chiefs - known to both foreigners and their own people – came to dwell on the boundary or interface between the internal and external worlds of their communities.

In this period, the foreigners' knowledge tended to begin and end with the name of the chief; even the extent of his authority was uncertain. A recurrent motif in the evidence is the idea of a 'scapegoat' or 'false' chief, pushed forward to talk to the foreigners. This reflects a number of important points. Firstly, authority in Western Mongalla was multiple and diversified, so that the person dealing with the foreigners might not be the only leader of a community. Secondly, there was a popular awareness of the vulnerability, as well as opportunity, inherent in being recognised as chief. And finally, an appearance of weakness on the part of the chiefs could be a useful strategy for deflecting the demands of the *turuk*.

[5] E.g. 'Extracts from report by Bimb. Headlam of tour from Mvolo to Lado Enclave Frontier', SIR 166, May 1908, PRO WO 106 231. In this period, the British used the northern Sudanese titles of 'sheikh', 'sultan' and 'wakil' interchangeably with 'chief' and 'headman'.

# 1. Rain, Trade and Guns: Changing Authority in the Nineteenth Century

## *1.1 Migration and Patronage*

A member of the expedition on behalf of the Egyptian Khedive in 1841, Werne, provided one of the earliest accounts of the political economy of Western Mongalla. He described meeting the 'King' of the Bari, Logunu, a member of the line of rain kings analysed by Simonse, and revealed the extent of trade in the region. The Bari exchanged iron for cloth and beads from the east and south, with nearby Lafon Hill acting as a centre of trade stretching as far as Ethiopia and Bunyoro.[6] Despite the subsequent depiction by Europeans of the region as part of the remote and primitive heart of Africa, it was thus already engaged in networks of long-distance trade. 'Foreign' goods and influences were esteemed, as reflected in Logunu's wearing of coloured cloth, and the interest shown in the 1841 expedition. Similarly an interviewee's account of chiefship in nearby Tokiman emphasises its foreign connections:

> It came from a strong man called Magara. This Magara was supposed to come from the Ethiopian side… maybe that is why he was strong because he brought arms. The main source of arms at that time was from there… He also brought a lot of cattle.[7]

Wealth and military strength were generated by, and generated, followers; 'wealth in people' was as crucial here as elsewhere in pre-colonial Africa. For example, Logunu was reported to visit the Mandari area annually in person to exchange his iron for slaves, to use in turn for iron-working.[8] There are Lokoiya traditions of an ancestral leader whose followers cultivated extensively, so that even the Bari came to get food from him.[9] Simonse focuses on the role of violence in, and the more abstract meanings of, the relationship between leaders and people, but a reciprocal

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[6] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 45; Ferdinand Werne, *Expedition to Discover the Sources of the White Nile, in the Years 1840, 1841*, translated by C. W. O'Reilly (London, 1849) Vol. 1, pp. 338-9.
[7] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, Khartoum, 23 Feb. 2003.
[8] Werne, *Expedition*, Vol. 2, p. 123.
[9] Interview with Severino Mati, Khartoum, 27 Jan. 2003.

balance was also maintained in a more practical sense by their mutual dependence. The ability to move and migrate might allow a leader to break away and found a new group, thus establishing his own political power, but it also created a sanction which people could use to limit the power of a leader and to enforce his obligations of patronage towards them.[10]

Histories of group origins frequently remember an ancestor who came from abroad, usually the east, or from a spiritual plane above. Such histories usually centre on 'clan' rather than ethnic origins; in fact ethnicity seems to have been linked to place rather than lineage, with stories of people moving from Lugbara to Nyangwara to Mandari, and a 'tribe' like the Mandari being made up of various groups of immigrants to a particular territory.[11] A sense of movement was intrinsic to local traditions, as was the idea of newcomers or foreigners bringing valuable new skills or resources. Thus the 'internal frontier', as Kopytoff puts it, was crucial in the construction of societies and their political culture.[12] His model may be over-simplified, however, especially in the case of an area like Western Mongalla where population movements were complex. Stories of migration represented the 'distillation' of the historical experiences of 'piecemeal' migration and settlement.[13] They were also more significant as a way of explaining and maintaining the current social order, as later chapters will show. Thus subservient groups within a community were understood to be either original inhabitants who had been defeated, or the descendents of immigrants who came without resources or kin of their own; whereas more dominant sections were generally understood to be migrants who had brought new skills and resources with them. For example, the elite 'clan' of rain priests and later chiefs on the Kajo Kaji plateau in the early 1900s were said to have arrived in the area bringing cattle and rain powers, so that they were welcomed and given land by the existing inhabitants, and became the political rulers.[14]

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[10] See also Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, pp. 6-7, 17-19.
[11] See Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 18-19, 32-3.
[12] Kopytoff, 'The Internal', pp. 3-84. For examples of migration stories in Western Mongalla see Beaton, 'A short history of Liria', 'A short history of the Luluba Hills', and 'A Short History of Ngangala' (c. 1934), NRO JD 1/1/2.
[13] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 50-51.
[14] Stigand, Inspector Rejaf, to Governor, 6 March 1911, NRO IN 2/29/239; Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, Khartoum, 17 Feb. 2003.

The idea of 'clans' was tied up with these ways of explaining relationships.[15] Dominant sections were understood to have begun as coherent kin-groups, to which 'clients', 'serfs' or even 'slaves' attached themselves. As Chapter One showed, Europeans would later be confused by the nature of social formation and kinship, often assuming that the clans were defined by blood relationship. But kinship was an idiom for describing social relations; clans were defined as much by territory and land as by bloodlines.[16] A clan seems to have been essentially a socio-economic unit, within and between which resources were managed, allocated and exchanged (though not corporately 'owned'), and relationships of inequality, specialisation and reciprocity maintained. Thus certain 'clans' were associated with a specialised livelihood such as fishing, hunting or ironworking; but these specialists were also recruited or captured by other clans eager to expand their 'wealth in knowledge'.[17] There was also a division within a clan between land- and cattle-owners and poorer dependents. These divisions in turn regulated marriage and the accumulation of female labour and reproduction, explaining why cattle as the means of exchange for marriage remained the most important form of wealth. Taboos on marriages within clans or across their internal divisions were partly a means of ensuring that the more marginalized sections remained dependent on the elites for the means to marry. Clans were not static units, but continued to divide and coalesce. They also did not define political or moral communities, though they contributed to debates within them. As Tosh writes of pre-colonial Lango, "[t]he political community typically comprised several clan sections, bound together by ties of neighbourhood and marriage rather than a common clan identity".[18] Members of these communities also belonged to wider networks and alliances, including the spheres of influence of rain and earth priests or the followings of military leaders.

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[15] Evidence on clans is taken mainly from Beaton, 'The Bari'; Huntingford, *Ethnographic Survey*, p. 46; Beaton, 'Land Tenure among the Luluba and Oxoriok', 22 May 1934 , NRO JD 1/1/2; G. O. Whitehead, 'Suppressed Classes among the Bari and Bari-Speaking Tribes', *SNR* 34, no. 2 (1953), pp. 265-80; and 'Social Change among the Bari', *SNR* 12, no. 1 (1929), pp. 91-97; Ernest B. Haddon, 'System of Chieftainship Amongst the Bari of Uganda', *JRAS* 10, no. 40 (1911), pp. 467-72.

[16] See also Pels, 'Pidginization', pp. 744-5.

[17] Interview with Chief James Josea Ramadalla, 31 Aug. 2004, Yei: "to have a clan you must have these people... attackers will try to capture them". See also Guyer and Belinga, 'Wealth in People', pp. 115-6.

[18] Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, p. 242.

### *1.2 Knowing the Rain*

The political economy at the time of the 1841 expedition was expressed through rain. Rain was firstly a vital resource and thus the most important obligation of a leader, given in return for tribute and status. Gaining a monopoly over control of rain was an important route to, or result of, political power; the Bari rain chiefs benefited from their home in the Belinian and Sindiru hills through the increased likelihood of rain falling there, as well as from the deposits of iron. Secondly, rain was an idiom used to express power, including that derived from spiritual connections; rain was believed to come from the divine through chiefs or priests. It therefore demonstrated their spiritual and moral authority. The combination of such authority with political, military and economic power is emphasised in oral histories of pre-colonial leaders throughout this region. The ability to control rain was an aspect of political power, but it also entailed a burden of moral obligations, and thus encapsulates the flow of power and divine blessing between leaders and people.[19] More will be said in a later chapter on the significance of rain as an expression of the internal peace of communities; for now it is important to note that it was the basis for measuring the legitimacy of a leader. When 'kings' or chiefs were killed collectively by their people for failing to provide rain, they were being removed for failing to meet the needs of their community.

Rain and knowledge were also intrinsically linked. One ancestral Bari rain-king had a name meaning 'he knows all and everything'.[20] The Bari were later reported to distinguish between "those who know water" and the rest of the community; in theory it was the former who would have held political power before the mid-nineteenth century.[21] However, knowledge and power were also expressed through 'ownership' of other aspects of the economy and ecology, such as land/soil, mountains, rivers and so on, and through divination.[22] These roles were more than just ritual; they represented knowledge of how to access and mediate with external

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[19] See Simonse, *Kings*, e.g. p. 40.
[20] A. C. Beaton, 'A Chapter in Bari History: The History of Sindiru, Bilinian and Mogiri', *SNR* 17, no. 2 (1934), pp. 169-200, at p. 170.
[21] Huntingford, *Ethnographic Survey*, p. 29; Haddon, 'System of Chieftainship'.
[22] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 265-9; Interview with Severino Mati, Khartoum, 27 Jan. 2003.

and spiritual forces, which in turn reveals an underlying structure that enabled an additional 'office' of mediating with the *turuk* to develop. And, as Chapter Six will further discuss, such forms of knowledge/power were diversified and restricted to particular spheres, by their own moral ambivalence. This was particularly apparent in the case of other specialists like smiths, hunters and fishermen, who, as well as being highly valued, were also partially stigmatised and marginalized.[23]

Power might originate in outside sources, available to those with the knowledge to access it, but authority relied upon converting that power into social relations. However much scope for patronage and personal power there might be for an individual therefore, he would nevertheless have to maintain good relations with other powerful figures whose knowledge he might require, and at the same time satisfy public opinion as embodied in collective councils. The Lokoiya and Luluba *monyomiji,* or ruling age-set, was the most obvious example of collective government, but in general, councils of elders and prominent and wealthy men were responsible for settling most disputes within communities. Women were not usually members, but are said to have had their own 'councils' and a "strong voice".[24] Oral histories claimed that Bari rain-kings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were restrained in their military campaigns by 'public opinion'.[25] The example of collective regicide in the case of the Bari rain-kings was only the most extreme check on their power; that power rested on their ability to direct and maintain a consensus in the community.

### *1.3 The Power of Words*

Knowing how to speak was vital to the conversion of knowledge/power into authority; this would remain a key to political success through the colonial period too and will be discussed in later chapters. The Bari *ngutu duma* or Mandari *nutu*

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[23] Whitehead, 'Suppressed Classes'; Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[24] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002, Khartoum.
[25] Beaton, 'A Chapter', pp. 177-8.

*dun*, wealthy and influential elders, were people with "the power of words".[26] Through skills of speech, leaders could generate consensus. The judicial aspect of the role of the Bari rain-kings rested on their ability to reflect public opinion in their decisions. King Logunu's judgement and execution of criminals was reported by Werne in 1841 to concur with "the unanimous will of the assembly".[27] Simonse describes their role as that of a 'dam' or 'buffer' between hostile elements: "[t]he King's role can be summarised as one of initiating, facilitating and monitoring peace processes".[28] A conflict in the distant past between Bari military leaders was remembered to have been resolved in a "grand parley" presided over by the *monye putet*, literally 'the father of the council', reflecting the recognition accorded to skills of arbitration.[29] Similarly the Moru were said to have taken cases to clan arbitrators, or *vureba*.[30] Rhetorical skill was an important aspect of the role of such figures. In the 1850s, Bari 'chiefs' were reported to speak to gatherings of their people, reminding them of the reasons for a particular action such as war, praising the ancestors and so on; according to Vinco, "the chief makes use of all the rhetoric at his command".[31] In addition, the ability of rain chiefs to curse – the ultimate power of words - formed a powerful sanction, enforcing settlement and adjudication.[32]

Knowing how to speak was also vital in foreign affairs. In the nineteenth century this was one of the functions of the Bari rain-kings and of the Lokoiya and Luluba *monyomiji*.[33] Diplomatic skills were reflected in Werne's report that King Logunu "had a very sound understanding and contrived skilfully to evade the demand for meat".[34] The wide recognition given to the rain-kings may have made them the most effective people to negotiate with outsiders; they also controlled the iron trade and so had to negotiate commercial relations. In the face of threats though, it was

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[26] Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 79; Seligman and Seligman, *Pagan Tribes*, pp. 252-3.
[27] Werne, *Expedition*, Vol. 2, p. 67.
[28] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 218.
[29] Beaton to Governor, 'History of the Nyori district', 2.11.32, NRO EP 2/34/127.
[30] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[31] Angelo Vinco, 'First Christian to live among the Bari: His Journeys 1851-1852', in E. Toniolo, and R. Hill (eds.), *The Opening of the Nile Basin: Writings by Members of the Catholic Mission to Central Africa on the Geography and Ethnography of the Sudan, 1842-1881*, (New York, 1975), pp. 74-105, at p. 101. See also Mair, 'New Elites', p. 167.
[32] See Evans-Pritchard, *Preliminary Draft of an Account of the Moro* (n.d., 1930s), NRO DK 112/14/95; also Johnson, 'Judicial Regulation', pp. 61, 72, on curse of Nuer prophets.
[33] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 71, 79.
[34] Werne, *Expedition*, Vol. 2, p. 67.

blacksmiths and women who were used as messengers or negotiators, as it was said to be unheard of for them to be killed even in wartime.[35] This must be the root of an oral history recounted today:

> At that time it was not normal for men to meet foreigners. It was normally women who would see what foreigners wanted... Women are better diplomats... They were told to go and listen and study the intentions of the visitors… Then they report to the council about the foreigners, and then the men prepare a reply to them. Angelo Vinco, when he wanted land in 1849 negotiated with the women, and the chief just blessed their negotiation.[36]

Vinco himself records direct negotiations with Logunu's son Nyigilo and other 'chiefs' regarding land,[37] so the interview is not recalling actual events, but rather reflecting the ideas which have developed about the particular qualities needed for negotiating with foreigners, and the perceived division of power within society so that men direct and decide, while women advise and negotiate. The account is backed up more by Baker's encounter with the sister of a chief of Belinian, who reportedly blamed men for being "hard heads" and declared that the women wanted peace. Baker described her as "exceedingly clever… [she] would have made a good foreign minister".[38] Such skills of speech, both within community politics and in relation to mediating with the *turuk*, would be integral to successful chiefship, reflecting the way that 'tradition' was evolving rather than being destroyed or invented.

### *1.4 The Foreigners*

The 1841 Egyptian Government expedition had found a way through the sudd on the Nile to reach Gondokoro, opening the way for an influx of Egyptian, European and

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[35] Vinco, 'First Christian', p. 84.
[36] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[37] Vinco, 'First Christian', pp. 78-81, 97. Nyigilo was the biological son of Logunu by a wife inherited from his father, according to Simonse, *Kings*, p. 89, fn 30.
[38] Baker, *Ismailia*, vol. 1, p. 331.

Northern Sudanese traders.[39] By the early 1860s, 120 boats sailed annually from Khartoum to Gondokoro to purchase ivory.[40] Between 1850 and 1860, an Austrian Catholic mission was also based at Gondokoro, but was eventually abandoned due to drought, famine and disease. The traders built up a system of *zeribas*, or fortified stations, with their own armies of free and slave soldiers, who also engaged in slave raiding.[41] From the 1870s, the government sought to end the latter activity, sending Samuel Baker to be 'Governor' of the Equatorial territories. Baker and his successors, General Gordon and Emin Pasha, established a *zeriba*-like system of government stations across the region. The collapse of the Turco-Egyptian Government encouraged local resistance, forcing Emin Pasha to withdraw to Wadelai by 1885. In 1888 the Mahdist/Ansar forces took Rejaf from the Egyptian army remnants, and Arabi Dafa'alla became Emir at Rejaf from 1892. The Ansar continued the pattern of raiding and relying on local agents or allies, until they were defeated by Congolese troops at Bedden in 1897. The Belgians then took over the Lado Enclave, and Colonel Martyr took over the east bank on behalf of the Uganda Administration.[42]

The 1840s and '50s saw a period of adjustment to the Nilotic trade and the rise of new men based on the prioritisation of new kinds of knowledge. Around Gondokoro on the Nile, it was Logunu's son Nyigilo who dominated relations with the foreign traders and missionaries, by collecting ivory and selling it to the annual expeditions, offering land to the missionaries, and becoming virtually the agent for the trader Brun Rollet. Though he had inherited rain powers, this role in foreign relations developed more through his knowledge of Arabic and his experience of travel and trade; as the missionary Kaufmann put it, "he knew how to win favour by flattering

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[39] For the detailed history and wider context of the trade and government interventions in nineteenth-century Equatoria, see Gray, *A History*; Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 87-103; R. W. Beachey, 'The East African Ivory Trade in the Nineteenth Century', *JAH* 8, no. 2 (1967), pp. 269-90.
[40] Collins, *Land Beyond*, p. 22.
[41] As Hodnebo writes, the numbers of slaves exported from the region may have been around 2,000 annually in the 1860s; more significant were the effects of the trading and the Turco-Egyptian stations on settlement and social patterns, especially in terms of the spread of new diseases, famine, warfare and depopulation of certain areas: *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 135-7. See also Johnson, *Root Causes*, p. 5.
[42] Narrative taken from Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 87-103.

strangers".[43] His brother Subek told Vinco to negotiate with Nyigilo, because "having been to Khartoum, he is the white man's favourite". Vinco interpreted this as jealousy on the part of Subek, but in fact it may have reflected the origins of a pattern whereby people recognised the ability of such individuals to protect them from the worst extractions of the foreigners, as represented in the popular fears that the traders and missionaries were cannibals or could prevent the rain falling.[44] But by the later 1850s, the area was hit hard by famine and the intensifying slave trade, and people blamed the traders, the mission and eventually Nyigilo himself, who took refuge briefly in Khartoum with Brun Rollet, but was killed by a group of young men when he returned home.[45] The ritualistic nature of the killing naturally leads Simonse to see this as a typical regicide of a rain-king, but it was also the result of the perception that Nyigilo had failed to effectively protect his community from the depredations of the foreigners.[46]

More widely in the region, individuals with knowledge of languages, trade and travel were gaining prestige. In the west, near the River Yei, the missionary Morlang encountered a '*Monye'* (translated by him as 'proprietor', later usually rendered 'master' or 'chief') who was able to translate Bari for him, having come from the Bari area as a child, and another who was an elephant hunter and trader, who accompanied him back to the Nile in order to see the mission and the boats from Khartoum. He also met the Bari *bunit* (doctor/diviner) Lungasuk, 'a renowned traveller', who acted as interpreter to Nuqud, the agent of the Coptic Egyptian trader Shenuda.[47] The traders generally relied on local interpreters with a little Arabic, some of whom had been to Khartoum, known as 'dragomans'.[48] Linguistic knowledge thus provided access to opportunities to be employed as agents of the

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[43] A. Kaufmann, 'The White Nile Valley and its Inhabitants', in Toniolo and Hill, *Opening*, pp. 140-95, at p. 194.
[44] Vinco, 'First Christian', p. 77; E. Pedemonte, 'A Report on the Voyage of 1849-1850', in Toniolo and Hill, *Opening*, pp. 55-73, at pp. 72-3; Simonse, *Kings*, p. 92.
[45] Franz Morlang, 'The Journeys of Franz Morlang East and West of Gondokoro in 1859', in Toniolo and Hill, *Opening*, pp. 109-28, at p. 111; Kaufmann, 'White Nile Valley', pp. 194-5.
[46] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 93. Gray argues inaccurately that Nyigilo was resented because he had taken on functions that were not sanctioned by his traditional status as a mere brother to a rain-maker: Gray, *A History*, p. 43.
[47] Morlang, 'Journeys', pp. 120-26.
[48] Pedemonte, 'Report', p. 62.

traders; in the Bari area Simonse describes such middlemen as 'cargo chiefs'.[49] Around Gondokoro, the main trader was the Egyptian Aqqad firm under Abu Sa'ud, which relied on two prominent local agents, Loro lo Lako (Allorron) and Laku lo Rundiyang (Abu Kuka).[50]

From the 1870s, the Turco-Egyptian Government established its own *zeribas* in the region, which, together with those of the traders, expanded in population and created surrounding concentric areas of raided, and often depopulated, territory.[51] They also introduced Arabic and 'Nubi' Islamic military culture and symbols.[52] Many of the soldiers and auxiliaries were of local origin, either recruited or enslaved, and many remained in the area after Emin Pasha's withdrawal.[53] By 1879, one or two dragomans, often ex-slaves, were said to be placed in every village to supervise taxation and porterage; a role similar to that of the later government chiefs.[54] When Baker visited Lobore, it was the dragoman Wani, an interpreter for the traders when a boy, who dealt with the visitors initially and organised porters, rather than the 'old sheik', Abbio or his son.[55] The dragomans were perhaps accepted by these communities as a way of ameliorating the risk of raids, and may have become responsible for 'foreign relations' due to their language skills; Gray perceptively describes their growing prominence as "indispensable intermediaries".[56]

The dragomans or other local intermediaries were becoming 'semi-Arabized' in their dress and manners, as they established good relations with the Egyptian

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[49] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 93-7; see also Gray, *A History*, pp. 95, 100-1, 142-3, on local agents and dragomans.
[50] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 94. 'Allorron' features prominently in Baker's writings; this name reflected Loro lo Lako's role, as according to Gray the Bari referred to the traders as 'Aloron', meaning 'wicked people': Gray, *A History*, p. 41.
[51] Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 21-8; Simonse, *Kings*, p. 97; Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', p. 158. Slave-raiding also continued: Emin Pasha, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa, Being a Collection of His Letters and Journals*, ed. and annotated by G. Schweinfurth et al (London, 1888), pp. 312, 410.
[52] For the history of the Nubis see Douglas H. Johnson, 'Structure of a Legacy: Military Slavery in Northeast Africa', *Ethnohistory* 36, 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 72-88; and in Uganda, Holger Bernt Hansen, 'Pre-Colonial Immigrants and Colonial Servants. The Nubians in Uganda Revisited', *African Affairs* 90, no. 361 (1991), pp. 559-80.
[53] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 68-70.
[54] C. T. Wilson and R. W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan*, 2 vols. (London, 1882), Vol. 2, p. 104.
[55] Samuel W. Baker, *Ismailia: A Narrative of the Expedition to Central Africa for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, Organized by Ismail, Khedive of Egypt*, 2 vols. (London, 1874), Vol. 2, p. 48.
[56] Gray, *A History*, pp. 100-1, 142-3.

stations.[57] Far to the west of the Nile, Emin Pasha met the Baka 'chief' Ansea, who wore "a greasy fez and long Tibet robe, green with age, as also wide Turkish trousers... on account of his light brown skin, exceedingly straight profile, scanty full beard and his classic Sudan Arabic, he gave the impression of being rather an inhabitant of Dar-Mahas or Batn-el-Hajr than an Abaka prince".[58] It may be that Ansea was in fact a former soldier and not a 'Baka' at all. In the Lugware area, Nubis settled and often became influential or powerful in local communities, so it seems likely that this would also be the case in Mongalla.[59]

The history of collaboration with the traders and governments in the nineteenth century is a sensitive matter in light of the subsequent history of Southern Sudan. The history of slave trading by northern Sudanese and Egyptians has gained enormous significance in the colonial and post-colonial periods, contributing to, and reflecting, the Southerners' perception of the extractive and racist attitudes of 'Arabs' towards them.[60] Informants therefore tended to emphasise histories of fighting the Arabs in the nineteenth century. One, however, did recount the story of a 'sub-chief' in his area who had brought his people to live near the camp of an Arab slave-trader, although, as the story emphasises, only because he was blackmailed by the capture of his daughter. The story is actually very revealing of the kind of reciprocal bargains made with skilful mediators in order to obtain protection. The 'sub-chief' negotiated immunity from raiding in return for his people moving closer to the camp, and presumably supplying it with labour and provisions; as a result he was also recognised by the trader as the 'head of his people'. The same informant also claimed that there were more Islamic names among chiefly families, because

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[57] Gray, *A History*, pp. 142-3.
[58] Emin Pasha, *Central Africa*, p. 382.
[59] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 68-70. The term 'Sultan' for a chief has persisted in the Yei and Kajo Kaji areas, as in West Nile district, and 'Juba Arabic' is similar to Nubian: see also Yuzbashi N. Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku and Other Minor Tribes', *SNR* 7, no. 1 (1924), pp. 1-41, at p. 4.
[60] The missionaries would also reiterate the history of slave-trading, as one visitor discovered in the 1950s at Lui: "We stood under a big tree near the Church and David the headmaster said, 'This tree is where the Arabs used to tie up their slaves for market in the old days.' I said, 'Sh! I thought in the modern Sudan you didn't mention such things!' He said, 'No – we don't – except among ourselves. But we shall never forget – and even if they cut the tree down, that still won't remove the facts": Bewes, East Africa, 1953-4, CMS Tours AFE AD3.

Arab slave traders stayed in their homes and named the children, again representing the extent of local collaboration.[61]

Trade and government interventions thus altered the basis of authority in Western Mongalla, as knowledge of languages, employment in the armies or stations, and the ability to pursue military or commercial strategies successfully, generated followings of clients or allies keen to gain access to trade goods, but more importantly to find safety from raids. The *timisi* clients among the Mandari, said to include destitute Dinka, Moru and Nyangwara, sought the protection of a *mar* or clan head, for example.[62] Near Amadi in 1879, Tak Farre was reported to have 5,000 men under his authority, and large areas of cultivation, "for anyone who is discontented with his chief or other circumstances comes to Tak Farre and receives a welcome from him".[63] This number is perhaps questionable, but what is clear is the significance of being able to offer protection. Simonse describes the rise of 'warlords', whose power depended on guns and who gained power after the collapse of the Nile trade and withdrawal of government forces.[64] However, the role of trade goods, including guns, may have been more nuanced than this. They were symbols of new kinds of knowledge and power, rather than the repositories of power in themselves; the 'warlords' had generally been middlemen or rain chiefs previously. Protection from the depredations of traders or soldiers was more important to people than access to the trade goods. It was the ability of leaders to ameliorate these depredations through skilful mediation that mattered principally.[65]

### *1.5 The Ostensible Sheikh*

Gaining a position of authority was as much about being known as about knowing, and in this regard the commodity trade was significant. The foreigners who entered this region were invariably looking for the 'chief' or 'sheikh'; someone with whom

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[61] Interview with Lubari Ramba, 31 Aug. 2004, Mitika, Yei.
[62] Huntingford, *Northern Nilo-Hamites*, p. 63.
[63] Wilson and Felkin, *Uganda*, Vol. 2, p. 129. See also a similar patron in Emin Pasha, *Central Africa*, p. 306.
[64] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 101-3.
[65] Simonse also refers in passing to the protection offered by first the cargo chiefs and later the warlords: *Kings*, pp. 96, 101.

they could work and who would hopefully be able to meet their demands for food, ivory, slaves, porters and so on. They often relied on appearance alone. In 1841, Werne unhesitatingly referred to Logunu as 'King': "[t]he dress and coiffure distinguish his tall figure from all the others".[66] Baker tended to assume that conspicuous warriors at the forefront of battles were 'sheikhs'.[67] It also added to prestige in the eyes of foreigners if an individual was recognised by the people, especially over a wide area. Baker met a rain-maker, Lokko, who claimed to be a great sheikh and to know "the entire country"; he proved to be "perfectly well known... [by] the natives, who received us without fear or suspicion".[68] Loro lo Lako's position rested on his being known, to the foreigners and to his people, who had explained to Baker, "that although Allorron had been the *ostensible sheik* for a great length of time, the true sheik by actual descent was a chief named Morbe". [My italics] Morbe had lost his cattle in Lokoiya raids, which may also explain why he had become less prominent than Loro.[69] But more significantly, Loro's recognition by both foreigners and local people was laying the foundations for the brokerage role of chiefs.

New symbols and signs of power or status developed as a result of the processes of recognition by foreigners. The latter gave gifts of clothing to the 'chiefs' they had identified, which served to further mark them out and make them instantly recognisable to future foreign visitors or government personnel.[70] Such clothing may have only been worn when foreigners visited, thus demonstrating its meaning within a particular sphere of authority and knowledge. Nyigilo, for example, wore clothes in front of the missionaries, but they were told that, "as soon as we were gone he would go about naked like the rest of his people".[71] He also did not possess other luxury trade goods, despite his access to them, but was said to live in identical style to the rest of his people, suggesting that commodities had not become a form of

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[66] Werne, *Expedition*, Vol. 2, p. 43. See for similar point, Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda: Economy, Society and Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 15.
[67] Sir Samuel White Baker, *The Albert N'yanza, Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 2 vols. (London, 1867), Vol. 2, p. 274; and *Ismailia*, Vol. 1, p. 393.
[68] Baker, *Ismailia*, Vol. 2, pp. 41-5. See also Werne, *Expedition*, Vol. 2, pp. 109-10.
[69] Baker, *Ismailia*, Vol. 1, p. 257.
[70] Charles George Gordon, *Gordon in Central Africa, from Original Letters and Documents*, edited by George Birkbeck Hill (London, 1899), p. 49.
[71] Pedemonte, 'Report', p. 64.

economic wealth as such. Clothes did not simply demonstrate status therefore, but may have been more of a specific uniform to mark out the 'foreigner's chief'.

As Glassman argues for East Africa, as cloth became more widely distributed, elites also sought more distinctive or prestigious items. For example, Loro lo Lako was reported to refuse to wear any of the numerous presents of clothes he received: "the only article of European manufacture which he uses is a large sunshade, and it is an amusing sight to watch him strutting about with it".[72] This may have resulted from the precedent of Gordon, who also carried one; at Moogi, "[t]hey knew I was the chief on account of my umbrella".[73] Trade goods, including guns, came to play a symbolic role in the political economy, particularly among the Bari, and Simonse argues that the decline of the steamer trade on the Nile led to a 'cargo cult' in which guns and steamers gained religious dimensions. This centred on the female prophet Kiden, who led successful resistance to the Ansar until her execution in 1893. She had gained followers and ivory by preaching a return of the trade and resurrection of dead cattle, and by promising that her wooden guns would bring invulnerability in the face of real guns.[74]

However, as the emphasis on resurrection of cattle shows, the trade goods had not fundamentally altered the economy; cattle and other livestock remained the principal means of investment and exchange. Clothes, umbrellas, guns and other items had become the trappings of power, not its source; there were only limited quantities and patrons did not become the centre of distribution networks. They may have controlled ivory and slave procurement, but this was for export, not local trade. And, since Kiden's guns were actually wooden, it was her promises of immunity and protection that mattered, not possession of guns.

### *1.6 Not the Real Sheikh*

The new forms of knowledge and patronage emerged within the continuing multiplicity and diversity of authority, and were not always sought after. There were

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[72] Wilson and Felkin, *Uganda*, Vol. 2, pp. 86-7. See Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*, e.g. p. 37.
[73] Gordon, *Central Africa*, p. 107.
[74] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum; Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 100-102.

disincentives for people to be distinguished as 'chiefs'; once identified by foreigners as such, individuals found themselves first in line for any demands or recriminations. For example, in 1879, Felkin reported that in the Amadi area, chiefs who did not cooperate fully with the slave-traders had been castrated, tortured or killed.[75] Gordon had had resisting chiefs punished and even sent to Khartoum.[76] On the appointment of a new 'government chief' at the demand of Baker, Loro lo Lako (himself an example of a newer kind of authority) was reportedly, "pleased that he had shifted his responsibility upon the shoulders of another".[77] Chiefs' relationship with the foreigners could also bring them into conflict with their own communities; this was most apparent in the murder of Nyigilo.[78]

There was therefore a period in many areas in the mid or later nineteenth century of renegotiating authority, as some leaders sought to avoid these dangers by allowing other individuals to deal with the foreigners. Baker, having attacked Belinian, asked to meet the 'sheikh of the mountain', but suspected that the man sent to talk to him, Wani, was not the 'real sheikh'.[79] This would be a recurring theme in European writing, reflecting both their own confusion and the complexities of changing authority in the region. European visitors were frequently frustrated at the apparent inability of chiefs to get them the porters they required.[80] Baker expressed this confusion and exasperation when the 'great sheikh' Bedden claimed that his people refused to carry:

> This is the regular African diplomacy when work is required. The people say, 'We must receive orders from our sheik'. The sheik says, 'I am willing, but my people will not obey me'. It is this passive resistance that may ruin an expedition.[81]

Such 'passive resistance' would be a feature of the colonial period too; the foreigners' uncertainty as to the authority of chiefs was frequently manipulated to avoid their demands.

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[75] Wilson and Felkin, *Uganda*, Vol. 2, p. 128.
[76] Gordon, *Central Africa*, p. 72.
[77] Baker, *Ismailia*, Vol. 1, p. 257.
[78] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 93.
[79] Baker, *Ismailia*, Vol. 1, p. 338.
[80] E.g. Emin Pasha, *Central Africa*, pp. 358, 360.
[81] Baker, *Ismailia*, Vol. 2, p. 23. Gordon was also later confused as to whether Bedden held 'real power': Gordon, *Central Africa*, pp. 78-9.

These confusions also reflected the continuing authority of other forms of knowledge/power alongside the new skills of foreign interlocution. The ability to mediate with the rain was still important; sometimes the new mediators might include rain-makers, as in the case of Bepo at Belinian who alternately worked with or fought against the traders and governments.[82] But whereas in the past their knowledge of rain had been widely-enough recognised to guarantee their influence and make them the most effective managers of external relations with surrounding communities, it was of less value in relation to the foreign powers. As a result, rain knowledge was increasingly internalised within communities and protected from foreign intrusion. But it continued to represent the most potent moral authority: the "respect and veneration for the dispensers of rain are greater than those felt for the chiefs of the country".[83]

Some of these processes are illustrated in an oral history from the Bari area.[84] One of the most prominent local agents of the Aqqad trading firm had been Lako lo Rundiang, or Abu Kuka, who was apparently killed fighting the Mahdists. His son Lukaja was still young, and it was his brother Lado Kirimin who became chief, but his reliance on 'torture' to maintain his power is said to have antagonised the elders of the community. Meanwhile his and Lako's nephew, Boreng, had been sent by Arabi to Khartoum for education in 1893, and now returned in 1897, with knowledge of Arabic and Islam. He won the support of the council of elders in ousting Lado Kirimin, who left to launch raids further west with his military followers. The story asserts that the family also had rain powers, but that they were now separated from the functions of chiefship, with Lako's son Lukaja becoming the *matat lo lori*, the chief of the staff, while Boreng remained 'chief'. The story is striking in terms of its depiction of the council choosing an individual perceived to have the right kinds of knowledge and experience to perform chiefly functions in the best interests of the community, as Lado Kiriman had failed to do. At the same time, the division between rain and foreign affairs was being made, perhaps partly to

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[82] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 101.
[83] G. Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha*, Vol. 1 (London, 1891), p. 304.
[84] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002, Khartoum.

protect the rain, and perhaps also to prevent too much power being concentrated in one individual.

*Conclusion*

The idea of an all-powerful single ruler in Mongalla was alien. Even the apparently most powerful patrons, warlords or rain chiefs had to share influence with other experts or elders and maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of their communities. This legitimacy rested on their success in knowing how to accomplish certain functions, such as military raids or defence, trade, rain control and so on. Over the nineteenth century, individuals with certain kinds of knowledge or ability clearly benefited from the changes to the political economy wrought by the influx of trade goods or the opportunities for employment and raiding, and were able to maximise on the chance to gain client followers from among the displaced populations of the region. But their success relied on skilful management of 'external' affairs above all, particularly if rain control or other offices were held separately by other individuals. This interlocutory role was a burden as well as a source of prestige, and was increasingly taken on by new men rather than established community authorities; their co-existence led to the former sometimes being depicted by outsiders as scapegoats. But by the end of the century it was a role that was becoming more defined as an office or institution: as well as the master of the land, or rain, or mountain, there was now in some cases the 'administrative' chief, or 'chief of the foreigners' (the Bari *matat lo gela*). This figure was still varied, though it was frequently a former soldier, trading agent or dragoman. But their functions were beginning to be distinct, and the associated forms of knowledge were given recognition by communities, who needed skilful or strong 'gatekeepers' to offer some security from external depredations. These individuals would now be the obvious people to mediate with the incoming colonial governments.[85]

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[85] Lamphear describes a similar minor war-leader in northern Kenya in the 1880s. "His ability to speak Kiswahili and his familiarity with outsiders gave him valuable skills needed to deal with the white administrator at Baringo": John Lamphear, *The Scattering Time: Turkana Responses to Colonial Rule* (Oxford, 1992), p. 79.

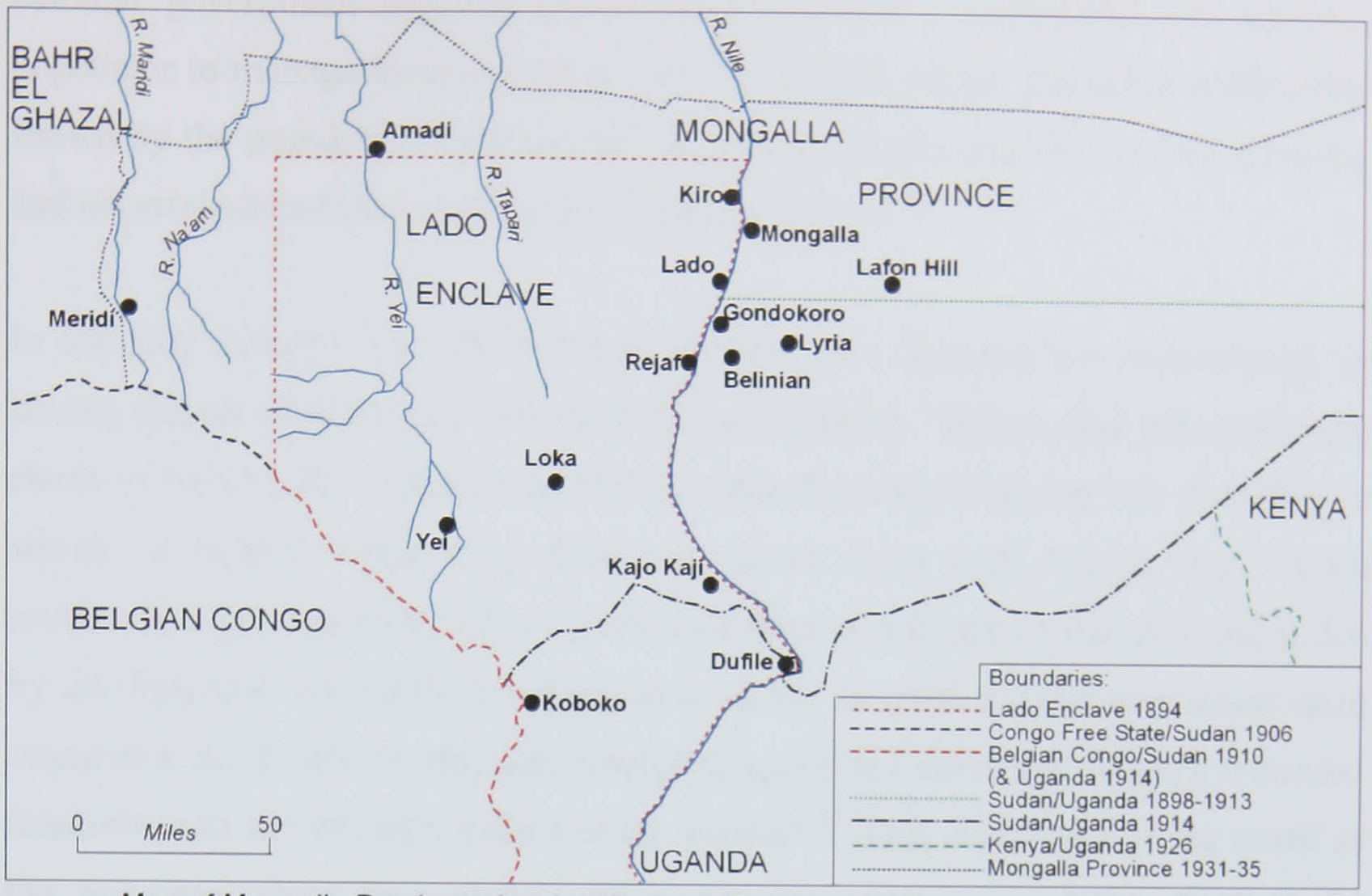
## 2. The Lado Enclave, 1897-1909: Patronage and Protection

Johnson emphasises the degree of apparent continuity in the "fabric of authority" in the South, from the Egyptian and Mahdist governments into the colonial period, so that Europeans, Egyptians and northern Sudanese alike were classed as 'Turks' by most Southerners.[86] The Belgian military administration of the Lado Enclave certainly bore many resemblances to its predecessors, though run by a handful of European commanders together with Congolese troops.[87] Their rule was reported by the British, and is remembered since, as being harsh, arbitrary and violent.[88] It may be that the temporary nature of their occupation encouraged a more brutal exploitation than the similarly military administrations of Sudan and Uganda. British reports, based on visits to the Enclave or conversations with Belgian officials, were confused as to whether the administrative system was based on large or small chiefs, perhaps reflecting a gap between the theory and practice of administration in the Enclave. The result was a disruptive and harshly extractive regime, under which communities had to further develop their strategies of survival and defence.

The Belgian administration appears to have made no pretence of seeking 'traditional' chiefs, preferring to 'appoint' individuals perceived to be useful.[89] They also sought to limit their power, according to British reports: "Sheikhs who claimed authority over several villages now only control their own, and small Sheikhs in each village are recognised equally with them".[90] The aim was to divide the population into small, regular settlements under a levelled stratum of 'small' chiefs. Adult men were given tax discs and were recorded in registers under the names of their chiefs, who would then be sent demands for porters or taxes.[91] There were only ever a few Belgian commanders in the entire Enclave; the administration relied on

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[86] Johnson, *Root Causes*, p. 10.
[87] For the international diplomatic history of European imperialism in the region, see Robert O. Collins, *King Leopold, England and the Upper Nile, 1899-1909* (New Haven, 1968); Collins, *Land Beyond*, pp. 2-15, 95-129, and, for the Lado Enclave administration, pp. 134-61.
[88] E.g. Logan, Mongalla, to Assistant Director Intelligence, Khartoum, 25 Dec. 1905, NRO MP 1/8/50; Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[89] Shaw, 'Trek No. 1 (Lado Enclave 3rd Jan – 30th Jan)' (n.d., 1911), CMS Acc. 111, F1.
[90] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231; see also 'Information on Lado Enclave from a Greek agent of Angelo Capato', *SIR* 115, Feb. 1904, PRO WO 106 226.
[91] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231.




Map of Mongalla Province showing the Lado Enclave and Sudan/Uganda/Belgian Congo boundary changes.

the Congolese troops to forcibly requisition food, taxes and labour. The role of 'chief' was therefore a hazardous one; it placed an individual first in the firing line if the Belgian or Congolese soldiers were displeased. One Ugandan official witnessed a 'sheikh' in the Enclave being beaten simply in order to find out where game was, and he was reportedly killed later for refusing to carry a soldier over a khor.[92] Others were flogged until they accepted Belgian sovereignty.[93] Whole communities moved across the Enclave boundaries to try to escape the raids by the Congolese troops.[94]

In the face of such a threatening outside force, communities continued to develop their means of defence. Even a British observer comprehended that "little is known of any government except that from time to time either carriers or grain are demanded", and that this had the effect of enhancing the position of the 'big sheikhs', "as these were the only people they [the government officers] ever saw or had any dealing with".[95] In other words, the sudden, unpredictable demands of the

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[92] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231; also *SIR* 155, June 1907.
[93] Wood, Bahr El Ghazal Intelligence Report, 30 April 1904, NRO IN 8/2/9.
[94] E.g. *SIR* 138, Jan. 1906, PRO WO 106/228.
[95] 'Notes on the Lado Enclave by the Lado Commission, 1910', NRO MP 1/8/51.

colonial government required communities to have a recognised and effective negotiator to manage these exactions. Another British report also described the fear shown by the population towards the Congolese soldiers, and the uneven, irregular and uncertain demands of the latter for grain or porters.[96]

In one oral history from the northern Enclave, the Belgians are remembered as having demanded tusks and other goods from Mandari villages, and then killed the chiefs to remove the evidence, so that the Mandari started 'giving' the chiefship to slaves, or people whose lives were less valued. It is said, though, that, "those owners, the real bosses who have gone underground because of fear of being killed by the Belgians, were still in command in as far as religious and war issues were concerned. So the chiefs who got themselves appointed under the Belgians restricted themselves to the ordinary affairs of the people".[97] This recurrence of the motif of the scapegoat chief thus reveals the continuing emergence of the chief of the foreigners. Many of those recognised as chief had been soldiers or employees of previous governments; they tended to speak Arabic at the very least. Some had also gained cattle through trading ivory with Greek merchants.[98] It was therefore usually no accident that they came forward to speak with the foreigners, and nor were they simply scapegoats; they were seen to know how to avert the worst of the unpredictable government attacks.

In return for mediating with the unknown power of the colonial government, these early chiefs were able to build up their prestige and authority. The Belgian-appointed chiefs are often remembered as having been 'harsh'; for example a Moru chief who ruled until 1927, is remembered by the name 'Mokoto Mabe', which is Lingala for cruel or harsh chief (Lingala, or Bangala, was the language used by the Congolese administration in the Enclave).[99] Those chiefs who met the demands of the administration were rewarded with cattle and guns, and a blind eye was turned to their other activities. Examples of chiefs who profited from raiding include Kape, a former soldier, and Lukudu, near Lado, who may be the same Lukudu remembered

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[96] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231.
[97] Interview with Gajuk Wurnyang Lupaya, 28 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[98] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231.
[99] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

in Fajelu oral history as having led a migration from near the Nile, using guns to defeat the local inhabitants.[100] Another case is that of Aluma, a Kakwa reportedly appointed as chief of the Kaliko to prevent their resistance; many years later as an old man, Aluma told a British official that there had been no chiefs before the Belgians came.[101]

Military symbols were adopted to signify chiefship, perhaps to both the Belgians and their own people. Certainly they impressed later British observers, who reported that the chiefs had been given 'great power' over their people by the Belgians, citing their armed retinues as evidence.[102] The coercive power of these chiefs, however, rested less on their guns, which were mostly old muzzle-loaders, than on their effectiveness in protecting people from the government soldiers.[103] Those chiefs who were supported, rather than raided, by the troops naturally attracted followers; in return they were able to coerce and bully people.

A Bari oral history from Loggo West encapsulates the way in which a potentially illegitimate degree of coercive power was tolerated by communities in return for effective protection. The 'great' chief Kirba Lado is said to have 'robbed' the chiefship by using Belgian support to defeat his maternal uncle. Kirba Lado's authority is said to have been unusual in overruling all the sub-chiefs of the area, due to the 'weakness' of the people. This is explained by the combination of his cattle-wealth (which may have been added to by the Belgians and later the Ugandan administration), which he used as bribery and to help resolve disputes, together with his military prowess in various factional wars, and the fear of being enslaved by his raids. There is also a report that he had been to Omdurman and met the Khalifa, which reveals that he had the kind of knowledge of the *turuk* that would have left

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[100] 'Information supplied by a Greek merchant recently arrived from the Lado Enclave', 27.3.10, NRO CI 10/12/51; Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231; *SIR* 155, June 1907; Shaw, 'Trek from Rejaf to Loka', March 1911, CMS Acc. 111, F3; Interview with Charles Taban Lupai, 5 Sept. 2004, Yei; Discussion with Yei Boma chiefs and sub-chiefs, 30 Aug. 2004, Yei.

[101] Gibson, Yei, 18 Dec. 1918, CMS G3 AL; EPMD Feb. 1953, NRO CS 2 30/3/6.

[102] Davis, 'Notes on the Lado Enclave' *SIR* 184, Nov. 1909, PRO WO 106 232; MPIR March 1904, NRO IN 8/2/12.

[103] Owen, 'Occupation of the Lado Enclave' May-June 1910, and Owen to Percival, Senior Insp. Loka-Kagulu District, 1 July 1910, both NRO MP 1/8/51.

him well-placed to manipulate the colonial presence and be tolerated as 'chief' by the people.[104]

The Belgian administration continued and intensified changes in the political patterns of the Lado Enclave since the mid-nineteenth century. The interesting thing is that the qualities sought by the Belgians in chiefs were also those recognised by communities as useful to their own interests. Individuals with experience of service with foreign governments, or knowledge of trade or languages, or military prowess, were likely to be able to defend people more effectively in the face of government demands and continuing raiding and instability. Such figures were also developing their own symbols of authority, notably their European military regalia. The Enclave administration offered opportunities to those who could gain influence by force of character and shows of strength, both in the eyes of their own communities and the Belgians. But their success relied on more than force or opportunistic agency alone. Their communities recognised the value of having a 'government' or 'foreigners'' chief, and so entered into a kind of moral compact with them, tolerating a degree of bullying and personal profiting in return for protection.

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[104] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum; Simonse, *Kings*, p. 104.

## 3. Chiefs and British Administration, 1898-1914: Sudan and Uganda

Meanwhile, north of the Enclave and east of the Nile, British officials were administering Mongalla Province (so called from 1906) of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and the Nile district of the Uganda Protectorate. In both areas, military administrators were largely concerned at this stage with preventing warfare and disorder, and with attempting to find 'chiefs' or 'sheikhs' who could provide labour and tribute on demand to meet the needs of the nascent governments. The British vision of establishing proper government ensured that they went beyond the purely pragmatic approach of the Belgians in their dealings with 'sheikhs', by emphasising their role in relation to the 'government', and also by limiting their military strength and raiding. In practice though, a similar pattern to that in the Lado Enclave emerged in British territory: a small number of warlords or opportunistic ex-soldiers, traders or dragomans succeeded in manipulating the colonial presence to expand their capacity to act as patrons, and, most importantly, to earn popular recognition as useful intermediaries.

### *3.1 Divided Authority: Uganda territory*

In 1898, the Uganda government took over the territory east of the Nile, including the Southern Bari, Luluba and Lyria. Administrators described this area as the most remote and 'backward' in Uganda, still feeling "the effects of the rule of Emin Pasha's mutinous soldiers followed by the Dervishes".[105] The administration recognised as chiefs the most obvious 'strong men' in the region, who tended to be individuals previously involved in trade or warfare, and who made themselves conspicuous to the foreign administrators. Kwajo and Boreng, the sons or descendents of the 'cargo chiefs' Loro lo Lako and Abu Kuka, were recognised as chiefs in Gondokoro and Tokiman respectively. Modi Adum, who had started out as a dragoman and become an Emir under the Mahdists, sought out Colonel Martyr and

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[105] Report by Sadler on Nile Province, Uganda, 31 March 1903, cited in J. P. Barber, 'The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism in Northern Uganda, 1898-1919', *Uganda Journal* 29, no. 1 (1965), pp. 27-43, at p. 29.

succeeded in convincing him that he was the chief of the Bari.[106] In Luluba, Lualla, who had allegedly met the Khalifa in Khartoum, impressed administrators by his willingness to supply their garrisons with food and building materials.[107] Kirba of Loggo is remembered as having gained the chiefship because he was "exceptionally gifted"; he "proved himself to the British administration during the course of time that he was an able man, so he was installed as the great chief of the area". His brother Lako Lado however was "responsible for the village matters" and acted as 'guide' to Kirba, suggesting that Kirba's role was defined largely in relation to foreign and military affairs.[108] Thus these chiefs clearly decided it was to their advantage to gain recognition and backing from the Uganda administration, which in turn saw them as having useful qualities for chiefship.[109] At the same time their communities recognised them as 'gifted' when it came to war and external relations.

Their claims initially led to a period of conflict and adjustment with, and between, the various rain controllers in the area. In the end Leju and Bombo became rain chiefs of Sindiru and Belinian respectively, though both were also made into *mukungus,* or headmen, under chiefs Kirba of Loggo and Kwajo of Gondokoro.[110] In fact they remained far more than headmen, as they continued to derive wide-ranging power from their rain control. Even the Sudan administrators were concerned by the extent of their power and the tribute paid by Sudan subjects to them:

> [T]he Baris, on the eastern bank, have long been terrorized by the rain-makers of Sheikh Bembo, of Jebel Belinian (near Gondokoro, in the Uganda Protectorate), who have made a most businesslike use of their powers, and exact tribute of sheep and, in a few cases, even cows from the Sudanese Bari villages on the east bank, as far north as the boundary line with the Bor Dinkas, for services rendered in this respect.[111]

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[106] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 103-4; Martyr, 'Report on the Nile District of the Uganda Protectorate', 15 April 1899, PRO FO 2/201; Beaton, 'A Chapter', p. 181.
[107] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 128.
[108] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[109] See Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule', p. 154.
[110] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 106.
[111] *SIR* 182, Sept. 1909, PRO WO 106 232; MPIR Aug. 1909, NRO IN 8/2/13.

The division between rain and government chiefs was particularly striking in the Uganda territory, perhaps because of the long history of a foreign presence at Gondokoro. An Assistant D.C., Haddon, made a study of the Bari political systems in 1909-10, and concluded that as well as the clan leaders, there were two kinds of chiefs: the *mata* or rain chief, and the *bongun* or district chief. *Bongun* simply means commoner, or person without rain, but had come to refer to the government chiefs, who did the 'political' work and were also war-leaders. Modi Adum was an example of the latter; he was respected for his leadership qualities, but his son was reportedly less popular, so that people took their cases more to the rain chiefs for settlement.[112] In Tokiman where Boreng was government chief, the rain had gone to his cousin Lokoji.[113] In 1903, a huge meeting in Luluba between the British official and the *monyomiji* agreed to make Lualla the government chief and give the rain powers to his rivals, an arrangement still in place today, according to Simonse.[114] Lualla also held rain powers, but his principle role was recognised as being the management of relations with the government.[115]

Lyria was at this stage less affected by the presence of the colonial administration, and the Lokoiya tended to resist its demands. They were able to take advantage of the local geography; for example in 1906 the Uganda administrator reported the failure of a punitive expedition against a Lokoiya chief, "owing it is said to the difficulty of the country he inhabits which is very hilly".[116] Even here though, the rain and government functions became separated within the rain chief family. Lojing lo Rugang was responsible for rain while Jada Rugang was in charge of government relations, though with more difficulties than elsewhere due to the resistance of the powerful *monyomiji*.[117] The distinct institution of the government chief was thus already formed in this area before incorporation into the Sudan in 1914.

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[112] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 107; Haddon, 'System of Chieftainship', p. 471-2.
[113] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[114] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 129.
[115] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 134.
[116] MPIR March 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12.
[117] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 134; Beaton, 'A short history of Liria' (c. 1934), NRO JD 1/1 2.

### *3.2 Nominal Sheikhs: Sudan territory*

Such processes were less obvious in the Sudan territory north of Uganda and the Enclave, where the scapegoat motif of the weak or false chief was instead stronger in British reports. Indeed, one administrator even bemoaned the lack of a powerful rainmaker in the Sudan and the resulting tribute paid to Bombo and Leju, whose spheres of authority transcended, and thus undermined, the colonial boundaries.[118] This was a region in which the Sudan government encountered little threat of armed resistance, and yet was continually frustrated by the more 'passive' resistance behind refusals to supply grain and labour. Administrators saw the solution in finding sheikhs who would be both powerful and cooperative enough to meet government demands; their failure and the reported 'weakness' of the sheikhs is revealing of the strategies of communities in the face of those demands. In arousing the suspicion of administrators that they lacked genuine authority, or in being blamed personally for failures to comply with government orders, these individuals were playing a role of defence or deflection for their communities.[119] At the same time of course, they may have seized opportunities to gain personally from the process.

The Sudan inhabitants seem to have accepted in principle the idea of paying tribute to the government; indeed a large number who crossed into Sudan to avoid the raids of the Belgians expressed great willingness to pay tax in the hope of gaining protection, suggesting that the foreign governments were seen as potential patrons.[120] But administrators in practice encountered much resistance and evasion of both tribute and labour requirements. In 1903, early treks by the Inspector found Bari sheikhs 'suspicious' and 'distrustful',[121] while the following year they were reported to be complaining that the birds had eaten their dura so that they could not

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[118] Jennings-Bramly, A/Gov, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12.

[119] See Fields, *Revival*, p. 256: "equivocation and a certain duplicity were a chief's most practical choices. In order to get by, many a sharp-witted chief must have cultivated a reputation for absent-mindedness".

[120] *SIR* 140, March 1906, PRO WO 106 228. See Collins, *Land Beyond*, p. 234: the Nuer saw tribute as protection money and viewed the state as a patron.

[121] *SIR* 110, Sept. 1903, PRO WO 106 225.

provide tribute. It was also reported that only a quarter of the numbers of porters requested by the government were actually ever provided.[122] Sheikh Bathi was described as the "biggest Nyambara [Nyangwara] sheikh" north of the Enclave border, yet he claimed that his '*wakils*' [headmen] would not obey his orders to supply tribute.[123] One of the 'biggest' Bari sheikhs, Ladokanga, simply disappeared in advance of visits by the Inspector, until he was arrested and imprisoned.[124] In 1907, a report complained that, "if a Sheikh is called on to parade his following, he is not only unable to do so, but is also suspicious of one's reasons for wishing to count them".[125] The British reaction varied between frustration and derision at the apparent lack of authority of sheikhs, and suspicion that they were simply making excuses and evading demands.

It is likely that the extent of authority of these 'sheikhs' was in fact varied. In some cases they seem to have been military leaders, such as Marenga of the Mandari who moved out of the Enclave, or Sheikh Dei, also Mandari.[126] But in many other cases, their authority may have been more 'nominal', as the British put it.[127] A large proportion of the Bari sheikhs listed in British reports were said to be between the ages of twenty and thirty, which seems too young to be wielding real power over community elders.[128] In a few cases, officials reported that 'sheikhs' turned out to be mere 'representatives' or 'interpreters' for the 'real' sheikh, reflecting the continuing multiplicity of authority and the recognition of the utility of linguistic and diplomatic skills.[129]

The British administrators, however, having identified certain 'sheikhs', were determined to build up their authority and hence usefulness. They reported that the sheikhs welcomed presents, particularly clothing, but also tobacco and other trade

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[122] MPIR March 1904, NRO IN 8/2/12.
[123] *SIR* 177, April 1909, PRO WO 106 232.
[124] MPIR March 1904, NRO IN 8/2/12.
[125] *GGR* 1907.
[126] *SIR* 138, Jan. 1906, and 140, March 1906, PRO WO 106 228; *SIR* 177, April 1909, PRO WO 106 232.
[127] *GGR* 1907.
[128] MPIR March 1904, NRO IN 8/2/12; Jennings-Bramly, A/Gov, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12.
[129] Jennings-Bramly, A/Gov, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12; MPIR May 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12.

goods.[130] Officers also handed out Remington rifles, describing them as 'a badge of office'.[131] As in the Enclave, clothing and military symbols were being adopted to signify the 'government' chiefs. Their prominence also enabled them to benefit from trade; sheikhs were frequently reported to possess ivory for, or cattle from, trade.[132] They also took advantage of their guns, or of the assistance of government soldiers, to exact tribute in grain or labourers from neighbouring settlements.[133] The position of 'wakil' or headman, was reported to be unpopular, and in one case was held by a half-paralysed elderly man, perhaps because they were bullied by the chiefs.[134]

The British policy of establishing the sheikhs as 'representatives of government' may have increasingly fitted with both individual ambitions and community strategies. According to British reports, by 1907, even the "more independent tribesmen... were not slow to recognise that the Sheikh being virtually approved by Government as its agent... it was more desirable to be on good terms with him than in opposition".[135] As in the Lado Enclave, the threat of the violent power of the colonial governments made people turn to the individuals who had been gaining recognition over the nineteenth century for their knowledge in relation to external powers. The moral compact thus formed would lead in turn to the chiefs being invested with a little of the coercive force of the colonial state. But their authority rested more on their ability to keep that state at bay.

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[130] *SIR* 110, Sept. 1903, PRO WO 106 225; Cameron, 'Inspection tour in the Southern Mandari country', *SIR* 140, March 1906, PRO WO 106 228.
[131] *GGR* 1907.
[132] *SIR* 110, Sept 1903, PRO WO 106 225; Cameron, 'Inspection tour in the Southern Mandari country', *SIR* 140, March 1906, PRO WO 106 228.
[133] Dove, 'Tour of inspection through country occupied by Mandari Nyambara tribes between the Nile and the Bahr El Ghazal', Dec. 1908, *SIR* 177, April 1909, PRO WO 106 232; *SIR* 85, Aug. 1901, PRO FO 78 5167; *SIR* 178, May 1909, PRO WO 106 232.
[134] Jennings-Bramly, A/Gov, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12.
[135] *GGR* 1907.

## 4. Building up the Chiefs, 1910-1921

In 1910 the Mongalla Provincial Government took over the former Lado Enclave territories, and four years later also gained the Nile district of Uganda in exchange for the southern Enclave district of Mount Wati.[136] The period 1910-21 thus witnessed the consolidation of the province, occasional military patrols to subdue unrest or raiding, and efforts to register the population and establish regular administration. The continuity from previous administrations was apparent in the reliance on Egyptian *mamurs* or junior administrative assistants, who, like their British superiors, were military officers.[137] What little coverage the mamurs received in British reports tended to be negative, and by 1920 they were being blamed for "oppressive and illegal acts" throughout the province; a reflection of the military style of administration in this period.[138] But they were also settling cases as third-class magistrates and were generally in more direct contact with chiefs and people than the British Inspectors until well into the 1920s.[139]

However, the limited government personnel in the province (especially during the war) ensured that the inhabitants had room to continue to adapt and shift their strategies for dealing with government, and their political institutions. In some cases, the chiefs already recognised by the Belgians or British retained and expanded their wealth, influence or authority, taking advantage of opportunities to benefit from government backing or rewards. In other cases the British administrators struggled to find 'useful' chiefs, as powerful figures resisted government demands, or as they and their communities continued to rely on negotiators lacking in real authority. However, the sporadic use of force and punishment ensured that government, and those most prominent in dealing with government, had to be taken more seriously. And as the diverse chiefs came into more contact with the administrative centres, and adopted government or military rituals and regalia, so their roles came to be more distinct, and even prestigious.

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[136] For the British administration of Southern Sudan up to 1918, see Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 228-56.
[137] See Douglas H. Johnson, 'From Military to Tribal Police: Policing the Upper Nile Province of the Sudan', in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds.), *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830-1940* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 151-67; and *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 8-9.
[138] MPIR June 1920, NRO IN 2/48/408.
[139] See later reports on the courts: NRO MP 1/1.2.

### *4.1 Uncertain Authority*

As the British took over the new territories, they encountered some difficulties in terms of inherited 'chiefs'. In parts of the Enclave, they reported in 1910 that *wakils* or even heads of families were trying to 'break away' from their sheikhs and set themselves up as independent chiefs, often by returning 'gifts' of cattle or guns to their former patrons.[140] This reinforces the idea that chiefship under the Belgians had been a short-term form of patronage and protection, and the arrival of the British appeared to offer opportunities for relationships of dependency to be renegotiated. Some sheikhs expressed concern to the British that they would be replaced, admitting that they themselves had been appointed by the Belgians, and that their *wakils* were eager to gain independence.[141] The opportunism and contingency of chiefship at this time was reflected in one story told by a British administrator:

> A certain one Sali, posing as a Kakwa chief, came into Yei shortly after the Sudan occupation and complained of being raided by the Lugware, demanding help against them. It was found that Sali lived on the Belgian side of the border, and so he was sent back. Shortly afterwards I... found this same Sali some two or three days from his village, levying a tax of flour amongst the Lugware, no doubt persuading them that they would be punished by the Government if they did not comply. It then appeared that he was not even a chief, but a renegade Lugware who had adopted Kakwa customs and was living with the chief Loji.[142]

The story is also revealing of the disparity between the flexible local, and the rigid British, understandings of ethnic identity; the latter demonstrated by the assumption that Sali must be a 'renegade' if he was living as a Kakwa.

There was particular uncertainty regarding the authority of the early chiefs in certain areas. The west-bank Bari, for example, were said to have no significant chiefs at all, though they acknowledged the authority of Kwajo at Gondokoro.[143] The British

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[140] *SIR* 193, Aug. 1910, PRO WO 106 234; Owen to Percival, Senior Insp. Loka-Kagulu District, 1 July 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.
[141] Owen, 'Occupation of the Lado Enclave' May-June 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.
[142] Stigand, *Equatoria*, p. 88.
[143] Owen to Percival, Senior Insp. Loka-Kagulu District, 1 July 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.

had to literally create chiefs here, and try to amalgamate villages under them.[144] Similarly in the Fajelu areas, a missionary visitor in 1911 reported that the chiefs were all weak, having been put in place by the Belgians.[145] Today Fajelu chiefs are said to have had diverse origins, but to have been appointed under the British or Belgians without indigenous precedent. One story traces them to the building of roads and moving of villages onto them, when the British appointed road overseers or headmen, who became the 'chiefs'.[146] Another account suggests that it was the wealthiest households, who could entertain 'government visitors', whose leading members were recognised as chiefs.[147] Further north, the 'scapegoat' or client Mandari chiefs accepted during Belgian rule were, according to one informant, increasingly resented for their slave origins, as they sought to impose and implement government demands. One community is said to have taken their case to the British D.C. and explained the lack of legitimacy of their Dinka chief, but the D.C., no doubt reluctant to risk change, refused to allow his deposition, supporting the chief's own argument that he had earned his position by risking his life under the Belgians.[148] The scapegoat motif also continued in reports of sheikhs as 'half-witted' or 'practically imbecile'.[149] Chiefs sometimes hid on the arrival of the British Inspector, adding to the impression that their recognition by the government was not necessarily desirable.[150]

The original role of many of the 'sheikhs' as interpreters or spokesmen was also apparent after 1910. They were frequently reported to speak Arabic, suggesting the continuing importance of linguistic knowledge in their selection.[151] More generally, links to Nubi culture and previous experience of the *turuk* remained significant; for example, the Makaraka of Meridi District were reported to be living "under a man

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[144] Stigand, *Equatoria*, p. 42.
[145] Shaw, 'Trek No. 1 (Lado Enclave 3rd Jan – 30th Jan)' (n.d., 1911), CMS Acc. 111, F1.
[146] Interview with Simon Wani Ramba, 10 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[147] Interview with Festo Limi Sominda, 14 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[148] Interview with Gajuk Wurnyang Lupaya, 28 Nov. 2002, Khartoum; Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 40, fn 1.
[149] Owen, 'Report on Tour of inspection in Moru and Niambara districts', June 1911, *SIR* 205, Aug. 1911, PRO WO 106 6224.
[150] *SIR* 213, April 1912, PRO WO 106 6224.
[151] Owen, 'Notes on Enclave', 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51; Owen, 'Report on Tour of inspection in Moru and Niambara districts', June 1911, *SIR* 205, Aug. 1911, PRO WO 106 6224; *SIR* 195, Oct. 1910, PRO WO 106 234.

repatriated from Khartoum".[152] Chief Madreggi, a Moru, had been one of Arabi Dafalla's *jehadia*, and was known as a 'great linguist'.[153] Similarly, members of Chief Ramadalla's family in Yei were Muslims; his sister had lived in Omdurman, and her brother-in-law claimed to have been in Darfur with Ali Dinar and later to have fought under Arabi.[154] Thus the 'chiefs' assumed by the British to be 'traditional' authorities embodied the local adaptations to the foreign incursions of the nineteenth century.

### *4.2 Patronage and Force*

Not all chiefs had such origins however; the varied contingency of early colonial chiefship was also reflected in an example like Kajo-Kaji, where the rain priests became chiefs while the powerful land custodians became sub-chiefs.[155] According to one interviewee, the colonial governments found it easy to reinforce the authority of the Kuku rain chiefs, because of the 'cattle culture'. They were already wealthy in cattle (as Chief Kajo-Kaji's name reflected), and appear to have retained or rebuilt their herds at a time when most were being wiped out by disease. The area was well-situated to dominate trade between the Yei area and Uganda: the Kuku were reported to have bought ivory from the Lugbare and Kakwa with sheep and goats and then sold the ivory to Ugandan traders for cattle.[156] As elsewhere, the early chiefs tended to dominate such trade in ivory, and they were also given cattle by the colonial governments.[157] Wealth in cattle enhanced their power by giving them influence over the marriages of their dependents.

Other chiefs - often inherited from the Belgian regime, which had rewarded useful chiefs with cattle and guns - also played a role as patrons or 'big men'. Their wealth enabled them to gain followers, which could then enhance their military strength, and gain them further clients. They retained alliances with 'wakils' by giving them

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[152] *SIR* 201, April 1911, PRO WO 106 6224.
[153] EPMD July 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[154] Richardson, A/Governor to A/D.C. Yei, 24 Sept 1931, NRO EP 2/23/86.
[155] *SIR* 201, April 1911, PRO WO 106 6224; Stigand, Inspector Rejaf Merkaz, to Governor, 6 March 1911, NRO IN 2/29/239; Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[156] Vanden Plas, cited by Huntingford, *Northern Nilo-Hamites*, pp. 44-5.
[157] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231.

guns or livestock.[158] Lukudu, Bengali and Kape were some of the most prominent examples in the former Enclave, and all succeeded in remaining recognised as chiefs under the British, and being succeeded by their sons.[159]

However, while patronage relationships might involve the performance of certain obligations by clients, this would not extend to all the labour and tax demands made by the government. Administrators in some cases therefore had to use government soldiers to enforce the authority of a chief. For example when Bengali died in 1914 and his son succeeded him, Lugware clients living in his community rose up under their own leader Debbe and refused to supply porters to the mamur, reportedly seeking to escape from 'government supervision'. The government sent a patrol, which burnt Debbe's villages and left behind soldiers to 'protect' Bengali's successor.[160] Similarly in the Kuku area, Inspector Stigand and his mamur led patrols against resisting Kuku villages in 1912, who were led by "a man of some standing, but not a chief, by name Kazwali", who was 'giving trouble' to the local chief.[161] The takeover of the Lado Enclave had also involved deliberate displays of the military force of the state.[162] While force alone could not have conferred lasting legitimacy, it may have further convinced people of the value of the protection that a government-recognised chief could provide.

Force was also employed in Lokoiya country east of the Nile. When the Sudan Government took over the area from Uganda in 1914, it recognised Jada lo Rugang as chief of Lyria. By the following year however, he had 'resigned' as chief, handing over the role to a Latuka man named Lokidi. The records suggest that Jada returned in 1917, but he was clearly uncomfortable as government chief.[163] Simonse argues that in this area the ruling *monyomiji* made it difficult for chiefs to cooperate with

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[158] Owen to Percival, Senior Insp. Loka-Kagulu District, 1 July 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.
[159] Bangali had 100 rifles and raided neighbours: 'Notes on the Lado Enclave by the Lado Commission, 1910', NRO MP 1/8/51; Lukudu "was much used by the Belgians to raid other chiefs, and possesses a large herd of cattle (about 2000), most of which were captured by Belgian order from the Madi tribe to the south": Shaw, 'Trek from Rejaf to Loka', March 1911, CMS Acc. 111, F3.
[160] *SIR* 238, May 1914, PRO WO 106 6225.
[161] *SIR* 213, April 1912, PRO WO 106 6224.
[162] Owen, 'Occupation of the Lado Enclave' May-June 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.
[163] 'Tribal no. 20, Liria', NRO JD 1/1/2.

the government.[164] In 1918, Lokoiya from Ilangari attacked a police patrol, claiming that the police Onbashi, who they killed, had been too heavy-handed in demanding carriers. They went on to attack mail carriers and merchants in the area, until a company of the Equatorial Battalion was sent, resulting in the deaths of 48 Lokoiya.[165] Further unrest over carriers was reported from the area in 1920.[166] In this area then, people adopted outright resistance to the colonial government, rather than following the strategy of relying on a 'chief' to negotiate in their interests. This was partly because of a stronger institution of collective authority in the *monyomiji*, and partly because the demand for porters had exacerbated hostility, especially among the junior men of the age-set below the *monyomiji*.[167]

### *4.3 Division of Powers*

Where government demands were particularly excessive, the role of government chief was thus bound to have been a difficult one. This may have resulted in further community or individual decisions to separate functions and powers, as had already often occurred near the Nile.[168] Fajelu traditions recall the 'splitting' of powers in the early colonial period: "the administration was given to neutral people. They could be from the same family, so they would say so-and-so you become responsible for rain and for witchcraft, but this man we are keeping him for a special case which is administration".[169] In 1914 the new Belinian rain chief Molodiang declared himself unable to perform "the two onerous roles of Rain Chief and Government Chief", and requested that his relative Logunu take on the latter, a division which would remain permanent.[170] It appears that Jada of Lyria was also trying to pass the burden of the administrative role to Lokidi, whose Latuka ancestry may indicate a client status. Similarly at Lumer, the headman Faragalla was a Moru who had been seized by Arab raiders as a child and sold to the rain chief's family: "today at

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[164] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 134, 176.
[165] MPIR Aug. 1918, NRO IN 2/48/408.
[166] Latuka DMIR, Jan. and April 1920, NRO MP 1/4/27.
[167] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 176-7.
[168] Interview with Serafino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[169] Interview with Simon Wani Ramba, 10 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[170] Beaton, 'A Chapter', p. 192

Lumer, the true son is Rain Chief and the bought but later adopted child Faragalla is headman".[171]

A distinction was thus being made between the administrative functions of government chiefs, and other forms of power which continued to exist, a process encouraged, though not fully understood, by the colonial administrators. Their invented notion of a 'chief' or 'sheikh' was appropriated and reshaped by the people of the region as they sought to get the best deal out of their relations with the colonial administration, and as the 'chiefs' themselves forged greater prestige for their position. They were pushed or drawn increasingly into acting as intermediaries at the interface between government and local society, a role which required a growing degree of specialist knowledge or experience.

*4.4 Displays of authority*

As part of these processes, chiefs were coming into contact more with the foreign administrators and their centres. They were invited to attend rituals and ceremonies, such as meeting the Governor at Rejaf in 1910, when they all had to take part in a dance. The following year the chiefs of Lado District returned to Rejaf to meet the Governor-General Wingate at a lavish ceremony in which they were presented with gifts of clothing or decorations.[172] Soon after, a group of chiefs and relatives of chiefs, including Kape of the Makaraka, Ramadalla of Yei district, and the son of the Moru chief Niari, were taken on a visit to Khartoum, for which they had reportedly volunteered enthusiastically.[173] Chiefs on a more routine basis had to come in to district headquarters, and were even encouraged to have 'town houses', where they could stay while on 'government business'.[174] They seem to have enjoyed bringing cases to the administrators to be settled, seeing it as an opportunity to meet and talk with each other, and gain news which they could then bring back to their communities.[175]

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[171] 'Tribal no. 20, Liria', NRO JD 1/1/2.
[172] *SIR* 193, Aug. 1910, PRO WO 106 234; *SIR* 199, Feb. 1911, PRO WO 106 6224
[173] Owen, 'Report on Tour of inspection in Moru and Niambara districts', June 1911, *SIR* 205, Aug. 1911, and *SIR* 207, Oct 1911, both PRO WO 106 6224.
[174] Shaw, Yei, 25 July 1917, CMS Acc. 111, F4.
[175] Owen, 'Occupation of the Lado Enclave' May-June 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.

Partly as a result of these experiences, chiefs were increasingly adopting rituals or badges of their office. The practice of wearing European military outfits and having 'retinues' or 'bands' with rifles or older guns, and bugles and drums, remained particularly common in the former Enclave territory.[176] It also spread beyond though, with Moru sheikhs reported to be wearing khakis and busbies presented them by the Governor-General.[177] In addition, tables and chairs, tobacco pipes, papers, and even a metal boat bought with ivory from a Khartoum merchant, were displayed by chiefs, with a symbolism beyond their practical use.[178] It may be that the government demands for tax and labour forced chiefs to make new demands on their people, and that they therefore turned to new outward displays and badges of authority in order to underline their right to make such demands.[179] On the other hand they may have used these displays more to impress the government visitors than their own people.

Finally, by 1920 there were also signs of the development of new forms of expertise and ritual within the chiefly sphere of knowledge. Towards the end of this period, the first Christian missions began to set up schools in Yei and then Juba. They requested chiefs to send their sons, and some chiefs began to associate themselves more with the missions, and to welcome assistance from the first graduates of the mission schools.[180] There is little evidence regarding the judicial role of chiefs at this time, but there is occasional mention of them settling cases.[181] More significantly, it was reported in 1915 that "the local chiefs are said to copy in their courts all the procedure and formalities of a Government office".[182] Thus chiefs were not only bringing back physical badges and news from their visits to government centres, but

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[176] Storrar, 'Letters From the Sudan, vol. 5', 15 April – 17 June, 1917, SAD 53/1/1-536.
[177] Owen, 'Report on Tour of inspection in Moru and Niambara districts', June 1911, *SIR* 205, Aug. 1911, PRO WO 106 6224.
[178] Owen, 'Occupation of the Lado Enclave' May-June 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51; Shaw, 'Trek No. 2 (West into Bahr El Ghazal Province and then South returning through the Lado Enclave) 4 April - 25 June, prob. 1911, CMS Acc. 111, F1; Gwynne, 'Diary June-July 1911', CMS Acc. 18, F1/49; Spence to mother, Yei, 15 July 1915, SAL D12/202/1-19.
[179] See Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, p. 188.
[180] Gibson, Yei, 18 Dec. 1918, 5 Dec. 1921, Sept. 1922, CMS G3 AL.
[181] Spence to mother, Yei, 29 May 1915, SAL D12/202/1-19.
[182] Crowfoot, Director of Education to Governor-General, 'Education in MP', 14 June 1915, CMS G3 SO.

were beginning to display their knowledge through the new rituals and mysteries of administration.

## Conclusion

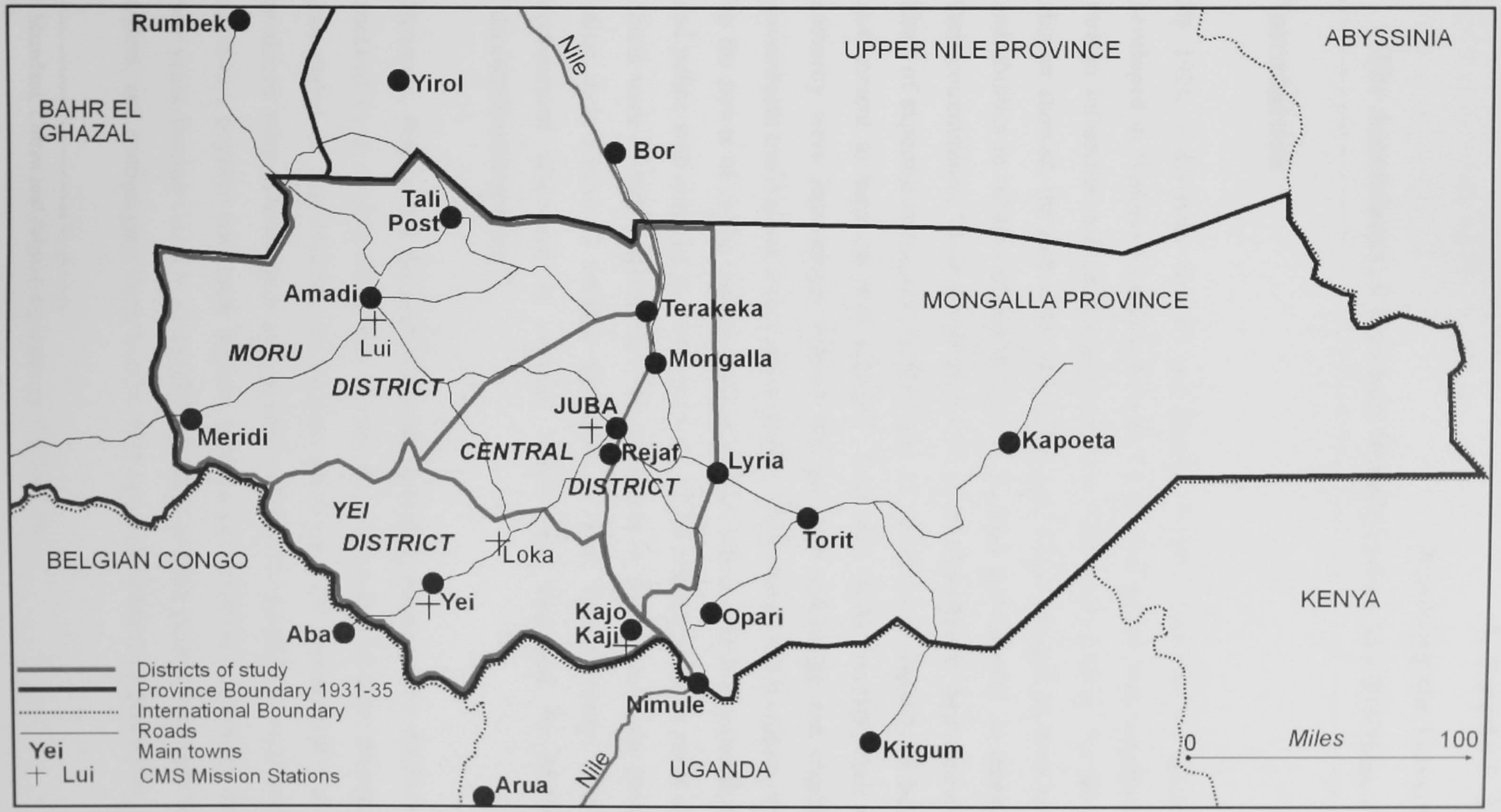
The period up to about 1920 has been characterised by historians of Southern Sudan as a period of military administration.[183] By 1920, the Khartoum Government was expressing concern at the extent of force being employed by the Mongalla administration on a regular basis, both in terms of corporal punishment, and punitive patrols.[184] The following year, a rising by sections of Mandari and Aliab Dinka in retaliation for the extent of force employed by the government, especially the mamur, resulted in further use of military force to subdue it.[185] This was the last serious confrontation or patrol in Western Mongalla, so that it could be seen to mark the end of a period of 'conquest' or 'pacification'.

However, such depictions obscure the complexity of the processes of adjustment already going on before 1921. Force was a significant element of relations between the colonial government and the chiefs and people in this period, but it was not the only story. It is also possible to see the evolution of the government chiefs, from very diverse origins, into something akin to an institution, with more homogenous functions and appearances. Whether they had seized their position through their own endeavours, or been pushed into it by their communities, or by accidents of British identification, their role increasingly demanded forms of knowledge and experience that were distinct from other kinds of power. In some cases this led to a clear division of functions by communities, while elsewhere rain chiefs or big men took on the administrative functions with varying degrees of success. But what is apparent overall is the recognition by communities themselves of the need for someone suitable to play the role of 'chief', however they translated that concept, in order to manage relations with 'government' in their best interests. New symbols or objects of authority had also evolved, such as clothing, guns and other trade goods, and were perhaps beginning to replace rain as the most potent expression of political power, even if the latter remained a crucial component of moral authority within communities.

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[183] E.g. Daly, *Empire*, pp. 396-7.
[184] Daly, *Empire*, p. 151.
[185] MPIR May 1918, June 1920, NRO IN 2/48/408; Governor Willis, UNP, to CS, re 'The Future of the Mamour', 16 March 1929, NRO CS 1/11/36; MPIR Oct.-Nov. 1921, NRO IN 2/30/251.

From the 1920s, the British administrators would become increasingly concerned (in theory) with how 'true' or 'traditional' the chiefs of Mongalla were. They would also seek to make their authority more defined and permanent. But it is important to recognise the fluidity and dynamism of 'tradition', as the changes of the nineteenth century demonstrate. By 1920, the 'chiefs' were neither the product of a timeless tradition of hereditary rulers, nor were they a novel and despotic form of authority imposed by colonial governments and heralding the destruction of all previous political tradition. Instead they were emerging as an institution which combined elements of longer-standing traditions of authority with newer forms of knowledge that had developed to meet the needs of the changing situation in Western Mongalla. From the 1920s, their role would continue to adapt and develop, particularly as the managers of relations with a government that would increasingly seek to intervene in the lives of the people of this region.




Map showing Yei, Moru and Central Districts with 1935 boundaries, based on 'Equatorial Province: Mongalla Administrative Districts' map, in L. F. Nalder, *Equatorial Province Handbook*, Vol. 1 *Mongalla* (Khartoum, 1936).

# Chapter Three

## Knowing the Government:

## The Ascendancy, Crisis and Domestication of Chiefship, 1921-56

### Introduction

By 1921, a diversely derived and loosely defined institution of chiefship had developed in Western Mongalla through the interactions between communities and foreign influences and governments since the nineteenth century. As the previous chapter showed, the role of the chiefs had been largely shaped by their knowledge and abilities in relation to foreigners and external 'government', as recognised by their communities. Their actual authority varied according to their access to other kinds of expertise and power, notably rain, as well as to the capacity of the colonial government to back up their authority. From the 1920s however, their role and authority were increasingly defined through their knowledge and experience of government institutions, rituals and symbols. The government was intent on building up the power of chiefs through policies of devolution, which invested their courts and police with some of the coercive force of the colonial state. In many cases, the chiefs were therefore appearing to be the agents or employees of the government, using their courts to enforce obedience to their own authority, in a pattern documented elsewhere in colonial Africa, and described by Mamdani as 'decentralised despotism'.[1]

However, from about the mid-1930s the increasing power of the chiefs would be checked by a number of factors. Firstly they lost some of their monopoly over knowledge of government, as mission education and government bureaucracy produced other interlocutors and generally diluted the prestige of such knowledge. Secondly, popular resistance became increasingly disabling, especially during the war years, forcing chiefs to accept their inability to force people to comply with their orders, and encouraging them to rely more on consultation and persuasion. Thirdly,

[1] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, especially pp. 23,43-48, 54.

the provincial government underwent a fundamental shift in its thinking, partly as a result of the wider theoretical changes outlined in Chapter One, and partly through observation of this resistance and of the maintenance or development of more collective kinds of authority. The colonial discourse of local governance shifted from building up the chiefs to favouring a more 'democratic' and 'clan'-based system. This in turn may have reflected an increasingly vocal competition with the chiefs from those claiming to be 'clan-heads' or sub-chiefs.

Caught between the contradictory and yet partially converging expectations and pressures of the government and their people, the chiefs were thus under considerable pressure from the late-1930s. Their responses varied, but the majority seem to have adapted their role through both innovation and recourse to elements of local political tradition. They increasingly developed their role in adjudication and arbitration and emphasised their skills of consensus-building in the community. They also re-emphasised their ability to be gatekeepers, concealing and defending their communities. Some of them found new ways to demonstrate the value of their knowledge of government, especially if they were literate and had been employed in the administration previously. They used a newer language of development, modernity and rights to depict themselves as the spokesmen for the interests of their people. The real test of the effectiveness of these various strategies, however, would come in the last decade of colonial rule, when the authority of the chiefs would come under new pressures as a result of the sudden shift to elected political bodies and engagement with national politics, and the emergence of the first 'Southern politicians'.

## 1. The Ascendancy of the Chiefs

### *1.1 Devolution*

As Chapter One showed, the 1920s saw the formal adoption of indirect rule by the Sudan Government.[2] The Governor of Mongalla, Brock, voiced the changing rhetoric in 1924: "I think in the past there has been too great a tendency to support the people against the chiefs", preventing them exerting "a useful authority".[3] In fact, changes in local governance had already begun, through the institution of government-recognised courts. First introduced in Ugandan territory before 1914, these 'Lukikos', made up of six to eight chiefs, were set up by district officials in Western Mongalla between 1921 and 1924.[4] The actual court procedures varied between districts, but the overall pattern was for cases to be heard by the court and then their decisions reported to the D.C. or Mamur for recording and, if necessary, sentencing with magisterial powers.[5]

An integral accompaniment to the development of the courts was the creation of chiefs' police: "the natural concomitant of chiefs courts".[6] Each chief was to have three or four retainers to enforce his orders and the decisions of the court, and to arrest criminals. They were exempt from poll tax and their clothes and 'old' guns were to be paid for by the court fees and fines; an early step towards financial devolution.[7] The policemen were also to help chiefs in their tasks of building or repairing roads and rest-houses, but their primary role, in government eyes, was to uphold the authority of the chiefs: "[t]hey will see that the Chief is respected".[8]

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[2] For the details of government policy, see Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 52-84.
[3] Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[4] Barber, 'Moving Frontier', p. 32; Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131. In Buganda, a lukiko was the term for a council, but in northern Uganda it "evolved into a meeting of government appointed chiefs... held largely to try judicial cases and to pass information and orders from higher to lower levels": Burke, *Local Government*, p. 37.
[5] Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2; (anon.) 'Notes on Chiefs Courts in Yei and Loka' (1924), NRO MP 1/1/2.
[6] Brock to CS, 27 June 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[7] D.C. Holland, 'Lukiko district order no. 2: Chiefs Police', 21 Sept. 1923; D.C. Central District to Governor, 25 Nov. 1926, both NRO MP 1/1/2.
[8] D.C. Holland, 'Lukiko district order no. 2: Chiefs Police', 21 Sept. 1923, NRO Mongalla Province 1/1/2.

The 1920s also saw the removal of mamurs from the Province, making the direct relationship between D.C.'s and chiefs more significant. As the previous chapter noted, the mamurs received scant or negative coverage in reports, but they were often the principal supervisors of the early courts and the main executive and judicial officers, under the D.C.'s.[9] Yet British reports were contradictory. Mamurs were seen on the one hand as insensitive to local culture, and on the other hand as conniving with the chiefs: "[t]he usual type which is sent south is not desirable. when touring a District they drink Merissa with the Chiefs, and generally at some time or other, break the Game laws and arrange with the Chiefs to conceal it".[10] The Aliab Dinka rising of 1919, in which Major Stigand lost his life, was blamed on the 'malpractices' of the Mamur, and by 1924-5 all Egyptian mamurs were being evacuated from the Province.[11] Administrators seized the opportunity to deprecate the possibility of their being replaced by Sudanese sub-mamurs, who might seek to 'lord it over' the 'native chief', and so between 1921 and 1931 the number of mamurs or sub-mamurs in the Province were reduced from around twenty to just one.[12] In welcoming their removal, Governor Skrine in 1929 emphasised that such 'liaison officers' were not necessary in order to gain "insight into native feeling". Instead "[a] method of improving touch which may often succeed is to enlist in the police a native of the tribe to be administered (preferably a son of the chief) and in later years to make use of him in the administration of his tribe."[13]

Skrine was clearly a major proponent of indirect rule, and (apparently unintentionally) revealed the ironies of the doctrine: "[a]mong primitive natives who are not naturally subject to an organised tribal discipline... obedience to the reasonable orders of their tribal chiefs is one of the first essentials to be inculcated".[14] He directed the drafting of the 1931 Chiefs' Courts Ordinance, which

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[9] Holland, 'Lukikos District order No. 1: The Formation of Lukikos in the Moru Aliab district', 15 Sept. 1923; Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924; and Mamour Mongalla, 'Bari-Mandaris Habits and Laws of Legislation together with adopted rules for Mongalla district chiefs court', 11 Sept. 1924, all NRO MP 1/1/2.

[10] Maynard, enclosure in Governor Balfour to CS, 're The Future of the Mamour', 2 May 1929, NRO CS 1/11/36.

[11] Governor Willis, UNP, to CS, 're The Future of the Mamour', 16 March 1929, NRO CS 1/11/36.

[12] CS to Governors, 'Sudanese sub-mamur system and decentralisation', 20 Oct. 1924, NRO CS 50/2/10; Redfern to Nalder, 29 Jan. 1931, NRO CS 50/16/65.

[13] A. W. Skrine, 'Notes on current topics in Mongalla Province', March 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104.

[14] Skrine to CS, 5 Jan. 1927, NRO CS 1/39/104.

marked the formalisation of the system of courts that had developed locally under the direction of individual colonial administrators. The Ordinance gave 'legal sanction' to the Lukikos, now termed 'B' Courts, and allowed sentences of imprisonment, fines or lashes, granting head-chiefs third-class magisterial powers. It also provided for the creation of 'A' Courts, consisting of just one chief, with headmen or elders appointed by him, which were intended to deal with the bulk of cases, so that the B courts could become more like appeal courts.[15] At the same time, salaries were introduced, or formalised, for chiefs, which gave further incentive to administrators to carry out 'amalgamations' of smaller chiefdoms under 'head-chiefs', to reduce the numbers of chiefs drawing salaries, and to create what they saw as 'viable' units of administration.[16] By 1929 the numbers of chiefs in Yei District had already been reduced from 56 to thirteen.[17] The rest of the chiefs were reduced to 'sub-chiefs', and received remuneration for tax collection rather than salaries.[18] Chiefs were made responsible for paying their own police and other staff by the mid-30s, and they were increasingly expected to supervise a range of activities, from maintenance of roads, resthouses, court houses and jails, to the introduction of new crops.[19]

The shift from a military to civilian administration during the 1920s also meant that Inspectors, or D.C.'s as they became, tended to spend longer periods of service in the province. The Southern D.C.'s, or 'Bog Barons' have attracted the attention of historians for their idiosyncratic and authoritarian styles of government.[20] An example of such a long-serving administrator was Major Maynard, who attended court sessions in Yei district and "intervened authoritatively in the hearing of cases".[21] He also welcomed the development of the courts as a channel of communication, asserting that "a D.C. in the South can now feel the pulse of his

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[15] Governor MP to Governor UNP, 'Notes on native courts', 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[16] Governor Balfour to FS, 5 May 1930, NRO CS 1/39/104; (anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[17] *Sleeping Sickness Annual Report* 1919, NRO MP 1/6/39; Nalder, *Province Handbook*, p. 60.
[18] Governor Balfour to FS, 5 May 1930, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[19] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[20] E.g. Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 15-16, 176.
[21] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.

people much better than he could before, through the Native Courts".[22] The depiction of Southern D.C.'s as exercising virtual direct rule in their districts should be tempered by an awareness of their limitations and inability to supervise such huge areas closely; hence their desire to centralise authority in fewer chiefs and to use the courts as a source of information. They built up personal relationships with the chiefs, who were thus established as the principal interlocutors between government and people.

*1.2 Chiefs' Courts and Police*

Initially in the 1920s, some of the chiefs seem to have viewed the new courts as an unwelcome government imposition. In Mongalla District, Lukiko rules included fines for chiefs who failed to attend, and in 1926 it was suggested that paying chiefs by the session might encourage them to try to be selected for the court, and increase their 'interest' in it.[23] The novelty of a judicial role for some chiefs was hinted at in the Governor's wish for the courts to "inculcate" in the chiefs that they should be settling cases.[24] However, the chiefs also began to take advantage of the opportunities for enhancing their own prestige and authority. Administrators had this intention when they laid down rules for the court buildings and furniture which spatially and physically demonstrated the status of the chiefs.[25] Presidents of courts were given "a badge of office", and chiefs were also given rifles and bicycles, with emphasis on the need for them to move around among their people and supervise road maintenance.[26] Thus foreign clothing, badges and objects continued to symbolise the role of the 'foreigners'' or 'government' chief.

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[22] Maynard, enclosure in Governor Balfour to CS, 're The Future of the Mamour', 2 May 1929, NRO CS 1/11/36.
[23] Mamour Mongalla, 'Bari-Mandaris Habits and Laws of Legislation together with adopted rules for Mongalla district chiefs court', 11 Sept. 1924; D.C. Central District to Governor, 25 Nov. 1926, both NRO MP 1/1/2.
[24] Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[25] E.g. Holland, 'Lukikos District order No. 1: The Formation of Lukikos in the Moru Aliab district', 15 Sept. 1923, NRO MP 1/1/2. The spectacle of the chief's court was of similar significance in the Nuba Mountains: Willis, 'Violence, Authority', p. 107.
[26] Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2; Governor Balfour to FS, 16 Aug. 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104; *SIR* 365, Dec. 1925, PRO WO 33 999.

An increasingly central aspect of court and government ritual was the use of writing and the recording of court cases, in the vernacular and/or English. With limited numbers of literate clerks, this initially ensured the involvement of D.C.'s or Mamurs, but gradually knowledge of writing would become increasingly valued by chiefs themselves. The Yei B Court president was chosen not because he was the 'bigger' chief, but because he was "the only one that can read and write".[27] In general though, most chiefs were still illiterate and therefore the written court record was more a symbol than a skill.[28] From 1931, the court procedures were also more regulated, requiring trained clerks, and further imbued with ritual and symbols. For example, each court received a warrant, "a notable and ornate document, adorned with a seal... [to] be framed and hung in the Court House".[29] In 1931, a murder enquiry by Amadi court resulted in "a voluminous document in Moru, the first of its kind", reflecting the increasing prominence of the written record in government procedures.[30] Even the A courts were each supposed to keep their own records.[31]

As well as defining their role and sphere of knowledge more through 'government' rituals and symbols, the courts also offered chiefs the opportunity to gain wider information to take back to their homes. Just as administrators welcomed the courts as channels of communication, no doubt the role of chiefs as disseminators of information enhanced their status and value in the eyes of their communities. "The native is an inveterate gossip and no surer means of spreading a government order and the reason for it can be adopted than by explaining it to all assembled at a Chiefs' Court and allowing them to discuss it".[32] Courts were also an opportunity to meet with other chiefs and cement a distinct sense of identity.

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[27] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[28] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[29] (Anon.) 'Note on Southern Governors' views regarding draft chiefs courts ordinance', 13 Jan 1931, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[30] 'Extract Mongalla diary', March 1931, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[31] Governor MP to Governor UNP, 'Notes on native courts', 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[32] Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2. See similar function of court as chiefs' meeting in Simon Roberts, 'Tswana Government and Law in the Time of Seepapitso, 1910-1916', in Mann and Roberts, *Law in Colonial Africa*, pp. 167-84.

In the common pattern in colonial Africa outlined by Chanock then, the chiefs' courts became the means of enforcing the authority of the local authorities.[33] In 1924 the proceedings of the Amadi court reported that more than a third of cases related to 'tribal discipline', including refusals to perform labour or pay tax, and moving from one chief to another.[34] The early court regulations further emphasised the authority and rights of chiefs, including claims to a tusk or leg of hunted game, to labour in the chief's cultivation "to enable him to entertain guests, soldiers, other chiefs etc", and to absolute obedience to their orders; "[a]ll men under a chief are to be entirely under his control". Even fines for adultery were higher if it was an offence against the chief's family.[35] The courts will be discussed further in Chapter Six, but it is clear that there were opportunities for the chiefs to manipulate the initial recording of 'tribal laws' to their own advantage.

In light of the novelty of producing written laws, and the extent of control and direction exercised by the D.C.'s, it is hardly surprising that these so-called 'native' courts were regarded by the people as "purely Government institutions", as a Governor of Mongalla would later complain. He added that the early courts were characterised by "an aping of what they thought were our ideas and our laws; and a tendency on the part of the chiefs police to push people about, make them stand at attention and so forth."[36] As the previous chapter showed, the early colonial governments had been largely experienced as extractive and violent; now the chiefs were appropriating some of that coercive force and using the courts to display it. At the same time, the government was seeking to regulate the chiefs' own coercive resources through the recognition and appropriation of chief's police. As the previous chapter showed, many chiefs had already had their own 'retinues' or 'bodyguards', as one D.C. explained in 1931:

> The Chiefs have what are known as 'shirkeli' and called Government police and BASINGARI, who are known and called the Chiefs police or retainers.

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[33] Chanock, *Law, Custom*, esp. pp. 113-23.
[34] (Anon.) 'Amadi District Notes on Chiefs Courts', 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[35] Maynard, D.C. Opari-Yei district, to Governor, 'Lukiko regulations', 2 Jan. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.; Mamour Mongalla, 'Bari-Mandaris Habits and Laws of Legislation together with adopted rules for Mongalla district chiefs court', 11 Sept. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[36] Governor MP to Governor UNP, 'Notes on native courts', 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42.

> It is likely that these are really more powerful than what we call Chiefs police. You will try to get the better BASINGARI to become Chiefs police.[37]

These linguistic terms are interesting: 'shirkeli' or 'Serikali' was used widely in East Africa to mean 'government', and in Uganda to mean 'soldiers'.[38] 'Basingari' derives from *bazinqir*, the private slave-soldiers of the Khartoum traders in Southern Sudan.[39] Their meeting in the idea of the chiefs' police symbolises the pulling together of different historical experiences of extraneous power in the region. In an attempt to make the chiefs' police more regulated and official, they were given uniforms, shipped from Britain, and badges as "outward signs of their authority".[40] Yet this is likely to have only added to the impression that they and the courts belonged to the external domain of the government.

### *1.3 The Government Chief*

The association of the chiefs with government may have invested them with a degree of force and power, but it also restricted them to one sphere of knowledge and authority. Other kinds of authority therefore continued to function, as a report from 1931 revealed:

> [I]nvestigations have elicited the existence of indigenous Chiefs' Courts generally under the big rain chiefs assisted by tribal elders... It also appears that in the native mind our chiefs' courts are regarded rather as Government than as Native Courts.[41]

This was particularly true for the Bari area, where:

> [C]ases have continually been heard by Rainmakers and headmen in council... [and] villages have always had a 'putet' to decide local cases. A further complication is that in some cases the Rainmaker is not the chief, but

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[37] Richardson, D.C. HQ, to D.C. Moru, 26 June 1931, NRO EP 2/23/86 .
[38] Personal comment by Justin Willis; see also Brett L. Shadle, 'Patronage, Millenarianism and the Serpent God Mumbo in South-West Kenya, 1912-34', *Africa* 72, no. 1 (2002), pp. 29-54, for reference to Serikali in Kenya. The term 'Sirikali' is still used today in Sudan for the chiefs' police: Nasiwa, 'Baseline Survey'.
[39] Collins, *The Southern Sudan*, p. 14.
[40] Brock, Dep. Governor, to CS, 7 Oct. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2; Governor Balfour to FS, 16 Aug. 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[41] 'Diary', April 1931, NRO CS 1/39/104.

> continues to hold his local 'putet'. More investigation of the function of Monyekak and Rainmaker are essential before the courts can be said to be founded on a purely native basis.[42]

As these reports reflect, there was clearly a division of powers between 'government' and other kinds of authority, especially rain chiefs, who retained primary judicial functions while the chiefs' courts simply enforced administrative orders. The previous chapter showed that there was a tendency since the nineteenth century to split the functions of rain/political power and foreign relations, but it seems to have become more prevalent in the 1920s and 30s, occurring even in areas where the chiefs had previously also retained rain powers.[43] There were a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, despite their emphasis on 'traditional' authorities, administrators were increasingly hostile to rain-makers and 'ritual' authorities acting as chiefs. This was partly a prejudice against what one D.C. called "[a] useless lot of old scoundrels who play on the superstitious beliefs of the simple native", and partly a belief, based on experience, that rain chiefs did not meet the needs of government and were innately 'conservative'.[44] In other words, rain chiefs had an authority independent of government backing which generally made them less amenable to administrative demands.[45] In one case the D.C., Cooke, became so exasperated with the rain family as chiefs in Lyria that he imprisoned them and imposed a headman, Lolik Lado, as chief. He explained that the rain chiefs had been respected for their rain powers, but were (unsurprisingly) not seen as the 'representative of Government'.[46] The same D.C. led a policy in the 1930s of encouraging the replacement of older chiefs by their educated sons or relatives, though Lolik was the only one forcibly installed. The exception was the most prominent rain chief of all, Pitya Lugor, who refused to resign as chief, and whose people resisted amalgamation.[47]

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[42] (Anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[43] E.g. 'Diary', April 1931, NRO CS 1/39/104.: "The death occurred of Yokni Kerri a Bari rain chief... His son, who was educated by the Church Missionary Society, has succeeded him as chief but will not 'have the rain'."
[44] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131; (anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[45] See also Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, p. 123.
[46] (Anon.) 'Tribal no. 20 Liria', NRO JD 1/1/2.
[47] Nalder to CS, 2 April 1936, NRO CS 66/9/84.

The government was painfully aware of the authority of rain chiefs, and of its own belief in maintaining a hereditary chiefship; it was therefore ideal if an educated relative of the rain chief could be appointed as chief. A perfect example was the mission-educated chief of Belinian, Alessandro Muludiang Logunu, a member of the rain family, and allegedly able to trace his descent back for fifteen generations: "so here we have rain, hereditary [*sic*] and education on our sides!"[48] Chiefs themselves were clearly also using history to assert their own claims to hereditary authority; thus Pitya Lugor declared, "my chieftaincy is not new, it is an old state. Long ago when the Govt. came in this country, all the power was in the hand of my ancestors". He succeeded in being recognised as the only chief with "an ancient history" in the district.[49]

But secondly, many rain chiefs themselves were delegating the role of administrative chief to a (usually educated) relative, "whose raison d'etre is to relieve him of the growing burden of secular affairs".[50] As another official put it, the rain chiefs did not want to be bothered by "undue preoccupation with mundane matters".[51] Rain chiefs retained "the respect and confidence of the people" more effectively by remaining "the power behind the elected chief".[52] This suggests that the 'mundane' or 'secular' functions of the chief did not carry much status: "this is exactly why when you are a chief you do not have a lot of power… people expect you to do the work that they want".[53] Even in the courts – supposedly the arena of chiefs' expertise and power - it was reported in 1929 that, "the Chief's authority is not sufficiently established to enable him to keep order in the Court if the public are admitted".[54]

Senior elders in general were unlikely to want to become chief, seeing the fussing, ordering and deference to Europeans entailed as ill-befitting the dignity of their

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[48] (Anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[49] Chief Pitya Lugor to Governor-General, Sindiru, 4 Jan. 1936, NRO CS 66/9/84; (anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[50] 'Diary', April 1931, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[51] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[52] EPMD Dec. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[53] Interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Khartoum.
[54] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.

position.[55] A younger man with sufficient energy, and useful education, was often preferred.[56] One "elder statesman" thus refused a chiefship in favour of his educated nephew, because "the position could not sensibly increase his prestige and influence".[57] Such evidence challenges the idea of colonial chiefs as despots, with unlimited opportunity for profit and power. The chiefs' lack of authority *within* their communities may have undermined their ability to demand obedience, which in turn suggests that their reliance on coercive force was in fact a sign of weakness.

Thirdly, the people themselves seem to have retained a certain amount of control over the selection of chiefs, and were encouraging the division of powers: "[t]here is a tendency among the people themselves where a rainmaker's son becomes chief to give 'the rain' to his brother".[58] This may have been partly, as the Tonj D.C. suggested, "because a traditional chief had to be obeyed, and there were some government orders the people did not wish to obey."[59] But it also reflected the continuing popular recognition that certain kinds of knowledge enabled and equipped chiefs to deal more effectively with government. Increasingly this meant literacy and experience of government or mission employment. For example, in Tokiman on the death of Chief Lako Boreng in 1936, his half-brother Sambrino Soka, a hospital clerk, was "unanimously elected by the Bari elders".[60] These cases also reflect the apparent control over the succession maintained by communities, or at least by elders: "[t]he people themselves while tending to select within the family by no means regard the succession as passing necessarily to the son".[61] Even the Bari rain chief, Pitya Lugor, was unable to secure his son's succession in the face of opposition from both his people and the Bari Council of Chiefs; his educated nephew was chosen instead.[62]

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[55] Bravman, *Making*, pp. 111-16.
[56] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[57] Moru District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[58] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[59] Hawkesworth, D.C. Tonj, to Governor Equatoria, 17 July 1939, RHL MSS Perham 548/4.
[60] Harrison, Asst. D.C. Central District, to Senior Medical Inspector Equatoria, 16 Spet. 1936, NRO DK3 1/6/32. Other examples: EPMD Sep 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29; Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[61] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131; EPAR 1939, RHL MSS Perham 548/4.
[62] Juba District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.

Chiefs themselves were aware of the need to maintain an exclusive sphere of knowledge in order to maintain any legitimacy in the community: "[w]here they have no personal prestige and function merely as a result of Government backing they can hardly be expected to succeed".[63] This explains their generally favourable attitude towards the first missions, who in turn courted them; their sons were among the first pupils of the mission schools.[64] By 1924, Aluma, a prominent chief since Belgian days, had a village school run by his own educated son.[65] In Yei, chiefs were said to have "become most keen on education", to the extent of building schools and teachers' houses, and paying their salaries.[66] As well as training these teachers, the missions also recognised the potential need of chiefs for educated assistants: "some boys now know enough to be able to return to their homes and act as interpreters and write letters in English for their chiefs, and so save their fathers long journeys through the bush to and from Government posts".[67] The illiterate chiefs were even reported to be taught some reading and writing by their sons.[68] In Kajo Kaji, the chiefs are remembered as having requested the first mission station themselves, so keen were they on the idea of education:

> The story was that they got a meeting, a border meeting between the chiefs of Uganda and the Sudan. During this meeting our chiefs were impressed by the educated Ugandans who took the minutes of the conference, the clerks. So the chiefs asked the District Commissioner of Yei that they want a mission to come there… [and] our first educated children came from the families of the chiefs.[69]

The mission focus on training the next chiefs also led to the mimicking of government procedures in schools, for example by electing schoolboy chiefs and holding courts, thus adding to the idea that they were accessing an exclusive government sphere of knowledge.[70]

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[63] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[64] Shaw, Yei, 25 July 1917, CMS Acc. 111, F4: "The Chiefs seem to really want their boys to learn to read and write". For narratives of Christian mission activity in Southern Sudan, see Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 197-48; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*.
[65] Director of Education, 'Report on education in Southern Sudan', 1 May 1924, CMS G3 SO.
[66] Finch, Yei, 5 May 1932, CMS G3 AL.
[67] Lea-Wilson, Juba, Nov. 1923, CMS G3 AL.
[68] Selwyn, Kajo Kaji, Oct. 1932, CMS G3 AL.
[69] Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[70] Selwyn, Loka, 1930, CMS G3 AL.

The ascendancy of the chiefs in the 1920s and '30s thus relied on their continuing monopoly of knowledge of the government, as well as their investment by the latter with a degree of coercive force. This period saw them using the courts to display and enforce their authority in a manner which at certain times and places may have approached despotism. They were always constrained by the continuing authority of rain chiefs and other powerful figures (who will be discussed more in later chapters), and by the collective conceptualisation of the government as an external domain. Yet this period also witnessed the consolidation of hereditary chiefship in Western Mongalla. Administrators, with typical unintended irony, welcomed this "evolution of the ruling families".[71] But this was not entirely a change wrought by administrators; it also drew on an apparent popular belief that knowledge could be embodied in family lines, as in rain priesthood. Hereditary chiefship also brought greater immunity from government intervention in selection, and communities could at least exert some choice over which relative succeeded. Nevertheless, the entrenched position of the chiefly families may have begun to arouse some jealousy and clan or family rivalries, contributing to tensions from the later 1930s.

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[71] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105; Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8. See also Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, pp. 181-218; Chanock, *Law, Custom*, p. 112.

## 2. Competition and Resistance, 1930s-40s

### *2.1 Losing the monopoly of knowledge*

Knowledge of Arabic had often been key to the recognition of the early chiefs by both people and colonial administrators; for example, one chief in Yei district with no rain powers was said to have gained his position simply through his "wide knowledge of bastard Arabic".[72] However, by 1930, it was decided that the language of the government should be English, not Arabic, as part of the Southern policy discussed in Chapter One. Many chiefs also remained illiterate, and so the government increasingly employed clerks and accountants at all levels to fulfil the bureaucratic functions of administration.[73] At the same time education was becoming more widely available beyond the chiefs' families: "when they saw that these children of chiefs and sub-chiefs were bringing home presents and that they were able to read and write and all this, they were encouraged and pupils began to rush".[74]

The relationships between the chiefs and the educated Christian staff of government and missions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. The chiefs saw them as potential rivals, particularly as they had a tendency, reported with concern by one missionary in 1925, to "strut about with an air of superiority because they could read and write and were 'men of Jesus'".[75] By the 1930s it was reported that, "[c]onstantly, troubles are arising between chiefs and teachers; the former tremendously jealous of the power and present popularity of the latter, continually plotting and working against them". One chief resorted to tyrannical means of crushing this competition, by declaring that "he would flog everyone in his village who was a believer."[76] More generally, though, chiefs were not alone in resenting the arrogance of teachers, and could rely on the support of other community authorities: "[t]oo often a young boy in this position seeks only to make himself an

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[72] EPMD Dec. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[73] In 1939 only 6 out of 16 Yei district chiefs had even basic literacy: Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[74] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[75] Fraser, Lui, 9 Nov. 1925, CMS G3 AL.
[76] Riley, Maridi and Yei, 30 Aug. 1934, CMS G3 AL.

important person in opposition to the local headmen or elders".[77] In the long run, teachers seem to have been respected for their education, but did not gain authority within the community. By 1941, as a candidate at the Juba training school wrote, "[n]owadays the majority of the people do not think much of the teachers' work".[78] Relationships with the chiefs were better where "the teachers respected the chiefs, they paid allegiance to them and showed their work to them".[79] In Yei district, even though most chiefs were not Christian, "[t]he presiding chief will in some of the courts call in the local teacher to open the court with prayer and a short Gospel message."[80] In such cases, the chiefs may have been co-opting the teachers to demonstrate their own link to the knowledge of the missions.[81]

Clerks on the other hand were much more intimately involved in the work of government and of the chiefs. By 1928, the Moru D.C. was recommending that chiefs' clerks be paid a salary; "[t]hey allow all communications from the District Commissioner to Chiefs to be sent in writing and assist in the collection of poll tax".[82] Especially when chiefs were still illiterate, they therefore had opportunity for financial gains; more than one court clerk was fired and imprisoned for embezzling tribute money.[83] According to interviewees, the chief's clerk was "the spokesman of the chief, the go-between between the chief and the people, explaining what the chief wants done to the people, and reports back to the chief about the people. So in that case he had a certain social status, he was given a special respect".[84] But status was not the same as power, as informants are keen to emphasise; the educated were respected and had a 'special place' in society, but were not powerful.[85] The government was even less impressed by them: chiefs' clerks in Yei district were described as "very crude products", lacking in accountancy skills.[86] Indeed, "[t]he

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[77] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99.
[78] Janson Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941', NRO DK3 1/6/29.
[79] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[80] Gibson, Yei, 1939, CMS G3 AL.
[81] See similar alliance between chiefs and educated Christians in Lango: Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, pp. 192-8.
[82] Brock, Dep. Governor to FS, 25.8.28, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[83] E.g. EPMD March 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53; Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[84] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[85] Interviews with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, and Serefino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002, Khartoum.
[86] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.

post of court clerk is not a career, it is not normally suitable for a grown man with wife and family".[87] People often disliked the clerks for their role in unpopular administrative measures, such as the issuing of passes to go to Uganda, and felt that they behaved arrogantly as a result.[88] In such cases the clerks may have been associated with the most unpopular aspects of the chiefs' work, and therefore been the first target of resentment.

More powerful than teachers or clerks were the provincial and district police. The police often had similar origins to the chiefs; many had previously been soldiers.[89] Increasingly they also had a degree of literacy, and were taught some basic English. They were also being given greater responsibilities and powers of criminal investigation. A complicated divorce case in Kajo Kaji in 1939, for example, was investigated and recorded by the Yei police sergeant, who also translated for the D.C. in the subsequent court case.[90] But the police were situated firmly in the government arena; those who reported matters to them rather than to the chiefs were seen as informers.[91]

The written record continued to gain in prominence in government procedures, especially in the courts; for example by 1946 administrators declared "the aim of substituting eventually the simple production of a written record for this mass of verbal evidence" in matrimonial court cases.[92] Increasing opportunities were emerging for educated men, especially in the district and Province headquarters, where 'Station Officers' were beginning to be recruited for administrative and police duties, usually drawn from the high ranks of the police or clerks.[93] Great emphasis was placed on their knowledge of English and they were expected by 1945 to keep station diaries, registers of information and records of police enquiries.[94] In 1938, the Juba training school opened to train Intermediate School graduates in clerical

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[87] 'Minutes of District Commissioners' meeting, Juba', Jan. 1939, NRO CS2 1/2/5; (anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[88] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham.
[89] John Winder, 'Fifty Years On: Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32.
[90] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 31.
[91] Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[92] EPMD Sept. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[93] E.g. EPMD Dec. 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78.
[94] Parr, 'Note for Mr Skeet', 20-30 Aug. 1942, NRO DK 57/1/1; also Cave, to 'Sir Hubert', 27 May 1945, NRO EP 1/1/2; (anon.) 'History of Station Officers', 23 Oct 1948, NRO EP 1/6/34.

skills and English.[95] Government work was becoming more respected and sought after, particularly in relation to mission employment, largely because it was better-paid. In 1947 Station Officers were granted third-class magisterial powers (equal to chiefs), and the following year their title was changed to 'Administrative Assistants'. Also in 1948 Southern candidates were eligible for the first time to sit exams for the newly reopened School of Administration in Khartoum, which trained mamurs and sub-mamurs.[96]

However, up to this point the influence of such people in the villages was limited; they were operating more in a distant government domain, though their wages might be welcomed. In contrast, the increasingly literate (to a basic extent at least) chiefs were being further installed as central figures in the community through written records. They were required to keep detailed and up-to-date registers of the population, which in Yei district involved the creation of chiefs' registries: "[s]uch little offices are really an intrinsic necessity to the reorganisation and control of the *Tribal documents* which operate administrative action"[97] [my italics]. Not only were chiefs being treated by administrators as the primary repositories of knowledge about their people and customs, but also that knowledge was increasingly embodied in records and registers.

The opportunities for clerks, policemen and teachers to gain authority or compete as interlocutors with government were limited; the chiefs held on to their position in this regard. But the effects of education nevertheless undermined the monopoly of chiefs over certain kinds of knowledge. In addition, the rituals of administration and the courts were also becoming more public and accessible, thus reducing their mystery and power. The chiefs' courts appear to have become more popular, partly for their very performance. In 1937 there were reported "signs that taking cases to a court might become a cheap recreation akin [to] free cinemas in England"; "all and sundry" were said to be attending the A courts.[98] Knowledge of their procedures gradually became more disseminated; in 1938 a man appealed to his B court,

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[95] Sandison to Morrison, Deputy Governor UNP, 21 Dec. 1938 and 9 Jan. 1939, NRO DK3 1/6/29.
[96] Beaton, Dep. Governor EP to CS, 22.9.48 and 4.12.48, NRO EP 1/6/34.
[97] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[98] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99; (anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.

because the chief in the A court had sentenced him to more lashes than the court warrant allowed.[99] Many chiefs and policemen were prosecuted in the B courts for unfair or illegal activities, and the use of the B courts as appeal courts seems to have been increasingly understood.[100] In 1945, the President of Kajo Kaji B court was fined by his own court for "favouritism towards a relative" in his A court, and this prompted a number of other complaints about him to be voiced, relating to financial misappropriation.[101] The growing popular manipulation of the courts will be discussed further in chapter 6, but it is important to see it as another way in which the mystique or power of chiefs' knowledge of government ritual was being gradually undermined and diluted.

### *2.2 Changing Government Discourse: The Clans*

At the same time, from the mid-1930s, the rhetoric and policies of the Provincial government were also favouring the chiefs less.[102] As Chapter 1 showed, the production of a *Tribal Survey* and a *Province Handbook* by Governor Nalder prompted a revision to ideas of tradition and native authority:

> The idea of the executive chief, completely foreign to their own conceptions, was fathered on the tribes by the incoming Egyptians and Europeans… One fact which has only recently emerged is the extreme importance in the social structure of many tribes, of the *clans*… the African of these parts is *essentially democratic*.[103] [My italics]

In 1938, there was therefore a change from individual poll tax assessment to a clan tribute, which was supposed to be allocated and collected by the clan heads according to wealth and age within the clan; the intention was to encourage a sense

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[99] EPMD Nov. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[100] E.g. YDMD March, Sept. 1942 and Dec. 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87; EPMD Feb. 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42; Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[101] YDMD March 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[102] For the wider British rhetoric from the 1930s emphasising 'public opinion' and the danger of autocratic chiefs, see Shadle, 'Changing Traditions', p. 428; Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, p. 143. For the British preference for clan heads as a more effective means of recruiting labour, see John Lonsdale, 'The Politics of Conquest in Western Kenya, 1894-1908', in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, Vol. 1, pp. 45-74, at p. 71.
[103] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.

of "corporate responsibility".[104] A year later however, the Yei D.C. was reporting difficulties: "[t]he collective idea has not yet been revived".[105] The effects of clan-based agricultural and land policies will be discussed in Chapter 4, but these again assumed a communal social structure.

There was some confusion in relation to the definition of a 'clan'. In Juba district the Bari clans were dispersed over the area, with sometimes only a few members in each village.[106] The government policies rather conceptualised a clan as a 'family group' within a village or chiefdom. In Moru district, this caused problems because many 'clans' had only two or three members; in the end it was agreed that "the territorial 'mukongo' [headman] basis is the only one that offers any prospect of the successful implementation of the tribute policy".[107] Administrators sought the 'original' clan heads from pre-colonial times, but in the past such a position is unlikely to have been so political or hereditary.[108] One D.C. hoped that the chiefs' registers of population would "impart a sense of cohesion to the family groups themselves", again revealing the disparity between government ideology and local realities.[109]

The greater government focus on communality and democracy led to some damning indictments of chiefship, summarised in 1938: "[t]he Chiefs have been so far the mouthpiece through which government orders have been issued to the people; the courts have been regarded as the government's way of settling cases."[110] Moru district was reported to be one of the worst examples:

> There appeared to be an absence of unity and mutual cooperation between chiefs and people; an absence on the part of the chief of a spirit of unselfish service towards his people, a lack of obedience and voluntary allegiance on the part of the people to their chiefs. The chiefs looked to their District

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[104] 'Central District Information Book', NRO JD 1/1/5; Governor Parr, 'Note circulated to D.C.'s on 20 Dec. 1938 on Taxation', NRO EP 2/2/8.
[105] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[106] Beaton, 'The Bari', p. 110; Lewis, 'Notes on Bari', SAD 600/7/1-49, pp. 6-20.
[107] EPMD Feb. 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42; Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97; Philip Yona Jambi, written reply, 2003, Khartoum; Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[108] Liversidge, Asst. D.C. Yei to Governor, 28.10.38, NRO EP 2/2/8. See also Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, pp. 143-5: clans in Lango had not played a political role and the 'clan leaders' chosen as headmen or sub-chiefs were simply prominent or wealthy men.
[109] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[110] EPAR 1938, NRO CS 57/25/103.

> Commissioner for instructions and support in their dealings with the people. The people's point of view did not secure adequate presentation and all parties in consequence suffered.[111]

The government, therefore, while still relying on the chiefs to carry out its demands, was also increasingly trying to ensure that they were effective as channels of representation for the views of 'the people'. It emphasised the danger of the chief becoming an 'autocrat', and it also pressed for fewer sentences of corporal punishment, welcoming "a sensible diminution in the number of men flogged" in 1939.[112] Symbolically, Governor Parr ordered the removal of chiefs' uniforms and badges to try to ensure that they were no longer seen as 'Government' chiefs.[113]

While the British concern with 'democratic' structures of local government reflected wider colonial rhetoric from the 1930s, it may well have also resulted from an increasingly vocalised set of claims within Western Mongalla. As the chiefly families had become entrenched, other prominent men may have emphasised the 'traditional' importance of clans and clan heads in order to make rival claims to authority.[114] The individuals in Western Mongalla designated as clan leaders, sub-chiefs and headmen are rarely prominent in the government records, but they must have played a significant role in the lower-level mediation between chiefs and people. In 1939, for example, the majority of cases in Yei district were reported to be handled initially by the unofficial sub-chiefs' courts.[115] It may well be that such people were responsible for the sudden government awareness of 'clans' in the 1930s; such competing claims to historical status or identity will be explored more in Chapter Six.

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[111] Moru District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[112] Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105; Yei and Moru District AR's, 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[113] Margery Perham, 'Native administration book: draft chapter on the South' (1946), RHL MSS Perham 542/5.
[114] See Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, pp. 215-6; Lonsdale, 'Conquest State, p. 38; 'Moral Economy', p. 330. See also Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, p. 124: peasants "fondly recalled alternative traditions of rule by lineage elders".
[115] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94; also Interview with Lubari Ramba, 31-8-04, Mitika, Yei.

### *2.3 Crisis and Resistance*

The years of the Second World War marked something of a crisis of confidence in the chiefs on the part of both government and people. The war effort, together with further policies of devolution, greatly increased the functions required of the chiefs by the government, especially in terms of requisitioning labour and food crops. Labour had previously been obtained largely by the province police, but in 1938 it was decided that chiefs should have "their own road foremen, their own paid road gangs and will themselves be responsible for the maintenance of roads".[116] Chiefs were also made the focus for sleeping sickness inspections and (usually unpopular) agricultural interventions and projects, which will be discussed more in Chapter Four.[117] Concern at the effect of implementing these measures through the chiefs led the Yei D.C., Tracey, to produce a scathing attack on the system of requisitioning forced labour:

> On the administrative side he [the chief] has to be – of inevitable necessity – the odious tax collector… Otherwise he is simply a tulba-driver, forcing his people to perform on behalf of government services, which… they do not consider a duty but an impost… They are performed by the recalcitrant at the additional cost of beatings and imprisonment. For the chief has to reinforce his personal influence with discipline; and he is the more effective disciplinarian when his people do not dare to disobey. This is as direct as indirect rule can be… He inevitably has to appear as a government employee and against his own side.[118]

Such a depiction evokes Mamdani's idea of despotism, but it may represent an extreme; the D.C. was trying to get across a point to the Governor about the harmful effects of forced labour. Nevertheless, it contains important indications of the coercive behaviour of some of the chiefs over the previous two decades, and the danger they were facing by 1939 in appearing to be on the government 'side'. The result was an increasing inability to fulfil government demands, despite the use of physical force.

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[116] EPAR 1938, NRO CS 57/25/103.
[117] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8; Juba District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[118] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.

By 1945, British administrators had become concerned that conscript labour and forced sale of grain in particular had 'undermined' and "strained the authority of chiefs severely".[119] One of the results was increased movement of people from one chief to another, or migration to the towns or beyond the Province; "its effect was to teach the people that it paid handsomely to be truculent and as far away as possible".[120] Juba district reported "a spate of complaints from chiefs that their subjects have run away".[121] "Their people don't want to work and in most chiefships there exist hostile elements who are only too glad to find an opportunity to work up dissatisfaction".[122] In parts of Moru District, "police have to be despatched repeatedly to assist the chief and arrest delinquents".[123] One chief here was attacked in 1940 by "a number of disgruntled labourers who refused to go to work on the Wau road"; in another case a chiefs' policeman was stabbed by a resistant road worker.[124] Other attacks on chiefs took the form of 'witchcraft' or Christian revivalism.[125]

The tensions of this period and the meaning of witchcraft and revivalism will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, but they had the cumulative effect of putting the chiefs increasingly on the defensive. The difficulty of their position resulted in at least one case where, "the chosen chief for a long while refused to take up his natural responsibilities as chief, but was finally induced by his subjects to do so".[126] This statement reflects an ironic convergence of government and popular discourses in relation to one aspect of chiefship: the idea of their '*natural* responsibilities'. The hereditary chiefs had not simply gained coercive force; they had ended up in a position in which they were subject to the expectations of both government and people, which were frequently at odds. Their use of coercive force was more a reflection of their inability to command, and one which was increasingly

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[119] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97; Juba District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98; EPAR 1946, NRO DK 57/10/32.
[120] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[121] Juba District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98.
[122] EPMD Aug 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[123] Moru District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[124] EPMD Aug 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46; YDMD June 1943, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[125] EPMD March 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53; EPMD April 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78; reports in NRO EP 1/5/26.
[126] EPAR 1939, RHL MSS Perham 548/4.

ineffective in the face of popular resistance and changing government ideology.

## 3. Adaptations and Traditions, 1930s-50s

The tensions of the war years exposed the potential or actual illegitimacy of the chiefs and the danger that they could be seen to be part of government rather than of their own communities, as seem to have been the case with the neighbouring Zande chiefs.[127] This was too risky: chiefs, especially if they were young men, had to be careful not to damage their own prospects within the community, in terms of marriage, wealth and social networks, by antagonising the elders.[128] The coercive force of the colonial state was limited; chiefs who requested its backing too often risked removal by government for their own ineffectiveness. There was therefore a need for chiefs to maintain a degree of support within the community if they were to be able to profit at all from their office in terms of wealth and prestige. Their strategies varied according to their own personalities and local specificities, but by the late 1930s-1940s they were increasingly drawing on deeper political traditions of arbitration and adjudication, as well as re-emphasising their gatekeeper role.

### *3.1 The Cutter of Cases*

From the 1930s, the Provincial government increasingly reported an image of the chiefs' courts, which reflected the new colonial ideology of collective and 'democratic' authority, and which is echoed in the testimonies of informants today. These depictions emphasise the chief as 'head juryman' or 'spokesman' rather than judge, whose role was the effective summing up of the collective opinion of the court.[129] Court procedures were and are described as 'democratic'; decisions resulted from discussion and reflected a 'consensus'.[130]

These depictions clearly represent an idealised scenario, especially in light of the use of force by chiefs outlined above, and the criticism by the Moru D.C. that "no

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[127] Reining, *The Zande*, p. 27.
[128] Bravman, *Making*, pp. 111-16.
[129] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[130] Governor Parr, Report to CS, 5 March 1942, SAD 817/3/1-88; Margery Perham, 'Native administration book: draft chapter on the South' (1946), RHL MSS Perham 542/5; Interviews with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, and Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

opinion but that of the chiefs is represented" in the B courts.[131] But increasingly the ideal appears to have been translated a little into reality. This partly involved a subtle manipulation of illusion by the chiefs. In appearing to reflect collective opinion in their decisions, they were also engaged in shaping or directing it, as one report unintentionally illustrated: "it is rare and often impossible for a judgement to be given which is directly contrary to public opinion; where there is no public opinion, it can be and has been formed by the decision of the courts, eg – magic, witchcraft, and 'poison' cases generally are handled by 'B' courts".[132] The absurd idea that there could be no public opinion in relation to such emotive issues as 'witchcraft' will be contradicted in later chapters, but the Governor's misunderstanding reflects the success of the chiefs in convincing administrators of their 'democratic' methods.

Yet this was not entirely an illusion either. The reports suggest two popular cultural desires or expectations in relation to justice and governance. One, already mentioned, was the "desire for a wide panel of jurymen"; this was not just about obtaining a fair decision, but also reflected the enduring importance of speech and discussion. As one of the first Southern sub-mamurs remembers, the only way to solve major difficulties was by mass meetings of chiefs and people, and long discussion until a consensus could be achieved.[133] Chiefs are remembered as having called people to talk for a long time and "explain and explain".[134] The importance of long discussion was also expressed in "the fine sense of leisurely deck chair justice" said to characterise the courts of the Province. Deck chairs had remained since the Belgian time as "an integral part of the Court House furniture"; they can be seen as symbols of the discursive style of court proceedings.[135] The management of such discussion required great skills of arbitration and mediation, and the use of "persuasive language".[136]

Secondly, there was a need and desire for adjudication: for resolution and for definite decisions that would be accepted, so that consensus could be maintained or

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[131] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[132] Parr, Report to CS, 5 March 1942, SAD 817/3/1-88.
[133] Interview with Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[134] Interview with Daniel Jumi Tongun, 10 Sept. 2004, Yei.
[135] EPAR 1942, NRO CS 57/28/114.
[136] Johnson, 'Judicial Regulation', p. 60.

rebuilt within the community. Colonial courts may have been initially instruments of control from above, as Chanock has shown, but they were also shaped over time by popular needs, as Chapter Six will further demonstrate.[137] The chiefs appear to have – successfully in most cases – sought to transform their courts from being the means by which government orders were enforced and coercive power was displayed, to becoming more accepted arenas of judicial settlement for the community; a shift from functions of administration alone to those of adjudication also. One definition given by an informant of what used to make a good chief or headman is simply "justice at settling disputes".[138] The Yei D.C. may have reflected the way in which chiefs and people annexed what had been government courts and made them community arenas: "it is only in the courts that the chief is in fact and deed the leader and representative of his people".[139] Mandari courts by the 1950s were referred to as *toket*, the old term for meeting-tree councils, and sessions were informal and "crowded with ordinary people".[140]

The courts were, as a result, also increasingly subject to rigorous public evaluation. This was apparent in a report from 1945:

> It has been interesting to watch how the number of cases increase in the A courts with the better chiefs. A bad chief has a bad court and few cases appear. A good chief replaces him and cases immediately increase as the litigants find they can now get satisfaction.[141]

Where chiefs failed to win the confidence of the people in their judicial skills, the courts remained unpopular government institutions reliant on the backing of the province police, as reported at Tali and Terakekka.[142] In Yei district, Chief Sasa Gindalla is remembered as "somebody who was rushing decisions, he could change his decision anytime". This may have explained his resort to force to seek respect in

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[137] Chanock, *Law, Custom*.
[138] Philip Yona Jambi, written reply, 2003, Khartoum.
[139] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[140] Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 128-9.
[141] Juba District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97. For an example see EPMD Oct.-Nov. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[142] EPMD Feb., Aug. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5; EPMD Jan. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.

his own court: "we used to be told stories of how he used to get up and try to cane the people in the court, chase people"[143]

In the Bari area on the other hand, the death in 1939 of Chief Lukak Leggi Logo, President of the Juba B Court, was reported as a great loss, "as he was looked on by the Bari as a 'Cutter' of cases". The report highlighted the tendency of people to vote with their feet to express their opinion of individual chiefs and courts: "litigants will always take their cases to a court where they know they will get satisfaction... in the 'cutting' of their cases".[144] This idea of 'cutting' cases was a neat expression for effective and decisive adjudication. Chiefs thus had to display both their ability to listen and arbitrate between opposing views, and their wisdom and authoritative judgements, reflecting a popular desire for discussion, but also for the ability to turn discussion into decision.

*3.2 The Gatekeeper*

At the same time as expanding their skills as adjudicators and arbitrators, chiefs were also resorting to their original role as gatekeepers in the "defence of the area": "the go-between between his people and the government".[145] This role involved the management of the flow of knowledge and information between the two, and increasingly chiefs seem to have manipulated this by concealing the activities of their people from government, whilst using rhetoric to convince the latter of their own good intentions. As Hatt writes, the chiefs needed to master the bureaucracy of government, and at the same time understand the 'backstage' world of local politics in order to distance themselves from government policies, by advising communities as to "what a minimal acceptable level of compliance is likely to be".[146]

As the earlier motif of the scapegoat chief had demonstrated, part of the role of a gatekeeper was to deflect government blame on behalf of his people.[147] British

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[143] Interview with Festo Limi Sominda, 14 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[144] Juba District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[145] Interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Khartoum; (anon.) 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6.
[146] Hatt, 'Establishing Tradition', p. 135-8.
[147] See also Reining, *The Zande*, p. 36.

administrators consistently complained at failures to provide taxes and labour, blaming the chiefs for 'slackness' or 'negligence'.[148] Similarly cultivation could be greatly improved, "[i]f the chiefs and headmen would be more energetic and interested in what is grown".[149] In addition they noted in 1944 that there may have been "a disinclination on their [the chiefs'] part to make what might be unpopular decisions" regarding labour and taxation.[150] This tendency was even more apparent when it came to some of the regulations, notably regarding araki, hashish and hunting, all of which ran "entirely counter to public opinion", and earned "the obvious sympathy of chiefs" for offenders.[151]

In addition, the role of gatekeeper was also evolving new aspects in relation to obtaining (limited) state resources and defending rights. Chiefs were able to request schools, bush shops, medical facilities, and agricultural inputs, as well as grain during food shortages.[152] In 1947, the Yei chiefs protested that if tax was to be raised, then the grain prices received by their people should also increase.[153] By the 1940s, some of them seem to have been using a language of 'development' to persuade their people to carry out agricultural or sanitary projects.[154] They were also increasingly defending community rights, for example by protesting at land reservations, something which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

In the process the chiefs seem to have become associated more closely with community identity and autonomy; and the *institution* of chiefship became more valued. Communities reportedly insisted on having their own A courts, thus defending their local distinctiveness.[155] There were increasing protests over past or

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[148] EPMD Dec. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46; EPMD Feb., Nov. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[149] Juba District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[150] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[151] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8; Juba District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98.
[152] EPMD June 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13; EPMD July 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[153] EPMD Dec. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[154] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[155] Governor MP to Governor UNP, 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42. Buxton also emphasises the opposition to amalgamation among Mandari communities in the 1950s: *Chiefs and Strangers*, e.g. pp. 34-5.

future amalgamations, partly due to conflicts and rivalries over chiefship.[156] But the cumulative effect of internal competition for political authority was nevertheless to emphasise the meaning and rights of chiefship, which in turn resulted from the "sense of self-hood" of neighbourhood communities, and the consequent need for a gatekeeper to defend and promote that self-hood.[157]

The government was also still employing its rhetoric of the hereditary chiefs as the 'natural' rulers of their communities. This even played a part in the selection of candidates for administrative training: Gordon Buli was favoured over other candidates because his father was a Kajo Kaji sub-chief, so he came from "an administrative family".[158] These families appear to have become synonymous with the 'administration' of their communities in the eyes of both government and people, though each had different expectations of them. Their authority rested upon their ability to both mediate effectively with government, and at the same time build up their personal reputation and knowledge of their people, in order to speak within the community "in the voice of a 'member', confronting the state system as an external phenomenon".[159]

But in the last decade of colonial rule, as the British administrators and sections of Sudanese society promoted democratic elections and modernising development, wider changes had a greater impact than ever before on the communities of Western Mongalla. The various strategies pursued by chiefs since the 1930s to enhance their authority within their communities would therefore be tested out in the face of rapid political change and new ideas of leadership and representation.

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[156] EPMD March-May 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5; 'Juba District Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6. See Berry, *Chiefs Know*, p. 196: the endless debates and conflict over Asante chiefship "attest both to the continued salience of chieftaincy as an institution, and to its dynamism".
[157] Lonsdale, referring to nineteenth-century Kenyan settlements, 'The Politics', pp. 50-1.
[158] Governor to CS, 26 Jan. 1949, NRO EP 1/6/34.
[159] Hatt, 'Establishing Tradition', p. 148.

## 4. Representing the Community, 1946-56

### *4.1 Councils and Assemblies*

The last decade of colonial rule in Southern Sudan, as has frequently been observed, witnessed rapid political change as the government belatedly sought to prepare Southerners for a role in the higher levels of administration and for participation in national political institutions.[160] The courts were increasingly treated by government as advisory and consultative bodies. Particularly in Juba and Yei districts, B courts or even unofficial 'councils' were used for discussion of important local issues, so that chiefs were being treated not simply as the 'mouthpiece' for government orders, but as spokesmen or representatives of their people, and of public opinion.[161] The language of political 'representation' may have been novel, but it seems to have corresponded with the evolving institution of the chief as the 'go-between' with the state. Similarly ideas of 'citizenship' appear to have reflected the transfer of ideas of patrimonial obligations to the state itself; the payment of taxes was seen to entail the right to state resources.[162]

From the mid-1930s a Bari Council had existed, made up of chiefs and their chosen councillors; by 1944, it was reported to be "showing a sense of responsibility", and bringing forward "ideas of their own", as well as forming a sub-committee of chiefs to discuss district education.[163] The following year it discussed such matters as "the spread of poisoning, the shortage of clothing and high prices charged, and the difficulty of supplying conscript labour during the cultivation season".[164] The Yei B Court or council of chiefs was similarly discussing topics like labour supply, sleeping sickness inspections, cross-border migration, adultery fines and village schools.[165] Chiefs and other court members seem to have enjoyed the regular meetings as a chance to meet and talk: "it helps the chiefs who live far apart to get to

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[160] For details of the national and international political developments and the debates about the South, see Johnson, 'Introduction', to *BDEEP*; Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 412-56.
[161] E.g. EPMD Nov. 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42.
[162] E.g. Bertram, Lui, Sep. 1948, CMS AF AL.
[163] EPMD Dec. 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78.
[164] EPMD Dec .1945, NRO CS 57/23/89.
[165] YDMD June 1944 and March 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87.

know each other and serves the purpose of bringing to notice matters in which chiefs and their people feel strongly".[166] By 1945 these two bodies were being described as "not far off formal constitution as administration units".[167] In 1951-2, the existing B courts or advisory councils were given new formal status as elected rural councils.[168]

Thus it was the existing institutions based on the chiefs that were developing into the new councils and expanding their remit as legislative and executive bodies. These developments in local government corresponded to wider political developments; in 1948 the first Province Council was established, with members elected by the B courts. It was at this level in particular that a new kind of spokesman was emerging: educated senior government or mission employees. In Yei District, two chiefs, Tete and Modi, were chosen: "at Yei however many speakers suggested that the selective net should be cast more widely, and that a local teacher might be as good a representative as a chief".[169] The Province Council then elected members to the Legislative Assembly (LA), including two educated chiefs with experience of mission or government employment for Moru and Juba districts, and a CMS teacher, Benjamin Lwoki, as member for Yei district. He spoke to the Yei B Court, emphasising that he was not a chief or leader, but rather had been chosen as a 'messenger' and 'servant' of the community.[170] This new idea of 'representation' was a striking usurpation of what had been the original role of some of the chiefs, as spokesman or negotiator with the outside world.

In general there were increased opportunities for educated people, who were seen by communities as more equipped to operate in the new institutional framework. By 1950, the B courts were also electing representatives to new district education councils. In one of the Juba District elections, an ex-soldier, the only literate candidate, was elected rather than one of the three chiefs standing: "[l]iteracy won, clan heads murmuring as they cast their votes 'because he reads', for fear of

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[166] Juba District AR, 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98.
[167] Governor Skeet, 'Notes based on Parr's handing over note to Skeet of 1943', May 1945, NRO DK 57/1/1.
[168] EPMD June-Dec. 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[169] EPMD March 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[170] EPMD Nov. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.

reprisals from their chiefs".[171] The administrator reporting this assumed that there was hostility or tension, but it was becoming more normal for educated people to be elected to such positions.[172] Similarly, as an interviewee explained, "when this political process happened, it was the teachers who became election officers because they commanded respect, and they were also considered to have a popular role in society."[173] In 1951, seven policemen or soldiers, seven sub-chiefs and three teachers were elected to the Meridi Advisory Local Council.[174]

### *4.2 Politics and Politicians*

In 1947, the now infamous Juba Conference was held, ostensibly to gain the views of Southern Sudanese on the future of the South. Members were drawn from among the chiefs and the higher ranks of the police, administration and church. The reports of the conference reveal a "distinct cleavage of opinion" between 'tribal leaders', i.e. the chiefs, and the 'educated community', as to how, and how quickly, unity could be achieved.[175] The former repeatedly depicted Southerners as children - reflecting the traditional link between maturity and knowledge - in relation to the northerners, emphasising their need for "political education".[176] The contrasting impatience of the 'educated community' may have reflected their growing knowledge of wider political activity in the north and outside Sudan, which gave them a sense of superiority towards the 'tribal' leaders.[177]

During the war years, the educated employees of both government and missions had begun to display a sense of identity and a nascent wider 'political' awareness.[178] By 1945, the Civil Secretary was writing that:

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[171] EPMD Jan. 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[172] EPMD Nov. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[173] Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[174] EPMD June 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[175] EPAR 1947, NRO CS2 30/10/32.
[176] 'Extract from Sudan Star, 16.6.47', NRO DK 1/2/5; 'Proceedings of the Juba Conference on the Political Development of the Southern Sudan, June 1947', appended in Wai *The Southern Sudan*, pp. 185-205.
[177] Hilary Paul Logali, 'Autobiography', SAD 890/1/1-80.
[178] Equatoria Grade Clerks to CS, 20 Feb. 1940, Marwood to CS, 26 April 1940, NRO DK3 1/6/31.

> There is probably no class of Sudanese with whom the government is least in touch with or least knowledgeable about [*sic*] as the educated Southern Sudanese. But there are indications – from petitions, letters and conversations with individuals – that many of them are puzzled and resentful about the backwardness of the S. Sudan.[179]

The following year, a missionary reported "rather a 'Bolshie' element amongst the more educated", and their growing criticism of "the white man".[180] In 1947, Southern officials had joined a strike by government labourers over wages: "[i]t was the culmination of a feeling of dissatisfaction which had been growing over the past two years, in a hot house atmosphere of political propaganda and unrest, at the allegedly inferior position of the southern government servant vis a vis his northern confrere".[181] The result was an immediate wage increase for government employees, and the following year Southern staff were transferred to the Northern wage scale. Strikes continued to occur among educated government and mission staff, usually over wages.[182]

Two teachers fired after one such strike left for Khartoum, where they formed links with the Graduates Congress.[183] Following the 1947 strike, Southern officials and mission employees formed their own 'Southern Intellectuals Organisation', which would become the Southern Party of the 1950s, later the Liberal Party. According to Hilary Logali, the son of a leading member, the party were strongly influenced by wider African nationalism, which had been introduced to the province by demobbed soldiers after the war. They initially saw alliance with the Graduates Congress as the route to gaining independence for the Sudan.[184]

The party leaders and LA members (MLA) toured their districts, reportedly seeking to publicise political developments and improve their own knowledge of the

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[179] CS to Council, 3 Feb. 1945, NRO EP 1/1/2.
[180] Sharland, Loka, Aug. 1946, CMS AF AL 1940-9. See also Willis, 'The Nyamang', p. 52.
[181] EPAR 1947, NRO CS2 30/10/32.
[182] EPMD May 1948, July 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13; Bertram, Lui, Sept. 1948, Crabb, Mundri Divinity school, 17 June 1949, Earl, Loka, 21 Aug. 1947, and Guillebaud, Yei, Aug. 1947, all CMS AF AL; 'Application of the Southern Sudan teachers and Dressers to Governor and Bishop of Southern Sudan', 29 May 1944, NRO EP 1/4/17.
[183] Tiernay, Dep. Governor to all D.C.'s and heads of dept., 11 July 1946, CS to Governor, 24 July 1946, NRO EP 1/4/17.
[184] Hilary Paul Logali, 'Autobiography', SAD 890/1/1-80.

districts.[185] From 1949, growing public interest in local government and wider politics was reported.[186] In Meridi, "large crowds attended the council elections and everyone professed to understand what they were about", and speeches were made, "thanking the government for this forward step in the administration of the country".[187] Even in the Mandari area of Juba District, long regarded as 'backward' by the government, it was reported that there was "an awakening interest in other than purely local affairs".[188] The news of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in 1952 furthered this "quickening of interest", and people began to hold "both formal and informal meetings" and "take a lively and enthusiastic interest in the constitution and the elections".[189] Government employees who returned to visit their villages were welcomed because they brought news of "developments in government".[190]

However, in November 1952, it was reported that the announcement of self-determination within three years had "caused a stir amongst the local people... the lack of good communication and the absence of any newspapers resulted in many unfounded rumours". The following month, an "unusually large number of political visitors to the Province" aroused excitement, apprehension and a "sense of insecurity" throughout the Province.[191] This atmosphere was exacerbated by the visit of an Egyptian delegation led by Major Saleh Salem, seeking to form a pro-Egyptian/NUP Southern party. They met with Chief Jambo in Moru District, and convinced him and his son to sign a document allegedly giving up the idea of British safeguards for the South. This led to widespread hostility to Jambo, and the refusal of his B Court to accept his continuing presidency; he was especially criticised for failing to consult his people first.[192] According to an interviewee from his chiefdom, Jambo claimed he was convinced into signing because he wanted independence, and

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[185] EPMD July, Sept. 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[186] EPMD June 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[187] EPMD June 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[188] EPMD Oct. 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[189] EPMD Feb., April, July, Sept. 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[190] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[191] EPMD Nov.-Dec. 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[192] Public Relations Officer to Sudan Agent London, 3 April 1953, PRO FO 371/102754, File 1051/493; Samwele Kajivora, Mundri, Moru District, to Governor-General, 28 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371 102747, File 1051/293; EPMD Dec. 1952 – March 1953, NRO CS2 30/3/6.

so "he would appreciate anyone who could help, even if it was the devil himself." The reported effect at the time was nevertheless that, "people were disinclined to meet any more visitors as many declared that they had been betrayed by those who had been elected to represent them".[194] This is particularly interesting in revealing the evolution of ideas of elected representation, but it also reflected the historical obligations upon chiefs to consult, and defend the interests of, their communities.

### *4.3 Local Knowledge*

This crisis involving Jambo was revealing in a number of ways. Firstly, it further exposed the existence of underlying criticism of the chiefs. In the later 1940s and the 1950s, an increased number of cases of misappropriation of taxes or general corruption by chiefs and clerks had also been reported.[195] This was particularly disturbing when it involved a 'politician', as in 1951 when Chief Korokangwa Hassan, MLA for Moru District, was convicted for stealing tribute money; "[t]he conviction... shocked tribal opinion and upset the educated Moru in the district".[196] The first Christian chief to be elected in the same district, Luka Jambiri, lauded at the time by missionaries, was also convicted for the same offence around this time.[197]

However, such appropriations may have been less shocking to people than the government reports suggest; chiefs were expected to maintain a degree of wealth and patronage capacity, a point which will be discussed more in Chapter Four. It is more likely that people had realised the effectiveness of accusing a chief of corruption as a means of attacking him; one informant referred to certain 'reporters' in the village who liked to inform the government of such matters.[198] The convictions thus reflect the ongoing hidden rivalries within communities. But at the same time, the growing importance of chiefship as a community institution was

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[193] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum. Jambo went on to visit Egypt repeatedly: EPMD July 1953, NRO CS2 30/3/6.Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 445-6.
[194] EPMD Dec. 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[195] EPMD Jan. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5; EPMD Feb. 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[196] EPMD May 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[197] EPMD May 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[198] Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum. See Spear, *Mountain Farmers*, p. 196.

apparent when a Meridi chief was also imprisoned for embezzlement: "amalgamation with a neighbouring chiefship was recommended but the people's strong desire for independence manifested itself in the collection of the money embezzled". This action convinced the government to allow the appointment of a relative of the chief rather than amalgamate the chiefdom.[199] Similarly in Yei district, people are remembered to have consented to the replacement of the elderly Chief Lomiteng - who had also been convicted of stealing poll tax - with his younger educated brother Lupai, because they did not want to be divided among other chiefs.[200]

The explanation for the real root of the problem in the Jambo incident offered by the interviewee from his chiefdom was that, "the Southerners at that time were very confused, we did not have enough educated people, politicians".[201] Another interviewee stated that there were no 'politicians' in the south, only government employees, suggesting that the latter may have been seen to belong to the domain of the government rather than of the people.[202] Hilary Logali admitted that the Liberal Party "did not have a strong grassroots base, except for the town of Juba". He also claimed that Chief Andarea Gore, who had been an MLA, quit politics because he was too "affected by rural life" and "became rustic and faded into political oblivion".[203] This reflects an interesting perception of the distance and dichotomy between the rural grass-roots and the small new class of Southern intelligentsia or 'politicians'. The chiefs were seen by the latter, and perhaps even viewed themselves, as being in general not equipped with the knowledge to operate confidently in the arena of national politics, hence the emphasis at the Juba conference on the need for political education.

Yet the chiefs were also more trusted than the politicians to know and understand the interests of local communities, despite this incident with Jambo, and their propensity to siphon off funds. It was Chief Modi of Yei, who exhorted Benjamin

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[199] Moru District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[200] Although this is according to Lupai's son: Interview with Charles Taban Lupai, 5 Sept. 2004, Yei; also EPMD March 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[201] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[202] Interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Khartoum.
[203] Hilary Paul Logali, 'Autobiography', SAD 890/1/1-80.

Lwoki to "speak firmly" for his constituency in the LA.[204] Crucially perhaps, one informant claimed that Lwoki was popularly thought to be too weak to stand up effectively for local interests, partly because he was the son of "an ordinary person" and so more vulnerable to bribes from the northern politicians. People therefore later wanted Eliya Lupe to represent them instead, because he was the son of a chief as well as the Chief Police Inspector.[205] This obviously reflects the informants' general advocacy of chiefs, but it may also reveal a popular belief that chiefs were more immune to outside influence and thus were trusted more to defend community interests.[206] This belief is borne out at least in the evidence of the Juba Conference, in which chiefs Lolik Lado and Cir Rehan repeatedly emphasised their need to consult further with their people in order to adequately represent their views.[207]

Also at the conference, Clement Mboro emphasised the need for southern representatives to study the "art of government" at the national, not just local, level.[208] In many ways, the 'state', in terms of central government, rather than local or provincial administration, began to impact on the lives of the people of Western Mongalla for the first time in the 1950s, and negatively in the eyes of some:

> Juba district Mandari tribesmen attribute the lack of rain during the last few years to the greater interest taken in their affairs by the government.[209]

The local institutions for mediating with government had developed to suit the small-scale communities of the area, and so this enlargement of scale caused something of a crisis. Chiefs might have had opportunities to exercise a degree of arbitrary power, but overall they remained answerable to their people, and to long-established alternative sources of power, in a way that the distant government in Khartoum was not. One Southern writer remembers the cheers given to Benjamin Lwoki in Loka when he had promised to request that Southerners be allowed to "run

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[204] EPMD Nov. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[205] Interviews with Lubari Ramba, 31 Aug 2004, Mitika, Yei, and Elder Daniel Jumi Tongun, 10 Sept 2004, Yei.
[206] See Spear, *Mountain Farmers*, p. 196: "the more wealth and power chiefs accumulated the more they were able to stand up to the colonial authorities to protect their own and their clients' interests".
[207] 'Proceedings of the Juba Conference on the Political Development of the Southern Sudan, June 1947', appended in Wai *The Southern Sudan*, pp. 185-205, at pp. 194-5, 198-9.
[208] 'Proceedings of the Juba Conference on the Political Development of the Southern Sudan, June 1947', appended in Wai *The Southern Sudan*, pp. 185-205, at p. 193.
[209] EPMD Jan. 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.

their own local affairs".[210] The importance of the local and relatively autonomous nature of authority in Western Mongalla, partly a result of deliberate government policy over the last forty years, became particularly apparent in this decade. Government might have become more interventionist, particularly from the late 1930s, but in general it had still intruded relatively little into the daily lives of people. Elders, headmen and chiefs sought to settle most matters before they had to come to the attention of government.[211]

The chief sat at the interface between state and people, but his was a very local, and *knowable,* face. Informants argue that the authority of the chiefs in fact rested on a kind of mutual knowledge. They had been observed and evaluated by their communities since their childhood; the courts in particular were "where the chiefs are known".[212] In turn, an important aspect of the chiefs' ability to settle cases and make just decisions rested on their knowledge of their people: "chiefs know the people one by one and know who is good and who is troublesome".[213] While this picture of mutual knowing is rather idealised, it nevertheless encapsulates a central aspect of legitimacy in Western Mongalla, an aspect which could not be easily transferred to large-scale representation, national politics or a 'modern' state bureaucracy. There was reported to be "widespread apprehension" that the Southern representative in the national institutions in Khartoum would be isolated from "his people" and therefore vulnerable to corruption.[214]

On the other hand the arrival at the same time of growing numbers of Northern government officials represented the influx of an alien government force into the local community:

> The spread of information was very difficult in the south. We were closed up with no information of the outside world... Southerners suddenly realised

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[210] Albino, *The Sudan*, p. 30.
[211] Interview with Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[212] Interviews with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003 and Simon Wani Ramba, 10 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[213] Interview with Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[214] Beaton, 'Report on the effects of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the Southern Sudan', 17 March 1953, (FO 371/102753), in *BDEEP Sudan*, Part II, no. 302, pp. 228-33. See also Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, p. 298: Southern politicians were removed from daily contact with their people by national politics.

> that they had new masters who entered into the shoes of the British but who didn't know how to treat with them... They... never gave the Southerners the feeling that it was their government.[215]

In 1954, Chief Modi Baraba wrote to MLA Benjamin Lwoki, on behalf of the 'Yei citizens', an interesting new appellation in itself. He complained at the 'bullying' by northern merchants and senior officials in the town, and blamed the latter for 'secretly' planning the sudden transfer of the new Southern Mamur to Yambio: "we should like him to work in Yei here for at least 2 years officially in order that we have to study his behaviour towards the people and watch how he carries his duty forward".[216] This not only reflects the sense of helplessness and lack of knowledge of the governmental changes taking place, but also the cultural importance of *knowing* the local authority figures and studying their behaviour, as had long been the way with chiefs. The breakdown of the system of mutual and reciprocal knowledge was thus resulting in a growing lack of confidence in the mediation between local communities and the state.

In 1955, the tensions of the preceding years burst into violent unrest and attacks on Northerners in Yei and Amadi, following the Torit mutiny, only put down in the end by Northern Sudanese troops.[217] The official inquiry into the trouble emphasised the power of rumour in generating the atmosphere of fear and apprehension beforehand, as well as criticising the behaviour of some northern traders and officials. It also tellingly pointed out that to Southerners, government politics and administration were all the same, and D.C.'s and ministers alike were '*hukuma*'.[218] A missionary observer highlighted the "lack of trust" in the Southern politicians, "for seeking only self-gain".[219] Some chiefs had been prominent in trying to prevent Northerners being killed, and afterwards they were under pressure to arrest the rebels, and yet unlike the Zande chiefs, they do not appear to have become seen as supporters of the colonial and then northern governments:

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[215] Hilary Paul Logali, 'Autobiography', SAD 890/1/1-80.
[216] 'Yei Citizens Chief Modi Baraba' to Sayed Benjamin Lwoki, Yei 2 Dec. 1954, SAD 761/7/1-56.
[217] On Torit mutiny see Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 453-8.
[218] Sudan Government, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Southern Sudan During August 1955* (Khartoum, 1956).
[219] Allison, Annual letter, 31 Aug. 1955, SAD 817/6/1-118.

> It seems reasonably certain that the chiefs are 'cooperating' with the Administration. They are running the Tribal Courts, bringing in mutineers and guns, looters and loot. But... their cooperation is with the mouth rather than with the heart. They have been badly frightened. They have been made personally responsible for producing the mutineers coming originally from their area. To some extent therefore their cooperation is obtained by duress... Probably a dozen chiefs and sub-chiefs are in prison on various charges ranging from murder to looting.[220]

Thus those chiefs who had not joined in the rising were still acting as gatekeepers, trying to satisfy the government, but maintaining their identity ultimately with their communities.

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[220] Colin Legum, 'Report on Southern Sudan', Nov. 1955, SAD 817/8/1-119; Reining, *The Zande*, p. 34.

## Conclusion

> Chiefs know their communities and their way of life.[221]
>
> In the negotiations preceding Independence the chiefs emerged as a politically important force. The network of government chiefs was one of the rare, if not the only, genuine southern Sudanese interlocutor with the colonial government in the preparations for Sudan's independence.[222]

The role of the chief as the 'genuine' interlocutor between government and people had not been an automatic outcome of colonial governance or of 'tribal tradition'. Many of the chiefs of the early colonial period had originated as translators, soldiers or traders. Their relationship with the colonial governments brought them limited access to resources, including some of the coercive force of the colonial state, which they demonstrated for a period in the 1920s-30s through their courts and police. But that relationship also risked their rejection by their communities for being the servants of government, a risk made more real by the increasing demands made by the government from the later 1930s. The resistance of these years, together with changing colonial discourses and the loss of their monopoly of knowledge, led the chiefs to pursue strategies intended to demonstrate their membership of, and authority within, their own communities. But even during their most coercive era in the 1920s and earlier 1930s, the chiefs were constrained by the plurality of community authorities and the limited effectiveness of force in generating status and command; they were rarely, if ever, despots, though they might be opportunistic.

So the position of the chiefs in the run-up to independence was the result of struggles, balancing acts and adaptations. Their efforts to continue to adapt to the new political and representative institutions and arenas met with mixed results, especially again if they were seen not to be defending the interests of their communities. But strikingly they became publicly perceived to be more likely to understand and defend those interests than any other interlocutor was. They had

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[221] Interview with Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[222] Simonse, *Kings*, p. 138.

started out with power resulting from knowing the government; now their authority rested on knowing their communities. In the face of greater external interventions, those communities were increasingly defining and defending their own local 'ways', in processes described elsewhere as the creation of ethnicity.[223] Chiefs had long been assumed by British administrators to be the repositories of knowledge of such community ways, as embodied in their registries and courts. But as the next three chapters will show, local knowledge-holding was contested and multiple: it not only resisted colonial hegemony but also concentration in the chiefs.

What the chiefs had always been valued for by their communities, however, was knowing how to defend the local autonomy of knowledge and authority in relation to external threats and the state. And increasingly they had also become valued for traditional skills of arbitration and adjudication, which, though they had been reshaped by the colonial institutions of local government, remained crucial in maintaining the cohesion of the local community. In at least one case, these combined skills were transferred after independence to new kinds of community: Chief Lolik of Lyria has a heroic reputation for not only defending his own community during the conflicts, but also for intervening in the first Anyanya rebel movement to maintain unity. His appointment as their 'Supreme Arbitrator' perhaps marks the height of the success of the chiefs in reshaping and adapting their role in response to popular pressure over the colonial period.[224] The result was the increasing identification of the institution of chiefship with local ways, rights and interests.

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[223] E.g. Bravman, *Making*.
[224] See Simonse, *Kings*, p. 138.

# Chapter Four

## Knowing the Land:

## Spatial and Economic Resistance

"My people although good at cultivation, as it is their chief occupation, do not know it in the way wanted by the white men".[1]

## Introduction

In a statement encapsulating the importance of local authorities being *known*, as discussed in the previous chapter, Governor Skrine also highlighted a powerful form of local resistance:

> The native population is tractable and easily led so long as the right methods are employed and they know the people with whom they are dealing; it is however quite easy to frighten them into a state of sullen apathy when they will *take to the bush* and give a considerable amount of trouble before they can be brought back again to resume their normal form of life.[2] [My italics]

The landscape of Western Mongalla, and its organisation and use, formed a contested and crucial territory of knowledge and power. Colonial officials, on the one hand, claimed that the 'natives' did not 'know their own country', and believed that Western scientific knowledge could order, reform and develop the landscape.[3] But on the other hand, their own efforts to know the country were frequently frustrated by the environment itself, which also formed a major tool of resistance for its inhabitants; the ability of the latter to find refuge and concealment in the 'bush' remains vital to this day.[4] Government and missionary efforts to impose a European version of order upon what one D.C. called "all their tangled jungles, spiritual as

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[1] Janson-Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941', NRO DK3 1/6/29.
[2] Governor to FS and CS, enclosing 'Report on the economic situation and possible developments of Mongalla Province', 27 March 1925, NRO EP 2/23/86.
[3] E.g. Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231. Gordon had claimed the same thing: *Central Africa*, p. 127.
[4] E.g. EPMD Sept. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53; Beaton, 'A Chapter', p. 174. Informants nowadays refer to joining Anyanya or SPLA as "going to the bush".

well as vegetable,"[5] were thus inevitably subverted. In addition, colonial officials and experts were divided over the priorities of agricultural and ecological policies.[6] The Europeans' claim to superior knowledge was never accepted by people who had their own experts and their own bank of knowledge and experience relating to agriculture, hunting, livestock and settlement, and for whom the landscape had additional layers of spiritual and historical meaning. They were keen to assimilate new kinds of knowledge to add to this bank, but only if it was deemed useful or meaningful, and not at the price of rejecting existing proven expertise. This was therefore a particularly contentious subject area, which illustrates both the ambitions and limitations of the colonial state, and the resilience of local knowledge.

Land issues also demonstrate the contradictions and limitations of Native Administration, particularly the disparity between government and community expectations, and the strategies that the chiefs employed to try to satisfy both. The control of 'customary' land tenure and the 'extra-economic' coercion of 'peasant' labour by all-powerful chiefs are central to Mamdani's argument for 'decentralised despotism'.[7] In Western Mongalla, chiefs could partially benefit from territorial re-organisation and greater controls on population movement and labour resources through the enforcement of agricultural directives. But these impositions could also arouse serious opposition and resistance, and at times damage the livelihoods of the chiefs as well as their people. This was becoming particularly apparent from the late 1930s onwards, as resistance mounted to the coercive enforcement of agricultural policies during the preceding years. Land issues thus provide some of the best examples of the ways in which chiefs were pressured by their people to act as gatekeepers, following the peak of their coercive power in the 1920s-30s, and demonstrate that they remained first and foremost members of their communities, not of the government.

The defensive role increasingly played by the chiefs, and their claims to speak for tradition, would result in them becoming more associated with communal land rights

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[5] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 26.
[6] Such divisions were particularly apparent in the planning and implementation of the Zande Scheme: see Reining, *The Zande*.
[7] Mamdani, *Citizen*, esp. 23, 56, 138-65.

by the end of the colonial period. But while claiming to know custom might offer opportunities to chiefs, it also forced them to engage in processes of negotiation and debate, in which they were far from hegemonic.[8] Land had not yet become an asset in itself separate from social relations, and so ritual land custodians retained much of their authority through their knowledge relating to the fertility of the community. Cattle were more important in building the capacity and authority of chiefs as patrons, but even this resource seems to have become both scarcer and more vulgarised over the colonial period. Chiefs' own ability to accumulate and exploit access to labour was also limited by popular resistance; individuals and households retained considerable autonomy over their labour and economic decisions. This chapter is a story of *limited* change in the political economy, and continued constraints on the ability of either state or chiefs to control it.

[8] Berry, *Chiefs Know*, pp. 7-8, 26-7, 50.

## 1. Contested Geographies

The settlement patterns encountered by the early European colonialists in Western Mongalla reflected the changes of the later nineteenth century. The systematic raiding from the *zeribas* had depopulated some areas and led to more concentrated and defensive settlements, particularly in the Bari and Kuku areas where cattle were kept inside fenced compounds.[9] The 1890s saw the spread of rinderpest into the area and huge cattle losses to add to the effects of previous raiding, and in the early 1900s, reports suggested concerted efforts to cultivate large areas, perhaps to make up for this.[10] The population in many cases also adopted more scattered and shifting settlements.[11] The arriving colonial officials attributed this to the traumas of the nineteenth century, suggesting that it was a defensive strategy to minimise the impact of raids.[12] However, it was of course more a reflection of extensive systems of agriculture and mixed farming; settlements moved within clearly 'circumscribed' areas, and ground was cultivated for two to three years before being left fallow for longer periods.[13] In areas of more fertile land, such as along the Nile, villages were more static and permanent, and plots demarcated more rigidly.[14]

Territorial settlements might be clearly defined then, but their inhabitants also observed wider spheres across the region. Anderson and Johnson emphasise the importance of flexible livelihoods and wide-ranging networks to the survival of communities in North-East Africa.[15] The indigenous geography of Western Mongalla was shaped by such strategies, as people maintained trade networks,

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[9] *SIR* 144, July 1906, PRO WO 106 228; *SIR* 156, July 1907, PRO WO 106 229.
[10] *SIR* 110 Sept. 1903, PRO WO 106 225; *SIR* 154, May 1907, PRO WO 106 229; Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231; Owen, 'Report on Tour of inspection in Moru and Niambara districts', June 1911, *SIR* 205, Aug. 1911, PRO WO 106 6224; Owen, 'Occupation of the Lado Enclave' May-June 1910, NRO MP 1/8/51.
[11] Gibson, Yei, Sept. 1922, CMS G3 AL; Hewitt, 'Extract from *The Problems of Success: History of the CMS*', SAD 84/10/1-136.
[12] Jennings-Bramly, 'Notes on the Mandari Tribe', 20 Sept. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12.
[13] Shaw, 'March 1911: Trek from Rejaf to Loka', CMS Acc. 111, F3; Stigand, *Equatoria*, pp. 31, 128; J. R. Catford, '*Katiri* Cultivation in the Moru District of Equatoria', *SNR* 32, no. 1 (1951), pp. 106-12.
[14] E.g. J. N. Richardson, 'Bari Notes', *SNR* 16, no. 2 (1933), pp. 181-6, at p. 184; Jennings-Bramly, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12; Interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct 2002, Khartoum.
[15] Douglas H. Johnson and David M. Anderson, 'Introduction', to their (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival* (London, 1988), pp. 1-24.

consulted distant experts, and absorbed new skills and crops in order to maximise their survival potential. The large grain harvests of the early 1900s were traded, for example, with people in Uganda in return for iron hoes, which could be used to purchase cattle and formed part of the marriage payment.[16] Even networks formed through conflict and subservience could be drawn upon in times of need; for example, the Makaraka leader Kape defeated the Moru-speaking Miza in the 1890s, and their 'chief' Warangwa submitted to Kape: "when these same Miza were suffering severely from famine for several years in succession... Ch. Warangwa apparently made some arrangement to buy quantities of seed grain from the Makaraka."[17]

Connections were also maintained with various specialists in hunting, fishing, iron-working and so on; they had an ambivalent status in society, which preserved their distinct livelihood and maintained a diversification of economic niches.[18] Access to alternative patrons and protectors was also cultivated in order to maintain sanctions on their behaviour; 'chiefs' who failed to fulfil their obligations to their dependents could be, and were, deserted.[19] The picture is one of movements and multiple networks, but across a geography that was also marked by focal points of sacred and historical meaning, and which was clearly mapped by the inhabitants.[20]

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[16] *SIR* 371 June 1925, PRO WO 33 999. There were also reports of Bari obtaining cattle from Dinka, and Mandari exchanging ivory for sheep with which to buy cattle: MPIR, Oct. 1903, and Jennings-Bramly, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12; *SIR* 177, April 1909, PRO WO 106 232.

[17] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.

[18] Whitehead, 'Suppressed Classes'. On specialised ecological knowledge, see Paul Richards, 'Ecological Change and the Politics of African Land Use', *African Studies Review*, 26, 2 (1983), pp. 1-72, p. 27.

[19] E.g. *SIR* 177, April 1909, PRO WO 106 232; Keen, 'The tribes of Meridi Sub-district', 1946, NRO DK 112/14/95; Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.

[20] For evidence of mapping and clear boundaries, see Stigand, *Equatoria*, p. 31. The idea that geographical boundaries did not really exist in African thought has been overturned by more recent work: see Paul Nugent, 'Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa', in Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju (eds), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London, 1996), pp. 35-67; David B. Coplan, 'A River Runs Through It: The meaning of the Lesotho-Free State border', *African Affairs* (2001), 100, pp 81-116.

*1.1 Boundaries, Resettlement and Villagisation*

The British colonial officials naturally understood little of these indigenous geographies, but attempted to reshape the human geography of Mongalla Province, through the imposition of boundaries and the re-ordering of settlement patterns. The rationale used to justify their policies would change from disease control initially, to an administrative and ideological desire for villagisation, to concerns over erosion and reserves. The earliest resettlement took place in Yei and Kajo Kaji districts as part of the sleeping sickness campaign. As Bell shows, the whole approach to sleeping sickness in the Sudan was based on the belief that it was a foreign import from Uganda or the Belgian Congo, and that it was territory rather than people which needed to be defended against it.[21] The campaign therefore centred on identifying and isolating infected areas. Cases were first discovered in the Lado Enclave in 1909, and from 1910, the British launched their campaign of inspections, bush clearance, sleeping sickness camps and relocation of villages away from streams and infested areas.[22]

The Ugandan boundary adjustment in 1914 was largely justified on the grounds that sleeping sickness controls would be more effective if both sides of the Nile were administered by the same government.[23] In 1922 it was decided that "nothing short of complete stoppage of indiscriminate movement across the frontiers would prevent the introduction of further cases of sleeping sickness into the Sudan". As a result all the frontier districts were declared closed districts, with special passes being required to leave or enter them.[24] The following year villages began to be cleared to create an uninhabited belt of seven to ten miles either side of the Uganda and Congo boundaries, and a 40-mile wide uninhabited border between Moru and Yei districts.[25] Special border policemen or 'Terebai' were employed to patrol the boundary, and in the early 1930s villages were moved north of the Aba road

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[21] Heather Bell, *Frontiers of Medicine in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1940* (Oxford, 1999).
[22] Mathias, 'Sleeping sickness report', *SIR* 209, Dec. 1911; Dove, 'Tour through Kaliko country', 15 May 1911, *SIR* 205, Aug. 1911; both PRO WO 106 6224.
[23] See R. O. Collins, 'Sudan-Uganda Boundary Rectification and the Sudanese Occupation of Madial, 1914', *Uganda Journal* 26, no. 2 (1962), pp. 140-53.
[24] Sleeping sickness AR 1922, NRO MP 1/6/39.
[25] Sleeping sickness AR 1923-4, NRO MP 1/6/39; Spence to mother, Yei 16 April 1915, SAL D12/202/7.

following further outbreaks of sleeping sickness across the Congo border.[26] Even as late as the 1940s, sleeping sickness was still being cited as a reason to relocate people: "[t]he local authority at Luolo Kajo Kaji is enforcing the concentration of the scattered village within reasonable limits to facilitate administrative and sleeping sickness control."[27]

While sleeping sickness was in itself a very real concern for officials, it also provided an opportunity to resettle people in the interests of the administration. They were concerned generally by the scattered nature of the population in small and often inaccessible settlements, as much for reasons of administration and taxation. In the 1910s, the government was seeking to build up the power of the designated chiefs, as Chapter 2 showed, and it used the pretext of sleeping sickness to force people to move closer to them.[28] For example, people were moved away from rivers and the Uganda frontier to be concentrated near the 'prominent' chiefs on the Kajo Kaji plateau.[29] During the 1920s, sleeping sickness continued to be the primary justification for the concentration of the population into villages:

> Evasion of inspection was found to be simple where natives were scattered in the bush… Villagisation was found to be the only method to cope with this.[30]

This was part of a wider response to sleeping sickness by colonial administrations; Kjekshus and Hodnebo have shown that the policy of concentration actually contributed to the spread of the disease by increasing the areas of abandoned bush in which tsetse thrived.[31]

The newly-built roads were increasingly the focus for these sleeping sickness resettlements.[32] In fact the roads became key in the British vision of the ordering and development of Western Mongalla, as a report on Loka and Yei districts reflected:

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[26] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[27] YDMD Feb. 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87. For details of the villagisation and isolation measures see Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 94-9.
[28] Spence to mother, Yei 15 Dec 1914 and 31 Dec 1914, SAL D12/203/2 and D12/200/8.
[29] Nalder, *Province Handbook*, p. 51.
[30] PMO to CS, 28 Aug 1927, NRO CS 44/10/44.
[31] H. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950* (London, 1977); Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 97, 101.
[32] Sleeping sickness AR 1923-4, NRO MP 1/6/39.

> It is unfortunate that the mass of the population lives at a considerable distance off the road, and there are at present no side roads fit for motor transport. This year a few Chiefs have been moved down onto the road but side roads are an essential for the development of the country.[33]

Road settlements reflected administrative expediency, but also the desire to create more obvious 'villages'. In 1939, the Yei D.C. extolled the virtues of a new geography of village communities centring on the roads, courts and chiefs' registries:

> The settling of people along the roads introduced a new and companionate element into native life, which their life scattered about the valleys never possessed... The road has become the spine of the community. The courts have certainly become the heart; and if offices or registries are provided, the broken down tribal elements may well regroup themselves into a new and vital village life, comprised of family groups... A further development may lie in congregating the bush shops into these centres.[34]

Thus a new government ideology of the 'village' justified the continuation of resettlement policies in areas not yet 'concentrated'. A similar link between roads, villages and good administration was made in the case of Nyamusa country in Moru district:

> Here the people are wild and untamed. They live away from the roads in small isolated communities. The road leading to their country has fallen into disrepair and the orders of the District Commissioner and the chief for its repair have been completely ignored... At the other end of the scale the small chiefship of the Borimba (Chief Jambo) presents a picture of pleasing orderliness. The cultivation is the cleanest and most forward, the homesteads are neat and surrounded with fruit trees, the taxes are promptly paid, the road is always in good repair.[35]

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[33] Governor to FS and CS, enclosing 'Report on the economic situation and possible developments of Mongalla Province', 27 March 1925, NRO EP 2/23/86. For a striking illustration of the new settlement pattern along the roads by c. 1930, see Map 4 in Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, p. 98. For similar villagisation on new roads in Cameroon, see Geschiere, 'Chiefs and Colonial Rule', p. 153.
[34] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8. See also Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[35] Moru District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.

Villagisation thus became seen as key to successful local government and development by the 1940s:

> Progress towards resettlement of the people around village centres has been meagre. Until this is done there will be no basic unit with a corporate feeling of unity on which any real system of self-government can be based.[36]

Villagisation was also intended to tidy up the 'tribal' geography, as in "the regrouping and resettlement" of Chief Dokolo's "large and unwieldy" chiefdom in Moru district, to separate three "tribal remnants".[37] Pressure from the Civil Secretary in Khartoum to produce a map of tribal boundaries in Equatoria in 1940 may have added to this concern to separate 'tribes' and make them territorial.[38] In Meridi sub-district, however, the impossibility of enforcing such a geography was emphasised in one report:

> [T]he subjects of different subchiefs are inextricably mixed, and subchiefships are no longer territorial or tribal. They are just a mess.[39]

Nevertheless, attempts were made to at least enforce Meridi sub-chiefs' boundaries and the registration of the population within them, and by 1940, the new road from Yei to Meridi had been completed and people were also being relocated alongside it.[40]

A further idealisation of the village community came from the Christian missionaries in Western Mongalla, though they sought to centre it on the church and school rather than the court or chiefs' registry. They had always welcomed villagisation, as aiding their own access to communities for purposes of evangelisation.[41] As elsewhere, they rejoiced in the real and symbolic impact of their mission stations on the environment:

> Less than a year ago this was a grass and bush covered wilderness with nothing but the tangled remains of earlier gardens and habitations to be seen. Now it has been transformed into a neat and delightful little village... The

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[36] Moru District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98; see also EPMD April 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[37] EPMD Oct. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[38] CS, Buchanan, to Marwood, 7 Dec 1940, NRO CS 1/2/5; Nugent, 'Arbitrary Lines', p. 39.
[39] Keen, 'The tribes of Meridi Sub-district', 1946, NRO DK 112/14/95.
[40] Tothill, 'Report, 1940', NRO EP 2/3/10.
[41] Hewitt, 'Extract from *The Problems of Success: History of the CMS*', SAD 84/10/1-136.

> hillock on which we raised this little House of prayer is of solid ironstone, and in order to lay the most shallow foundations, we had to chisel into the red rock itself – perhaps, or so we hope, a symbol pregnant with another meaning.[42]

Lui missionaries were particularly focussed on reshaping the sacred landscape, both through the main mission station - modestly described as the "hub of the universe" for the entire Moru tribe - and through a system of dispensaries and schools at regular intervals throughout the district.[43] Thus both the missionaries and government had an interest in creating villages, re-ordering the human landscape and imbuing it with new moral values.

### *1.2 Indigenous Geographies*

The resistance of the people to the erasing of their own geographies was consistent, but their methods shifted over the colonial period. In the 1910s, the first sleeping sickness relocations were only achieved through government patrols, as people simply refused to move. The language of the British reports implied that they could be herded like animals: "[t]he people show a natural disinclination to move from their villages and a few have not yet been rounded up".[44] In the Kaliko area of Yei district, the Sleeping Sickness Inspector encountered more resistance from both chiefs and people, including threats of poisoned arrows, and responded by flogging the former and burning down villages. In the face of this force, people also tried to hide in 'the bush' from the inspection visits, but to little avail:

> One village in which the chief himself hid… had to be severely dealt with. The chief is a prisoner, my men are searching the bush, all the huts have been burnt.[45]

The strong arm of the state was thus hard to evade or oppose when it came to the clearing of villages, but this did not mean that the government was able to entirely

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[42] Crabb, Yei Divinity school, 1946, CMS AF AL.
[43] Mrs Fraser, 8 Aug 1935, CMS Acc. 168, F2; 'Mission share plan: introductory letter for Lui Hospital' (n. d.), CMS G3 Sg6; Fraser, 'Pioneering medical work in the pagan Sudan', *The Mission Hospital: A record of medical missions of the CMS*, Vol. 29, 1925, pp. 32-6.
[44] *SIR* 248, March 1915, PRO WO 106 6225.
[45] Spence to mother, Yei, 31 Dec. 1914 and 15 Dec. 1914, SAL D12/200/1-28 and D12/203/1-24.

impose a new geography. Some chiefs and people sought to assert their own knowledge of the local geography, although at this stage their claims were dismissed by officials, confident of their own superior expertise. For example in 1906, Inspector Cameron reported on the undemarcated northern boundary of the Lado Enclave: "[t]he natives profess to know the frontier and say it is marked by a khor, but it is impossible that they can have anything but the roughest idea of where it runs."[46] After the takeover of the Enclave, the southern boundary with the Congo was also uncertain, being based on the Nile-Congo watershed, and one chief claimed that he was definitely on the Sudan side, because the streams in his area flowed into the Yei River. The Government Geologist dismissed this as "an absolute impossibility", but it does reveal the way in which chiefs' knowledge of the ways and (even geographic) language of government was a tool by which communities could try to defend themselves or exercise some autonomy.[47] It also shows the way that local people quickly sought to manipulate, and benefit from the imposed boundary. People and chiefs were united in ignoring the prohibitions on cross-border movement; indeed they used the 'no-man's land' of the frontiers to hide from tax collections and punishment. [48] The chiefs actively sought to profit from ivory poaching: "[e]ach poacher has an excellent system of paid intelligence with the native chiefs who give him timely information of the approach of an official".[49] Congo traders also bought ivory illegally and obtained porters from chiefs in Yei district, as reported in 1920.[50] In 1923, the Medical Officer reported with frustration the ability of people to make hidden paths across the frontier:

> The natives do not appreciate nor understand what we are doing for them. The most intelligent and those who might be expected to understand are only the smartest at evading the regulations. Communication with Uganda had been reduced but is still taking place. Two sultans found not only facilitating but encouraging it have been removed.[51]

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[46] Cameron, 'Inspection Tour in the Southern Mandari Country', *SIR* 140, March 1906, PRO WO 106/228.
[47] Grabham, 'Geological Traverses in the Southern Lado', *SIR* 223, Feb. 1913, PRO WO 106 6225.
[48] *SIR* 302, Sept. 1919 and *SIR* 321, April 1921, PRO WO 33 997.
[49] *SIR* 210, Jan. 1912, PRO WO 106 6224. See R. O. Collins, 'Ivory Poaching in the Lado Enclave', *Uganda Journal* 24, no. 2 (1960), pp. 217-28.
[50] Yei DMIR, Nov. 1920, NRO, MP 1/4/27.
[51] Sleeping sickness AR 1923, NRO MP 1/6/39.

In general social and trading networks thus continued to operate across these boundaries throughout the colonial period; inhabitants of the border zones maintained their 'informal' trade and even profited from the boundary.[52] They also continued to migrate across it, especially in times of food shortage.[53]

People also continued to seek recourse to various kinds of knowledge or expertise across these boundaries. For example, Adefuye has argued that Kakwa of Yei district continued to visit sacred sites now in Uganda, especially the rain chiefs and shrines at Koboko.[54] The appearance of a secret 'Maney' society in the Yei area was attributed by the British to a trader and ritual practitioner from the Congo.[55] The most reported case however was that of 'Allah Water' or 'Water of Yakan'. In 1919, two men from Yei District, Lugara and Rembe, were found to have been selling 'Allah Water' to Lugware from Uganda in the villages of two Sudanese Kakwa chiefs Bengali and Lokudu, where there were also some Lugware living. The water was said to offer immunity against death or wounds from government guns, the resurrection of ancestors and their cattle, German help to throw out the British, and a promised shipment of rifles along the Kaia and Nile rivers.[56] The Uganda administration – wrongly according to Leopold - blamed Yakan for unrest in Arua in 1919, and the Sudan administration sent a company of the Equatorial Battalion to Yei district, arrested Lugara and Rembe and fined the chiefs in whose village they had been operating.[57]

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[52] Trade and smuggling increased further when bicycles became widely available later in the colonial period: Interview with Lubari Ramba, 31 Aug. 2004, Mitika, Yei.

[53] YDMD Feb. 1944, May 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87.

[54] Ade Adefuye, 'The Kakwa of Uganda and the Sudan: The ethnic factor in national and international politics', in AI Asiwaju (ed), *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic relations across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984* (Lagos, 1985), pp.51-69, at p. 57.

[55] Yei DMIR Dec. 1919, NRO IN 2/48/408.

[56] John Middleton, 'The Yakan or Allah Water Cult among the Lugbara', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 93 (1963), pp. 80-108, at pp. 92-3; Bardwell to Governor Mongalla, 1 March 1919, NRO, MP 1/4/27.

[57] Bardwell to Governor Mongalla, 1 March 1919, NRO, MP 1/4/27; MPIR Feb., May 1919, NRO IN 2/48/408. Leopold argues that evidence from a Nubi informant convinced paranoid administrators and subsequent scholars (Middleton, 'Yakan'; Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 260-63) that the movement was anti-colonial and pan-Nilotic, when it was more Nubi-influenced and protective; the 1919 unrest was a largely unrelated response to tax and labour demands: 'Roots of Violence', pp. 124-9. On the general dislike of British administrators for pan-ethnic or cross-border ritual movements, see Douglas H. Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy: The Case of the Zande 'Secret Societies'', *Past and Present* 130 (1991), pp. 170-200, esp. pp. 179-81; and *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 27-9.

The Yakan movement illustrates the way in which networks and ritual communities transcended the colonial boundaries and ethnic definitions; as in northwestern Zimbabwe, this was "a place where colonial subjects persistently refused to be located in a determinate cartographic space – a place where they refused... to be named".[58] It may also have been partly a response to outbreaks of cattle and human disease in the form of rinderpest and sleeping sickness. Adefuye argues that the Kakwa blamed the sleeping sickness outbreak on their failure to visit the ancestral rain shrines at Koboko in Uganda, and that the Yakan water empowered them to resume such visits.[59] It may have also met a general need for protection after the forced relocations of villages.

In 1935, sleeping sickness was again the government pretext for attempting to suppress the continued observance of these wider economic, social and spiritual networks operating across the colonial boundaries:

> In spite of a large no-man's land separating the Kuku country from Uganda, our Kakwa people have been secretly visiting their Uganda relatives via the elephant tracks through the bush and so have brought the infection back with them. As a punishment the chief was put in prison and the whole Kakwa tribe made to move to a new site some 40 miles inland from the Uganda border. Before leaving some of the men burnt down the building which had been their Church and school – it is said out of resentment.[60]

In the same area, resistance to the territorial separation of clans to facilitate the new clan-based tax collection also resulted in the burning down of huts by the government. It was not only the boundary enforcement which aroused such resistance, but the relocation of villages away from ancestral graves and the streams where ancestors and spirits dwelt.[61] The continuing significance of this kind of sacred geography was increasingly imposed on the awareness of administrators, as for example in the Meridi area:

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[58] Worby, 'Maps, Names', p. 371. See also Berry, *Chiefs Know*, pp. 1-34, for 'elusive boundaries'.
[59] Adefuye, 'The Kakwa'.
[60] Finch, Kajo Kaji, 10 July 1935, CMS G3 AL.
[61] Winder, 'Fifty Years On: Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32; Stigand, *Equatoria*, p. 74; Jennings Bramly, 'Report of a tour among the Baris of the East Bank', 27 Aug. 1906, NRO IN 8/2/12; Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', pp. 2, 25; Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum; Reining, *Zande Scheme*, p. 4.

> Before the people were moved on to the roads the area in question was the home of most of the number mentioned above and the graves of their ancestors, of course, are there and to these the people naturally expect the right of access.[62]

Local people were not indifferent to "rootedness in physical space" as Kopytoff has suggested of Africans in general, any more than they were unable to comprehend physical boundaries.[63]

The government and missionary attempts to alter the local geography were thus particularly resented if they involved an assault on sacred sites.[64] One documented example occurred in Moru district, when a roadmaking party cut down a sacred tree belonging to an old rain-maker, Labi, who told Evans-Pritchard that this was a "sacrilegious action" which would have "serious consequences in connection with the rainfall". He continued to keep his rain pot on the site, but was disapproving of the grass burned along the edge of the road to keep it cleared: rain pots needed to be kept away from fire.[65] Later he seems to have abandoned the site, and strikingly it was appropriated by the Lui missionaries:

> In March the new dispensary and school were built at Chief Wajos... My husband had chosen the site last year, and the people think it very remarkable that this was the spot on which an old rainmaker used to live and carry on his healing art. He now lives about a mile away, his name is Labi and he... speaks in a very lordly way to the people and seems to have a good deal of influence over them still.[66]

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[62] Clark, D.C. Moru, to Governor, 29 Feb. 1940, NRO EP 2/17/66.
[63] Kopytoff, 'Internal African', p. 22; Coplan, 'A River', p. 85; Nugent, 'Arbitrary Lines', p. 36.
[64] For comparative struggles over the sacred landscape, see Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe*, (Oxford, 1999), and 'Taking Hold of the Land: Holy Places and Pilgrimages in Twentieth-Century Zimbabwe', *Past and Present* 117 (1987), pp. 158-94; Cherry Leonardi, 'Laying the First Course of Stones: Building the London Missionary Society Church in Madagascar, 1862-1895', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36, no. 3 (2003), pp. 607-33.
[65] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95; also Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[66] Mrs Fraser, 8 Aug. 1935, CMS Acc. 168, F2. This was reversed in 1942 in Yei district when a rain priest chose the site of a new medical post from which to practice: YDMD Oct. 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.

Labi's rain shrine represented an alternative focal point in the local geography to that of the new village centres, churches or schools, and one which was directly challenged by the government and missionary reshaping of the human landscape.

Trees remained the most significant focal points within communities all across Western Mongalla:

> Atoromong is a place of interest. All underneath its branches are black stones very smooth and shiny and worn into the shape of seats. It is some distance from the village houses but is used as a general meeting place for the days gossip, which accounts for the shininess of the stones. Smiths also work here… Under the tree were several burmahs and pots and I was told that no one ever removed anything which was not his own, so like other trees of this kind it is considered a safe depository.[67]

Similarly, the *toket* meeting-trees remained the centre of Mandari communities.[68] Thus the new centres ostensibly dominated by the government chiefs were not the only loci of community or authority; powerful landscapes were not altered so easily.

New meanings may also have been added on to existing ones; for example, in 1931 Chief Ramadallah agreed to have a bush school in his village: "[h]e has chosen the site of the school under a sacred tree called Roronon and is very keen to get it started."[69] The depth of older layers of geography was emphasised in relation to the newer and temporary European impositions, including the town of Juba; locals were reported to say that it was no more likely to remain permanent than previous European towns had:

> [I]ndeed it has got all the appearance of permanence, but… all the others looked the same to us and where are they now? On the other hand our small villages are on the same sites as they always were and what will cause them to change? It is better from our villages to watch Juba grow up and fall down again, and not to take any more notice of it than we did of Gondokoro, Lado, Rejaf and Mongalla.[70]

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[67] Reiland [?] 'Note on Lyria', June 1933, JD 1/1/2. See also Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 42-5.
[68] Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 77-9.
[69] Richardson, A/Governor to A/D. C. Yei, 24 Sept. 1931, NRO EP 2/23/86.
[70] Richardson, 'Bari Notes', p. 184.

Older geographies also remained imprinted on the socio-political patterns of the people, as emphasised in the detailed description of earlier settlements by one Moru D.C.: "[r]ecollection of this original tribal map is often invaluable as a guide to local 'politics'."[71] Yet the new government-imposed geographies also had an impact on local politics, placing the chiefs once again in an ambivalent position.

### *1.3 Chiefs on the Borderline*

From the 1920s, the government policy of villagisation on the roads had offered some advantages to the chiefs around the time at which their power was at its peak. The government reliance on them to lead the movement of their people and to enforce the sleeping sickness restrictions placed demands on them, but also enhanced their control of their people. It reduced the possibilities for traditional recourse to alternative chiefs if people were dissatisfied, and made tax collection, labour requisition and supervision easier for both chiefs and administrators.[72] Chiefs were also keen to construct centres to display their authority, such as the court-houses and registries. From the late 1930s however, they faced increasing resistance, as people themselves moved away from the roads again. This movement coincided with the growing uncertainty of government policy, as agricultural officers criticised the roadside settlement pattern.

As Chapter One showed, concerns about soil erosion had become prominent among agricultural experts and in the Colonial Office during the 1930s.[73] In Equatoria, as early as 1933, the Director of Agriculture, Cameron, warned that the resettlement on roads could have adverse effects:

> It is natural that road alignments where possible follow the high ridges where ironstone is near the surface and the soil is usually shallow... This has resulted in their choice of lands for cultivation being limited to land adjoining the road which is not usually the most fertile land available in the district.... [and] naturally becomes impoverished through overcropping.... I

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[71] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[72] Reining, *Zande Scheme*, pp. 16, 24-5.
[73] See Anderson, 'Depression, Dustbowl'; Richards, 'Ecological Change', p. 23.

> am under the impression that a reduction in productivity has already resulted from the migration to the roads.[74]

By 1940, his successor Tothill was arguing that there were "the strongest possible objections on the agricultural side" to the 'ribbon development' along the roads, and urging that the population should be moved away from the roads where possible.[75]

The administrators attempted to overcome these criticisms and concerns by a compromise:

> Chiefs were informed that applications for their people to move off the main roads to better cultivable land... would be sympathetically considered. It was however made clear that this was not a general invitation for everyone to take to the bush and reduce local and district administration to a state of anarchy. The proposal is to link up off-the-road settlements by bicycle paths so that all departmental officials can easily visit and supervise their various activities.[76]

In Yei and Juba districts by the early 1940s a number of chiefs led the resettlement of villages on land from which they had previously been removed.[77] However, the government stipulation that they must build new roads, in addition to the labour entailed in building new homes and clearing land for cultivation, discouraged many communities from obtaining government permission. Instead, they began to simply move, either with or without the approval of their chiefs. In the Kala area of Kajo Kaji, one example of this involved a sub-section breaking away from Chief Mojumurie under an old chief:

> Ex-chief Mulukwat and some of his people have deserted Kala and returned to their old haunts near Kandiri Hill south of Kala, where there is excellent ground for cultivation. They were moved thence to Kala some eight years ago for sleeping sickness reasons.[78]

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[74] Cameron, in Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[75] Tothill, 'Report, 1940', NRO EP 2/3/10.
[76] EPMD Dec. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[77] EPMD March 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53; Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[78] YDMD Feb., April 1944, NRO EP 2/24/87.

In the face of this fait accompli, the government simply ordered the building of a short road to link up the new settlement, demonstrating the effectiveness of such collective action.

It was in Moru district that the movement off the roads was most widespread, and seems to have occurred independently of the chiefs, who struggled to maintain control of their increasingly scattered people. Throughout the early 1940s, administrators and missionaries reported the dispersal of 'the *people* of such-and-such a chief', and often 'some', or 'sections' of the people, suggesting that communities may have been re-establishing the right to move away from chiefs, as well as reacting to the exhaustion of the ground on the roads.[79] According to the D.C., the chiefs responded negatively to these autonomous resettlements:

> Die hard chiefs still pine for the rigid regimentation of the past and would like to see everyone forced to live on the roads again. The matter is raised in every discussion by the Moru chiefs, who do not appear ever to have admitted the principle that people might live away from the roads if they wish, though considerably more than half the population already do so. It seems probable that those who have moved away from the roads are under the impression that they have done so against government wishes.[80]

This is particularly interesting in that it suggests that the act of resettlement was a quite deliberate act of resistance to the government and perhaps also the chiefs. The latter continued to push for re-concentration in the 1950s:

> The Amadi B court resolved 'That no economic progress or advance towards local government was possible for the Moru unless they abandoned their present habit of living in scattered hamlets'. To implement this resolution the Court directed that each chief, on his return to his country, should visit his sub-chiefs, collect the elders of the sub-chiefship and agree on a suitable area for concentration of the people.[81]

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[79] EPMD April 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46; EPMD March 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78; Lui station newsletter 1943, report 1944, CMS G3 Sg6; Yei central school report, 1941, CMS G3 Sg11; Lui hospital report, 1942, 1943, CMS G3 Sm2; EPMD Nov 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13. According to Tosh, migration was one of the few clear acts of peasant resistance to unpopular chiefs: *Clan Leaders*, p. 212.

[80] EPMD April 1943, NRO CS 57/19/74.

[81] EPMD Jan. 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24.

It is not known if this resolution was successfully implemented, but it seems that in this area the chiefs viewed the scattering of the population as a threat to their authority, and yet were unable to prevent it. In the Meridi area, people had always maintained their right to move between chiefs and sub-chiefs, despite government disapproval: "[i]t follows from this that subchiefs have little or no authority, and there is unlimited scope for playing one off against another". Yet despite this administrator's perception of 'chaotic' organisation, he had to admit that the people seemed "tractable and contented".[82] In 1944, people were officially allowed to move between chiefdoms, provided they registered the transfer: 173 moved between chiefs, and 258 between subchiefs in that year.[83] It may be that the people of Moru and Kajo Kaji districts were seeking to restore this kind of fluid geography, as well as searching for more fertile land.

At the same time as chiefs in some areas were facing the dispersal of their communities, the continuing popular resistance to boundaries and movement restrictions was also pushing the chiefs into hiding contraventions from the government as much as possible. Chiefs thus used their position as interlocutors of information between government and people to conceal illegal practices; frequently during this period the government reports had to admit a lack of knowledge, or misinformation, demonstrating the limits of the colonial state in the bush. In the 1940s, the Congo authorities complained about Sudanese poachers in the Garamba National Park, and the Moru D.C. had to admit that he was already aware of such trespass:

> This matter was brought to my notice early in the year in a chat I had with Chief Ngamunde about fishing possibilities in the neighbourhood. He told me that the River Naam was a poor fishing river but that in the River Aka across the border excellent fishing was available and the Mundu caught many fish there. My reception of this remark told him he had been a little too forthcoming.[84]

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[82] Keen, 'The tribes of Meridi Sub-district', 1946, NRO DK 112/14/95. See also Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[83] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[84] Clark, D.C. Moru to Governor, 16 Jan 1940, NRO EP 2/17/66.

The chiefs were increasingly adept at withholding such information: five years later the D.C.'s successor declared, "I consider that my chiefs are bona fide when they say they have no knowledge of this poaching whatsoever". A few weeks later, however, he retracted this:

> I am not now so sure of the good faith of my chiefs... I now consider that the chiefs are not cooperating with us in attempting to stop poaching in the Congo. It is difficult to suggest a solution in view of the *conspiracy of silence* on the part of the chiefs... it is possibly too great a strain on their authority.[85] [My italics]

In fact, these chiefs were following a long tradition of concealing poaching and cross-border movement from the *hakuma*.[86] Similarly in Yei district, the chiefs along the frontier "all expressed complete ignorance of any violations thereof",[87] and yet Chief Lita was punished for "condoning the passage of natives for trade purpose between the Belgian Congo and the Sudan".[88] The chiefs were never able to prevent the movement of their people, and in recognition of this sought instead to conceal the migrations from government. Similarly the government might have employed force to try to resettle people and prevent boundary crossing, but it too had to face the limits of its knowledge of, and control over the population.

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[85] McCargow, D.C. Moru to Governor, 26 Sept. 1945 and 8 Oct 1945, NRO EP 2/17/66.
[86] Simson to Governor Stigand, 15 Sept. 1919, NRO IN 2/48/408.
[87] Cullen, D.C. Yei to Governor, 3 Oct. 1945, NRO EP 2/17/66.
[88] YDMD July 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.

## 2. Agricultural and Ecological Knowledge

This region never saw large-scale agricultural development projects such as the neighbouring Zande Scheme. But there were various attempts to introduce new crops, produce food surpluses, train agricultural staff, and remedy erosion. There was a persistent British belief that the area was one of the most fertile in Sudan, and that its failure to profit from this was the result of the ignorance or laziness of the inhabitants. This justified the use of compulsion in the 1930s and into the 1940s to try to expand agricultural production, but as the concerns over erosion grew and agricultural experts criticised compulsion, policy changed to one of trying to impart knowledge. At the same time people had increasingly resisted government agricultural directives in recognition of the lack of profits to be gained. They rigorously evaluated and selected new kinds of agricultural knowledge, and continued to acknowledge the authority of their own experts in relation to land, cultivation and hunting. It is hardly surprising that they rejected much of the agricultural expertise of the government, whose policies form a catalogue of largely unsuitable interventions.

### *2.1 Cash Crops*

The basic development 'plan' pursued by the colonial administration in Western Mongalla involved trying to introduce partial monetisation by requesting that the Poll Tax introduced in 1925 be paid in cash, and promoting cash crops in order to raise the money.[89] The main hope was that cotton could become the primary cash crop, having been grown in the region back in the nineteenth century, and initially it met with some success. The early years of cotton cultivation, 1927-31, coincided with high prices, so that in the 1929-30 season, Kajo Kaji cultivators received a total of £E 1823 for their cotton; this must have been very welcome in light of efforts to purchase cattle and rebuild herds. The sudden drop in prices in 1932 however, caused a complete abandonment of the crop in most areas, and increasingly only "considerable administrative pressure" could persuade people to grow cotton. "It is

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[89] 'Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance, Mongalla', Government Gazette No. 466, Dec. 1925, PRO FO 867/41.

most important on material and psychological grounds to keep cotton growing alive. It is so far the only visible money crop for this Province".[90]

In 1937, the Yei D.C. sought to bring in Uganda buyers to obtain higher prices in the Kajo Kaji area, only to be disappointed by the coincidence of further 'unfortunate' price drops. In the same year, compulsion was dropped in Zande and Moru districts, resulting in a rapid decline of cotton cultivation. Yet alternative cash crops were also unpopular. For example, sunn hemp was very labour-intensive: "[a] general feeling amongst the natives is that the labour and time required for retting is more than the crop is worth". Coffee was also promoted, with seedlings given to chiefs, in the hope that it would be grown on communal plots. Yet 1937 was also a year of drought and food shortages, and it was reported that people were labouring on their food crops, determined to avoid another shortfall in 1938; it is hardly surprising that the cash crops caused resentment.[91] Two years later, reports conceded that cotton cultivation had greatly declined, that sunn hemp was a failure as a cash crop, and that coffee had made little progress. The organisation of cotton cultivation was criticised in Meridi district, where every tax-payer had had to grow at least half an acre under 'careful' supervision:

> [B]ut this constant 'prodding' of the people evoked a general distaste for the whole crop which has not yet been outgrown. To the people's mind cotton is a government 'forced labour'.

Yet these reports also emphasised the continuing desirability of a cash crop: pressure to come up with money for tax in Kajo Kaji was reported with concern to be causing increased labour migration to Uganda since the decline of cotton cultivation.[92] Local market trade in grain was also reported to be less in 1939 than it had been in 1924, thanks to increasing labour migration and government demands to grow other crops.[93]

In 1939, the Government 'Economic Botanist', Myers, produced a report on Equatoria, which was highly critical of the use of compulsion to grow cotton:

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[90] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[91] EPMD Jan.-April, Sept. 1937, NRO CS 57/4/17.
[92] Yei and Moru District AR's 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[93] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.

> This unpopularity is due to 'big stick' methods in the past; to the conviction that cotton is grown purely for the hakuma and not for themselves, since in bad years at least it does little more than pay the poll-tax; to the irksome labour of 'clean cultivation' demanded; to the fact that the picking season coincides with the height of the hunting season.[94]

Despite Myers' criticisms, the needs of the government during the Second World War ensured that cash crops together with new food crops were still being pushed in the early 1940s, though administrators were increasingly aware of their unpopularity: "[i]t is doubtful whether the native cultivator will ever love the potato, its introduction to the district having been accompanied by so much travail and labour".[95] Similarly the poor cotton crop at Kajo Kaji in 1944 was explained by "the prolonged drought and the apathy of the people who naturally are uninterested in a cash crop when even their food crops have failed two years in succession".[96]

*2.2 Agricultural 'Improvement'*

Although Myers' criticisms were not immediately addressed, the 1940s did see a resulting shift in government priorities from trying to use the land more profitably to trying to protect and improve the land itself, and from compulsory cultivation, to education and dissemination of agricultural knowledge. But the statement by one administrative staff trainee in 1941 - "[m]y people although good at cultivation, as it is their chief occupation, do not know it in the way wanted by the white men" - both asserted the existing agricultural skills of the people, and expressed incomprehension at government agricultural directives.[97] The Agricultural Bush School near Kajo Kaji was reported in 1939 to have "died owing to the permanent truancy of all the pupils": "[t]he idea of an agricultural syllabus was not consonant with the native idea of education."[98] In 1945 it was again reported that educated boys did not want to go into agriculture as a profession, preferring higher-status

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[94] Myers, 'Provisional Report of the Economic Botanist on Yei, Meridi, Yambio districts', 1939, NRO CS 1/5/11.
[95] EPMD Oct. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[96] YDMD March 1944, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[97] Janson-Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941', NRO DK3 1/6/29.
[98] EPMD March 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42; Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.

government employment.[99] Despite Myers' belief that education was the way to improve agriculture in the Province, the agricultural expertise of government officials was clearly not seen to be of value.

People measured cultivation practices in terms of their cost-effectiveness and returns on the labour entailed; when cotton prices were high they were naturally more enthusiastic about the crop.[100] But generally they made the rational choice, since the hunting and cotton-picking seasons coincided, to pursue the former: "[a]nd they certainly need meat much more than the money for cotton".[101] Some new crops were eagerly adopted; for example in Yei district, cassava and sweet potatoes were being widely grown by 1940.[102] When a free grain market was introduced in 1949, growers responded to the higher prices by producing more surplus for sale.[103] But there was resistance to crops and practices that did not provide sufficient returns. The Agricultural Demonstrators, or coffee and cotton 'boys', were seen as agricultural police rather than as useful experts, and without the use of compulsion their advice was ignored.[104] The posting of Agriculture Department 'intelligence' staff to the villages "for the purpose of keeping an eye and rendering a report on the harvest", would only have added to this impression.[105]

Often there must have been complete incomprehension as to what the aim or value of the new practices actually was. After all, there is repeated evidence in government reports to suggest that government knowledge was not in any way superior to existing expertise. The crop yields at the Agricultural Department farm at Kagelu, for example, did not "compare favourably with those of native crops".[106] The

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[99] EP Agriculture Department AR 1944-5, NRO EP 2/29/104.
[100] E.g. when the Zande scheme was being developed in the early 1950s: "Cultivators along the Maridi road in Yei district are agitating that they too should be allowed to grow cotton... They view the Zande scheme with green eyed envy", EPMD May 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6. See also John Tosh, 'Lango Agriculture During the Early Colonial Period: Land and Labour in a Cash-Crop Economy', *JAH* 19, no. 3 (1978), pp. 415-39.
[101] Myers, 'Provisional Report of the Economic Botanist on Yei, Meridi, Yambio districts', 1939, NRO CS 1/5/11.
[102] Tothill, 'Report, 1940', NRO EP 2/3/10.
[103] EPMD Aug. 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[104] Tracey, D.C. Yei, to Governor, 15.6.39, NRO EP 2/5/18. See Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 164, for examples of this elsewhere.
[105] YDMD July 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[106] Ferguson, AR of Inspector of Agriculture, Kagulu for 1944-5, SAD 753/3/1-129.

attempt in 1939 to demonstrate a new cassava squeezer in Juba district was undermined when local women produced their own version which they had long been using, and which had "many advantages over the more elaborate and expensive imported squeezer".[107] More disastrous was the inoculation of cattle in Kajo Kaji against rinderpest, which resulted in the deaths of 353 cattle from tetanus infections.[108] The apparent contradictions of government policy were amusingly highlighted in relation to the profitable crop of hashish:

> One addict made an official complaint after his arrest saying that the Turuk had introduced bafra (cassava), bambe (sweet potatoes) and bangi (hashish). He thought them all excellent and wholesome commodities and was bewildered at the flighty inconsistency of a government which now prosecuted people for the cultivation and consumption of hashish.[109]

*2.3 Erosion*

The greatest popular incomprehension occurred over the restrictions on grass-burning. The wider concerns over erosion led officials to believe that practices of shifting cultivation and the annual burning of the grass for cultivation and hunting were causing erosion: "[t]he soil impoverishment at Kajo Kaji appears so acute that in the so-called 'dust-bowl' area it will probably be advisable to prohibit burning altogether".[110] Hunting using 'native' methods was allowed, but the government increasingly sought to ban the use of fire.[111] However, it was later realised that leaving the grass unburned heightened the risk of more devastating fires later in the dry season, and so the policy was abruptly adjusted to promote controlled burning early in the year instead. Administrators admitted that this change was 'bewildering' for the people: in Moru district, "the people have quite made up their minds that the new D.C. likes fires whereas the old one hated them!".[112] But this policy meant that the areas which were too damp to be fired before the set date of 1st January became

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[107] EPMD Oct. 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42.
[108] EPMD Feb. 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13; Nicholson, 'Notes to Mr Tiernay', 16 March 1949, NRO DK 57/1/1.
[109] EPMD Nov. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[110] EPMD May 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5; Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information'. Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[111] EPMD March 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[112] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97; EPMD Oct. 1943, NRO CS 57/19/74.

sanctuaries for wildlife, and, as most watering places were in these areas, threatened people and livestock.[113] There were also increasing complaints that game was damaging crops; cassava in particular attracted elephants, a fact initially discounted by officials as merely an excuse for not growing it.[114] Hodnebo shows that the protection of game helped to assist the spread of tsetse and hence sleeping sickness, undermining local knowledge and strategies for controlling wildlife and vegetation.[115] Not surprisingly the chiefs joined their people in illegal grass-burning.[116]

The assumption that burning, hunting and shifting cultivation were harming the land was challenged by the report of the Agricultural Inspector in 1943:

> Shifting cultivation is universally practiced… Erosion is not encouraged by native methods and is nowhere very serious in the area. Activities of Govt. depts and missions often cause local cases of severe erosion.[117]

There was also evidence that locals had developed their own anti-erosion methods, as a description of the remains of settlements in Juba district revealed: "[t]he Bari had used to terrace their fields to prevent erosion".[118] The main cause of erosion was the concentration of the population, especially in Kajo Kaji and Kala, where "overcrowding owing to sleeping sickness regulations is causing hunger and discontent".[119] In response, administrators ordered the inhabitants to build dams in khors and gullies to try to prevent further erosion; the following year however the poor design of many of the dams led to them being washed away, so this must have seemed like yet more unremunerative labour for the government.[120] Finally, it was decided that the inhabitants of Kala should be relocated to a resettlement area at

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[113] EPMD March 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[114] Juba District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94; Yei District AR 1944 and 1945, NRO EP 2/27/97 and EP 2/27/98; Simpson, D.C. Yei River District to Governor, 17.8.36, NRO EP 2/17/67.
[115] Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 118-20.
[116] Interview with Dr Rubena Lumaya Wani, 22 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[117] Ferguson, 'Note on Equatoria crops and agriculture', SAD 753/5/1-69.
[118] EPMD March 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[119] EPMD April 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5; Myers, 'Provisional Report of the Economic Botanist on Yei, Meridi, Yambio districts', 1939, NRO CS 1/5/11. In other areas land pressure was leading cultivators to move further into the forest, but in Kajo Kaji this was unwelcome because it meant leaving the cattle behind: YDMD May-June 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[120] EPMD Sept. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5; EPMD Nov. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13. See Anderson, 'Dust Bowl', p. 334, for failure of such anti-erosion measures elsewhere.

Livolo, where they would be given surveyed 30 feddan farms. However, the reasons for Livolo being uninhabited soon became apparent:

> It is considered that parts of the area, though abandoned for many years, have suffered a process of continuous degeneration and so, to the original objective of resettling the over crowded Kala community, has been added the complementary objective of regenerating those parts of the area now insufficiently fertile to carry cultivators.[121]

*2.4 Agricultural Expertise*

It was clearly unsurprising that the crops and agricultural regulations introduced by the government were often seen as another kind of forced labour or taxation, with few apparent benefits. If anything these interventions made it more necessary for people to turn to their own experts and agricultural knowledge. The 'owners' of the rain, land and hunting or fishing grounds retained their central role in the community through their authority in relation to land, cultivation and hunting. In the Lyria area, the rain chief or the *monyekak* (earth chief) was responsible for blessing the harvest and hunting, while in the Moru area the *Bori* rain controller's importance in connection with cultivation was emphasised by one D.C.: "his approval is usually obtained before cultivating a new piece of ground and he presides at ceremonies in the time of sowing and harvest".[122] One Bari informant remembers how the women in particular honoured the rain priest, carrying him high around the village, because he was responsible for guaranteeing the food for their households.[123] Experts were also needed for success in hunting:

> There are specialists who deal in medicines for different animals. These are men, experienced and successful themselves in hunting, who sell various medicines and charms... [and] receive payment partly in hoes and partly in division of the spoil.[124]

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[121] EPMD March 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[122] Mynors [?], 'Notes on Evans-Pritchard's Draft Account of the Moru tribe', NRO DK 112/14/95. See also Ferguson, 'Equatoria Province', p. 890.
[123] Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002, Khartoum.
[124] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.

Rain experts in particular profited from their profession, but all the specialists in agriculture, fertility and hunting played a key part in the local political economy, rewarded for their services with labour and tribute.[125]

There also seems to have been a growing popular belief that chiefs should mediate with such experts to ensure the fertility of the community. People complained to the chief for example if a rain-maker was believed to be holding up the rain, and the chief might imprison or punish him, which was perhaps in line with Simonse's accounts of the torture of rain chiefs by their people during droughts.[126] On the other hand, in 1938, the Terrakekka chiefs "presented a combined petition that an Aliab Dinka… whom they said was a noted rainmaker in his own country, should be allowed to reside among the Mandari".[127] There are parallels with the idea that another obligation of the chief was to ensure protection from disease, which will be discussed in the next chapter. But this exhorting of rain experts did not mean that the chief himself had any respected agricultural knowledge, only that he was representing and defending the needs of the community.

The claims of European officials to be introducing superior Western expertise in relation to the land were undermined by their own divisions and discrepancies, and by the proven failure or flaws in many of their policies. Their knowledge gained little status, and indigenous agricultural and hunting experts retained greater prestige. However, the colonial impositions did have significance for the role of the chiefs in particular, and for the economic strategies pursued by communities.

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[125] Yuzbashi N. Yunis, 'Tribes on the Upper Nile: The Bari', *JRAS* 4, no. 14 (1905), pp. 226-31; (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 2; Philip Lomodong Lako, *Lokoya of Sudan: Culture and Ethnic Government* (Nairobi, 1995), p. 71.
[126] Interview with Simon Wani Ramba, 10 Jan 2003, Khartoum; Simonse, *Kings*, esp. pp. 345-73; F. Spire, 'Rain-Making in Equatorial Africa', *JRAS* 5, no. 17 (1905), pp. 15-21.
[127] EPMD Oct. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.

## 3. Land and Labour

The agricultural and infrastructural projects of the colonial government placed huge demands on the labour of local people. This, together with independent changes such as cattle losses, led to adjustments in the economy of Western Mongalla, and consequently in the political and social relations within communities. As studies of Tanzania in particular have shown, colonial land and conservation policies thus had a fundamental impact on the *moral* economy.[128] But because claims made on land and labour had to draw on histories of social relations, knowledge continued to be the key resource in the political economy.

### *3.1 Bridewealth and Cattle*

According to ethnographic reports and interviewees, there were well-established indigenous systems of land organisation. When communities moved to new sites, the bush was burned and the land allocated by the *monyekak* and/or the clan heads. Newcomers or non-clan members could gain access to clan land, either through a small payment for hoeing rights, or by a larger payment to buy into the normal clan member's rights to land; this was reportedly arranged by the clan head.[129] Land was not, however, communally owned by the clan, but on an individual basis once assigned.[130] Women were the focus for land 'ownership': plots on new land were assigned to each woman in the clan in Moru district, while in more permanent Bari settlements, each wife had her own plot, which would be inherited on her death by her son, even if her husband was still alive.[131]

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[128] Thomas Spear, 'Struggles for the Land: The Political and Moral Economies of Land on Mount Meru', pp. 213-40; Michele Wagner, 'Environment, Community and History: 'Nature in the Mind' in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Buha, Western Tanzania', pp. 175-99; Monson, 'Canoe-Building', all in Maddox, Giblin and Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land*.
[129] Beaton, 'Land Tenure among the Luluba and Oxoriok', 22 May 1934, JD 1/1/2; Beaton, 'The Bari', pp. 128-31; Huntingford, *Northern Nilo-Hamites*, p. 46; Catford, 'Katiri Cultivation'.
[130] Ferguson, 'Equatoria Province', p. 890.
[131] Catford 'Katiri cultivation'; G. O. Whitehead, 'Crops and Cattle among the Bari and Bari-Speaking Tribes', *SNR* 43 (1962), pp. 131-42, and 'Property and Inheritance among the Bari', *SNR* 31, no. 1 (1950), pp. 143-7; Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

As the focus for land ownership, and as the main cultivators of that land, women were therefore a crucial resource. As Shadle shows in Gusiiland, Kenya, the increase of cash cropping and the return of wealthy demobbed soldiers heightened the value of land and labour, and thus fuelled the rapid inflation of bridewealth prices in the 1940s and 50s.[132] In Western Mongalla, where there was not such a sudden expansion of profitable cash cropping, this development was more gradual, but nevertheless significant. It was fundamentally related to control of cattle, as the main form of currency with which to acquire human resources.[133] As Chapter Two showed, the conflicts, displacements and trade of the nineteenth century had generated networks of patronage, in which military and trading elites gained followings and cattle wealth. From the latter decades of the century, rinderpest and raids wiped out many of these cattle herds, and in 1906, the Bari were paying bridewealth in goats and cloth, not cows.[134] In the early colonial period, the chiefs in particular often took advantage of their relationship with colonial governments, together with trade and raiding, to rebuild their herds.[135] Further outbreaks of disease reduced cattle herds repeatedly; in 1938 only Chief Nderago had any cattle in Moru district, though the herd numbers of the Kuku and Mandari nevertheless continued to increase.[136]

Over time, individuals who might have formerly been dependent on patrons were able to earn the means to purchase cattle themselves, through wage labour in particular. According to one missionary, Whitehead, this had the effect of levelling former divisions between land and cattle-owning 'freemen' and their non-cattle owning clients or 'serfs', and gave the latter independence in marriage.[137] This in turn led to an increase in the bridewealth prices, or at least an insistence on payment in cattle, perhaps to try to maintain the older political economy of dependency on a patron for access to cattle and marriage. Cattle-bridewealth marriage was thus held

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[132] Shadle, 'Bridewealth', pp. 246-7.
[133] Interview with Margaret Keji Loro, 18.2.03, Khartoum: wealth was measured in cattle.
[134] Captain Alwyn Jennings Bramly, 'The Bari Tribe' *MAN* 65 (1906), pp. 101-3.
[135] Newcombe, 'Report on the Lado Enclave', *SIR* 162, Jan. 1908, PRO WO 106 231; Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum. In 1904-6, chiefs along the Nile apparently owned a considerable proportion of the village cows, but not necessarily the majority: Hodnebo, *Cattle and Flies*, pp. 40-41.
[136] EPMD Jan. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29; Huntingford, *Northern Nilo-Hamites* (quoting Vanden Plas), pp. 44-5, 59.
[137] Whitehead, 'Social Change', 'Suppressed Classes', and 'Crops and Cattle'.

up by elites as being fundamental to the moral economy, as Chapter Six will discuss.[138]

The scarcity of cattle, however, began to lead to the bridewealth being equated with cash, which in turn encouraged young men to seek wage labour in order to earn money, either to buy cattle or to pay the bridewealth directly.[139] As elsewhere in colonial Africa, young men thus had new opportunities to achieve greater independence in marriage from parents and elders.[140] But the latter stood to lose labour resources as a result of the migration to Uganda or Juba, and so may have responded by pushing up the bridewealth amounts even further. In one part of Yei district, a survey of labour in 1941 showed that 47% of adult men were employed away from their villages.[141] It was in this context of heightened competition for labour resources that the government demands for crops and labourers were being made.

### *3.2 Working for the Hakuma*

The chiefs' responsibility for enforcing government agricultural directives meant forcing or convincing people to provide labour. The relationship between tax collection and cash crops ensured that chiefs shared something of administrators' motives for promoting the latter, particularly as they were invariably blamed for failure to produce sufficient cash for taxation. In Moru district, compulsory cotton cultivation was abandoned in 1937, but "many cultivators did not realise they need not sow cotton and in some cases the chiefs forced them to do so, to facilitate head tax collection, for deficiency in which the chief is blamed".[142] The continued success of cotton in the Lyria and Luluba area was attributed to the energy of Chief Lolik,

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[138] Whitehead, 'Crops and Cattle', pp. 140-41, shows that most cattle were classed as *kisuk yemesi*, brideweath cattle, and that claims upon them were embedded in complex familial social relations.
[139] Whitehead, 'Crops and Cattle', p. 141; Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131: "the Kakwa have equated cattle with cash on the basis of a cow being equal to £2, a bull to £1".
[140] Bravman, *Making*, pp. 116-30.
[141] EPMD Aug., Oct. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[142] Myers, 'Provisional Report of the Economic Botanist on Yei, Meridi, Yambio districts', 1939, NRO CS 1/5/11.

who must have persuaded people that it was an easier way to earn their taxes than other options.[143] The courts were also increasingly used to enforce cultivation more generally, for example in Yei in 1945: "[c]hiefs courts on their own initiative have been passing sentence on persons who have failed to cultivate sufficient grain".[144]

However, the role of the chiefs in agricultural interventions was rationalised as part of their government work, because people made a distinction between *hakuma* crops and labour, and their own. People were said to view the sale of their crops to government as another form of taxation.[145] Similarly, 'demonstration gardens' failed because "the attitude generally was that these were 'Hakuma' plots and therefore only to be cultivated under compulsion being obviously a new form of labour tax".[146] It seems that such labour, though obviously resented, was understood as a labour tax imposed by the government *through* the chiefs, not by the chiefs themselves. The latter obtained labour through the clan heads or age-group organisations, and had to try to persuade people to meet government agricultural demands by emphasising community interests, and the benefits of cash and new crops.[147] Chiefs remembered now by interviewees as successful appear to have convinced at least some of their people that there were advantages to be gained from 'development' and new crops; "the lazy people do not like him, but everyone else loved him".[148] They were also becoming a channel of access to government resources, for example demanding bean and groundnut seeds from the government.[149]

The chiefs also had to be careful however to avoid being linked too closely to government agricultural authority and knowledge when it was so often unpopular and unsuitable. The same chief mentioned in this interview faced outright refusals to work on cultivation or road maintenance during the Christian 'revival' of 1938.[150] In another Moru chiefdom people simply refused to grow cotton despite exhortations of

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[143] Tothill, 'Report, 1940', NRO EP 2/3/10.
[144] YDMD Aug. 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[145] Juba District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[146] Ferguson, AR of Inspector of Agriculture, Kagulu for 1946, SAD 753/3/1-129.
[147] See also Clough, *Fighting*, p. 86.
[148] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[149] EPMD Oct. 1937, NRO CS 57/4/17.
[150] Harrison, A/D. C. Juba, to Governor, 8 Sept. 1938, NRO EP 1/5/26.

the D.C. and chief.[151] By the 1940s, the chiefs were seeking to deflect government demands through careful rhetoric. They "painted a gloomy picture" of the state of their crops to the government, leading one official to "wonder how much some of these rather pessimistic reports have to do with government buying of surplus crops, which does not appear to be popular".[152] In 1950, the Juba district chiefs' meeting told the D.C. that people were reluctant to grow cotton because it was not profitable.[153] The President of the Yei B court gave a "long harangue" on the evils of grassfires, but while occasionally culprits were caught and "dutifully punished" by the chiefs, it was "apparent that their sympathies are with the accused".[154] In 1942, Chief Daudi complained to the government that his people were being prevented from cultivating near the Kinda saw-mill; two years later he was fined for threatening to call a strike after a foreman at the mill was dismissed.[155] Chiefs were thus clearly acting as a new kind of gatekeeper with the *hakuma*.

This role could also involved taking the blame for the general resistance of their people to agricultural interventions: "Chief Lita is obstructive and slack with regards to experimental sowings of potatoes and cotton in his area, despite several warnings".[156] One informant recounted the story of Chief Lado Kirba of Loggo East in Juba district, who unsuccessfully tried to persuade his people to grow cotton: "when that was not done he got into trouble with the District Commissioner and was accused of being weak". Apparently as a result, he was 'demoted' and Loggo East amalgamated under Loggo West. The people were "very bitter", because they "had the feeling that they had been deprived, robbed of what they should have", and their protests eventually led to the restoration of Lado Kirba as chief at the end of the war: "the people came to like him more, they were very sympathetic and they always treated him with much respect... they didn't want to utter anything which would hurt his feelings."[157] People believed that the chief had been punished as a scapegoat for their own refusal to grow cotton. More importantly perhaps, they associated him

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[151] EPMD June 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[152] YDMD Dec. 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87; Dick, 'Trek Diary', 17 Aug. 1944, SAD 748 10/1-71.
[153] 'Extract from proceedings of Juba District Chiefs Meeting, Feb 1-4, 1950', NRO EP 2/9/32.
[154] EPMD Jan. 1943, NRO CS 57/19/74; YDMD Feb.-March1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[155] YDMD May 1942, July 1944, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[156] YDMD July 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[157] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

with their own autonomy and identity as Loggo East; a territorially defined community symbolised by their own chief.

### *3.3 Economic Strategies*

Resistance to the labour demands of the government was also expressed through the increasing labour migration of young men to the towns and the Ugandan plantations: "[i]t still appears that these migrations are stimulated not only by the need to earn tax money but also by the desire to avoid the numerous unremunerated services which are required of them by the government".[158] Similarly in Juba district:

> Investigations are being made into the movement of Chief's subjects into neighbouring Chief's territories and neighbouring districts to avoid Government demands for labour and grain in Juba. The number of Mandari who disappear into Aliab country is becoming a serious nuisance.[159]

But the labour migration was not only about resistance or evasion, or the aspirations of young men; it was also a strategy decided partly by household and community heads, which reflected the general failure of government agricultural interventions. In central Africa, Vaughan suggests that people made a deliberate decision to channel family labour into cash crops, but in Western Mongalla labour migration often proved a more viable means of earning cash, together with informal trade in crops like tobacco.[160] The Bari were reported to be abandoning their cotton plots in favour of work in Juba.[161] According to one interviewee from Kajo Kaji, the only profitable cash crop in the colonial period was tobacco; wealth came from owning cattle and goats, from 'petty' trade in goods like tobacco, and from waged employment.[162] Tobacco was also reported to be grown in Moru district in the 1940s because it was one of the few items for which the Dinka would trade their cattle.[163] Individual households made their own decisions as to which of these avenues to

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[158] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94; Interview with Lubari Ramba, 31 Aug. 2004, Mitika, Yei.
[159] EPMD Jan. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[160] Megan Vaughan, 'Food Production and Family Labour in Southern Malawi: The Shire Highlands and Upper Shire Valley in the Early Colonial Period', *JAH* 23, no. 3 (1982), pp. 351-64.
[161] EPMD Aug. 1937, NRO CS 57/4/17.
[162] Barnaba Dumo Wani, written answers, 2003, Khartoum.
[163] EPMD Jan. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5.

follow; for example, one detailed account described a family in Kajo Kaji deciding to sell their tobacco crop in Juba for beads, which they could then sell on at a profit in Uganda.[164]

However, government policies were increasingly promoting a communal and collective idea of African society and economy. The 'clan'-based tribute introduced in the 1930s added to the need for the recognised clan heads to retain control of the wages of younger men, and led later to complaints about paying tax on behalf of absent labourers.[165] In addition, cash crops were often introduced on a communal basis, ignoring the fact that all cultivation was individually owned and managed, though work parties might also be employed on a reciprocal or rewarded basis. In Yei, the attempt to introduce coffee through clans failed: "[t]he planted plots have not been maintained as a family affair – but the trees apportioned to each member. If one member of the family has been away, the others have left his piece".[166] A similar tendency was observed in Juba district: "[t]he people of Lyria have now asked to be allowed to cultivate ground-nuts in their own cultivations and not in communal areas as they say that some work hard and some don't". Administrators blamed such absence of "the collective idea" on "the powerful influence of years of individualisation".[167] Yet land, crops and cattle had always been individually controlled, as well as playing a key role in networks of reciprocity and dependency.[168] As labour had become more valuable than ever, it was instead ideas of communal obligation that were being emphasised in novel ways.

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[164] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, pp. 3-5.
[165] Governor Parr, 'Note circulated to D.C.'s on 20 Dec. 1938 on Taxation', NRO EP 2/2/8.
[166] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[167] Juba and Yei District AR's 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94. Nalder even asserted that there was no individual wealth or economic differentiation in pre-colonial societies, and that "as cattle were only used for marriage purposes it did not amount to 'wealth'": Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[168] Compare Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131 - clan tribute relies on clan ownership of cattle or other 'perm. assets' - with interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Khartoum and Huntingford, *Northern Nilo-Hamites*, pp. 44-5 - cattle were individually owned - and Logan Gray, D.C. Yei, to Governor, 22 June 1938, NRO EP 2/2/8: the 'agricultural tribes' of Yei district have no communal property.

### *3.4 The Moral Economy*

Ideas of the moral economy were always contested; it was the existence of this tension that prevented the total hegemony of an elite. But various strategies were pursued by certain sections of society in order to try to create or maintain situations of dependency and subordination of labour, while at the same time other sections emphasised patronage obligations and limited their oppression. The morality of wealth was complex and is significant to understanding the position of the chiefs.

The chiefs were most obviously in a position to exploit the colonial situation to their own advantage. In the 1930s it was reported that chiefs frequently covered tax deficits by foregoing the 5% remuneration to which they were entitled, and then recovering it in 'kind' later from defaulters; the official reporting this was concerned that it could lead to 'oppression'.[169] With only partial monetisation in the region, cash was of limited value beyond meeting demands for tax; the chiefs may well have preferred to gain labour instead.[170] When coffee was introduced in some areas, it was reported that only the chiefs and headmen were making a profit, because only they could afford to employ labour.[171] There was also some concern among officials that the agricultural demonstration plots brought profits only to the chiefs, and that the government was thus backing the chief conscripting labour in what was essentially his 'mini estate'.[172] Prison labour was also often used by the chief for either government works or his own cultivations.[173]

Mamdani sees the coercion of labour from tax defaulters as an indicator of the despotism of the chiefs.[174] But it may have been more legitimate, even if unpopular, than he suggests. One interviewee explained that the defaulter "will be a person who cannot pay, who does not have his own resources, so he provides his own labour".[175]

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[169] 'Central District Information Book', NRO JD 1/1/5.
[170] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[171] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8.
[172] Extract from Yei District AR 1940, and Governor to D.C. Yei, 16 Aug. 1939, NRO EP 2/5/18; Yei and Moru District AR's 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[173] Interviews with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Serefino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002, Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Khartoum; and Charles Taban Lupai, 5 Sept. 2004, Yei.
[174] Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 56.
[175] Interview with Festo Limi Sominda, 14 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.

This probably followed an older pattern of patronage; in fact, as Chapter Three explained, it was expected, and even preferred, that the chief should be wealthy, in order to render him more immune to outside bribery. As Lonsdale argues, wealth and leadership were equated: "fertile power fed clients". But "private ambition must serve the collective good"; greed was condemned, as the discussion of the idiom of witchcraft in Chapter Six will show.[176] Thus the chief was required to redistribute wealth through providing beer parties in return for labour, and by providing help during food shortages.[177] Interviewees also suggest that cultivating for the chief was accepted because he was busy with his government work; this adds to the impression that the chief was seen to be performing a job for his community, in return for which they would provide a limited amount of labour.[178] In addition, chiefs would organise labour for public works that benefited the community, and would provide food during public meetings or court sessions.[179]

According to one D.C., people had tolerated the demands for grain or labour from chiefs, because there was "nothing new" in offering such services to a patron. It was the introduction of a cash tax which was novel and not easily translated into these older patrimonial exchanges. It also forced young men to earn cash, so that they became increasingly resentful of unpaid labour; it was, he suggested, not "surprising that since they have been purposely taught that personal labour is a commodity, they should shirk the imposition and exaction of such labour unremunerated". This resentment then stimulated further labour migration to avoid the demands of the chief, contributing to the beginning of the "erosion of personal obligation" that occurred in areas of greater urban migration in East Africa.[180]

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[176] Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', pp. 337-9; Berry, *Chiefs Know*, p. xxxi. See also Leopold, *Roots of Violence*, p. 207; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, pp. 186-98.
[177] Interviews with Chief James Josea Ramadalla, 31 Aug. 2004, and Elder Daniel Jumi Tongun, 10 Sept. 2004, Yei; Whitehead, 'Crops and Cattle', p. 135. See also Rathbone, *Nkrumah*, p. 15.
[178] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum. See also Hatt, 'Establishing Tradition', p. 135.
[179] Interview with Daniel Jumi Tongun, 10 Sept. 2004, Yei; Nasiwa, 'Baseline Survey'. See also Fields, *Revival*, p. 67.
[180] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8. See John Lonsdale, 'East Africa', in Brown and Louis, *Twentieth Century*, pp. 530-44, at p. 537; Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, p. 235.

Chiefs, headmen and elders thus faced the problem of how to retain labour within communities and to meet government demands. One chief, Modi of Yei, resorted to sabotaging the labour lines of the Haggar coffee firm, "because he fears that he will lose their services on road maintenance".[181] But a more common strategy seems to have been to re-emphasise social and moral obligations, by asserting versions of history and tradition. Whitehead suggested that as the Bari clients gained independence in marriage, so the chiefs had to try to reinforce 'traditional right' as the basis for labour demands: "[m]y children, although I have not assisted you in marriage, you will work for me because you are the *'dupi* [slaves or non-kin dependents] of my grandfather".[182] In the 1950s, Buxton observed host/client relations in the Mandari area and claimed that the duty of clients to work for their hosts was not rewarded with beer in the way that other non-kin labour would be. Thus the idiom of 'kin' relations was being used to enforce such obligations. Yet she also observed the strength of a publicly endorsed "standard of behaviour" of the chief or notable towards his client, which ensured the reciprocity of this relationship.[183]

It was not just the chiefs who needed to enforce mutualities and socio-economic obligations. There was also general resentment and complaints about the preference of young, especially educated, men for wage labour rather than household cultivation.[184] The elders as well as the chiefs increasingly criticised "this new craze of going to Uganda in search of wealth, which they consider to be a delusion, to the detriment of their own country and its well-being."[185] In Moru district, "prominent elders continue to express their concern at the increasing exodus of young men from the country".[186] As opportunities for work in Juba also expanded, there was similar deprecation of the "drift of young men" in that direction: "[t]he effect on their morals is causing considerable concern to some of the chiefs".[187] The use of the word 'morals' is significant here; this issue went to the heart of the moral economy,

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[181] YDMD Jan. 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[182] Whitehead, 'Social Change', p. 95.
[183] Buxton, 'Clientship', pp. 103, 106.
[184] Juba District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97.
[185] Finch, 1939 Diocesan Review, CMS G3 S1/7-9; EPMD March 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[186] EPMD Sept. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[187] Juba District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98.

because as younger men gained more independence, both monetarily and in outlook, so their obligations to families and communities were threatened. Chiefs and elders developed a discourse about the value of hard work, and also argued that migrant workers should bring their wages back to their families and communities, especially to contribute to taxes.[188]

By the 1950s, it appears that work parties were beginning to be hired and paid in cash by those who could afford it, such as government employees.[189] In 1948, the Moru were reported to refuse to work on dispensary buildings without payment.[190] In recognition of the changing local economy, together with the influence of government ideas about modern development, administrators and chiefs increasingly had to accept the shift to waged labour. In 1952 the Moru Council, for example, "agreed that compulsory labour should give place to voluntary labour, and that an increase in wages should act as an incentive to this end".[191] Thus the independent economic decisions of younger men in particular had forced something of a change in the political economy.

### *3.5 Land Rights*

Another strategy for controlling labour was to emphasise land ownership and thus gain rent or labour from non-land owners. The British officials assumed that land was owned communally by the clans, and in making this assumption they may have contributed towards its realisation. Whitehead stated that access to land at this time was easy to obtain from the *monyekak* or clan heads, and this is also remembered to be the case in Moru district.[192] However, it seems that this system may have become rather more contentious in some areas by the later colonial period. This was particularly the case when government reservations of land for forestry or national parks forced people off the most fertile areas.[193] In Yei district, there were protests

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[188] EPMD Nov. 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24. See Bravman, *Making*, p. 121.
[189] Interview with Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[190] EPMD April 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[191] EPMD April 1952, NRO CS2 30/3/6; also EPMD June 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[192] Whitehead, 'Crops and cattle'; Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[193] EPMD April 1948, Nov. 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13; Governor Parr to CS, 30 March 1940, and Forbes, A/Game warden, to Governor, 4 March 1946, NRO EP 2/17/66.

to government at this loss of 'tribal' agricultural land and persistent demands for compensation. As a result, administrators became convinced of the 'ancient' rights of the landowning clans, and agreed to provide financial compensation.[194]

The social changes outlined by Whitehead, which were blurring the distinctions between free landowners and their former clients, may have meant that the landowners needed ways to reassert their status. If so, the recognition by the government of the 'ancient rights' of the landowning clans in the cases above would be significant in granting them a novel and distinct legal status.[195] As Chapter Three showed, certain people saw the value from the 1930s of asserting the historical rights of 'clans'. As settlement patterns changed, and as younger people or dependents increasingly failed to observe obligations as articulated through idioms of kinship, so elders sought to strengthen lineage-based land control by referring to history.[196] This is particularly apparent from the evidence Buxton gained from the Mandari in the 1950s, where grazing land was an increasing source of conflict: the *Bora* clan here "know that they have a special title to their land".[197] Claiming direct descent from the first settlers in an area, or from settlers who had been welcomed by earlier inhabitants, was a way to assert land rights and social status. Elsewhere in regions of land shortage this could become a critical justification for excluding others, but in Western Mongalla land was generally plentiful.[198] In Juba district, however, the most fertile land was found on the river banks and islands, and here more land disputes are remembered by interviewees.[199] More crucially perhaps, they suggest that the chiefs may have been gaining greater control over land. One

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[194] EPMD Oct.-Nov. 1948, Dec. 1949 NRO DK 57/5/13; EPMD Jan. 1950, April 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24.
[195] For debates over whether 'communal' land control was being created by 'landowning' clan leaders, see Mamdani, *Citizen*, pp. 138-41; Richards, 'Ecological Change', p. 55.
[196] One informant reflected this ongoing process in explaining that land was controlled by 'tradition' and clan history: Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19.2.03, Khartoum. See similar process in Lango: Tosh, *Clan Leaders*, p. 216.
[197] Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 33. The *Bora* 'clan' name was widely used across the region, associated with special land rights and often rain powers: for the possible Lwo linguistic connection of the name see Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 54-6. Stigand had also speculated that it referred to original inhabitants of the land, *Equatoria*, p. 48.
[198] On clan histories of first arrival, see Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 183-6; and Kopytoff, 'Internal African'. For cases where cash-crops made competition for land much greater, see Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', pp. 361-3; Spear, *Mountain Farmers*; Berry, *Chiefs Know*.
[199] Interviews with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003 and Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.

claimed that the chief had the power to punish offenders by taking their land away from them, while another stated that land disputes were settled by the chief, based on his knowledge of the history of the area.[200] These trends laid the foundations for the chiefs to become the focus for 'tribal' land claims more recently, as the movements of internally displaced people have turned land into a scarcer resource.[201]

In certain areas then, there may have been opportunities for chiefs to gain or manipulate control of land as a resource in itself, while more widely the use of courts to discuss land rights provided further opportunity for certain clans to establish more legalistic claims. But generally the role of the *monyekak* in land allocation remained paramount; for example in the Kajo Kaji area, the power of the chiefs is said to have been limited by the fact that they were dependent on the land custodians for their own access to land.[202] As Mamdani argues, the proprietary land rights of such 'earth chiefs' may have been more ideological than concrete.[203] Nevertheless the power of such ideology should not be underestimated; chiefs' legitimacy rested on their visible deference to such figures, as the principal mediators with powerful external forces other than the government. In addition, recalling the traditional rights of the 'owners' of hunting, fishing and cultivation lands was yet another way to re-emphasise patterns of reciprocal cooperation.[204] Despite the laws recorded in the 1920s granting the chiefs a share of hunting spoils, it was the owner of the hunting ground who in practice received this share, according to informants.[205] Historical and 'customary' knowledge was certainly key to land rights, but such knowledge was never monopolised by chiefs.[206]

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[200] Interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, and Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[201] Mampilly and Branch, 'Winning the War'.
[202] Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[203] Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 140.
[204] See Jamie Monson, 'Canoe-Building under Colonialism: Forestry and Food Policies in the Inner Kilombero Valley, 1920-40', in Maddox, Giblin & Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land*, pp. 200-12, at p. 207.
[205] Interview with Elder Daniel Jumi Tongun, 10 Sept. 2004, Yei.
[206] See also Berry, *Chiefs Know*.

## Conclusion

Mamdani describes the decentralised despotism of the colonial chiefs in Africa as "a regime of extra-economic coercion, a regime that breathed life into a whole range of compulsions: forced labor, forced crops, forced sales, forced contributions, and forced removals".[207] All of these compulsions were practised by the colonial state in Western Mongalla, as it sought economic viability and the hegemonic imposition of Western scientific knowledge. Officials in a basic sense "abstracted into the state, or bureaucratised, the coerced appropriation of African resources".[208] But at the level of the chiefs, coercion does not provide a sufficient explanation for the complex long-term task of persuading people to meet government demands. Nor could this often be done on the basis of the benefits of government policies; people must have rarely perceived useful knowledge to be gained from colonial agricultural interventions. Instead, the chiefs seem to have succeeded only in convincing people that they could keep the state at bay and satisfied by meeting certain minimum requirements. Where the hardships entailed in meeting those requirements became excessive, people resisted them anyway.

The chiefs gained certain limited rights to demand labour, but their authority and ability to accumulate were constrained by a number of factors. It was their ownership of cattle and control of labour which gave them the greatest opportunities to dominate the political economy, but even this was undermined by the loss of cattle and the increasing access to money and marital autonomy, the effects of which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. The chiefs do not seem to have gained control of the allocation of land, except perhaps if there was a dispute to be settled. They also did not control the economic decisions made by households, including labour migration and informal trade. And recognition of their knowledge was confined to a certain sphere, so that multiple other sources of expertise retained authority in relation to the land, agriculture and the human geography. Land issues illustrate the thin line the chiefs had to tread between government and people, and the effectiveness of community resistance to the state and to any despotic tendencies

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[207] Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 23.
[208] Berman and Lonsdale, 'Coping', p. 95.

on the part of the chiefs. Above all they reveal the basic disregard shown towards state intervention, wherever possible, and the preservation of indigenous geographies, knowledge and networks. In order to further explore the limits of 'extra-economic coercion', the following chapter will focus in more detail on understandings of the body and of physical force.

# Chapter Five

## Knowing the Body:

## Medicine, Force and Punishment

## Introduction

One interviewee, when asked if there was much resistance to colonial government demands for labour, crops or taxation, gave the following response:

> The taxes were poll tax, and D.C. Cooke gave people a number, a number on a medal like a dog! They… go from village to village and every headman has to bring his people, the young ones, and then you are undressed to see if you have become big, like a man. This was under a tree. And then when they think you are a mature man, whether 20 or 18, most important you are a grown man, then you are given a number. I saw it being done, we were just enjoying laughing.
>
> And the second time this kind of thing was being done was during the war, 1943/44/45, when there was a fear of plague from lice in the hair. People were shaven by force, everything in their houses were brought out and DDT'd, and then even the clothes they were living in, they were undressed and all these things were put in pots of hot water and DDT'd and everybody was shaven, all their hair.
>
> This was the only force I saw.[1]

It is striking that the emotive memories of colonial force that stood out for the interviewee were not those of corporal punishments or forced labour, but cases of invasion, humiliation and degradation of the body by government. These were also cases where the British personnel seem to have been more prominent than the chiefs or headmen, and therefore demonstrated more directly and powerfully the coercive power of the state. Knowledge of the body and understandings of physical harm

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[1] Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum. See also 'Central District Information Book', NRO JD 1/1/5: "At the first session of each Native B Court in the year, the chief parades the youths for admission to the tax list".

demonstrate the differences in belief and epistemological categories between the Europeans and the people of Western Mongalla; understanding this distinction is crucial to understanding the limits of power of both the colonial state and the chiefs, despite their apparent monopoly of physical force.

Especially in the earlier colonial period, the main contact local people had with white officials was in relation to medical campaigns. What those officials might depict as sanitary or even humanitarian interventions were experienced more as controlling and invasive impositions. On the other hand, some of the medical treatment offered by the missions was received more favourably, although the hospitals were always partly associated with government too, and mistrust continued in some areas. But Western treatment and prevention never addressed all the implications of 'medicine' in terms of knowledge of the wider issues surrounding a physical ailment or injury, understanding of it as a symptom of unresolved interpersonal, social or spiritual problems, and the need for holistic psychological and social, as well as physical, healing. Lambek defines 'medicine' as essentially knowledge put into practice.[2] Physical ailments were in a sense a symptom of the unknown; their treatment involved gaining knowledge not only of how to cure them, but also of why they had occurred to that particular person at that time.

Just as the physical was not necessarily a distinct category of experience, nor was force simply about actual bodily coercion. Mamdani's argument for the power of the colonial chiefs rests partly on the assumption that their police held a monopoly over the threat of force. In Western Mongalla, the use of physical punishment was indeed a prominent aspect of the enforcement of chiefly authority, but it seems to have been routinised and normalised within certain limits. It was also known and recognisable; it was the unknown possibilities of power to harm held by others that aroused the greatest fear. If bodies were contested territories, they were conquered more by these mysterious powers than by all the potential or actual physical force of the colonial state, ensuring that neither the state nor the chiefs acquired a monopoly of coercive capabilities in the eyes of the people. In addition, as the state rendered local bodies

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[2] Lambek, *Knowledge*, p. 16.

more helpless against external physical force, so recourse to other sources of personal protection and power may, if anything, have gained in importance.

## 1. Colonial Disease Control

In the sleeping sickness designated areas, the force of the early colonial state was experienced largely in relation to the disease, although this connection may not always have been understood by the inhabitants. The use of the sleeping sickness registers of population for tax purposes served to further associate the 'medical' campaign with the general imposition of colonial government. As Lyons writes of the sleeping sickness campaign in the Belgian Congo, "many Africans perceived colonial medical practices as part of the conquest of their societies".[3] The territorial implications of the campaign against sleeping sickness have already been discussed in the previous chapter, together with the force employed to move villages and punish the absentees from inspections. But the inspections themselves were also invasive, involving the palpitation of cervical glands by white medical officials. One Sleeping Sickness Inspector, Spence, explained the mistrust of inspections in 1914:

> The men don't like it, and still less do they like their women and children being seen. Consequently they tell the women that the messenger is coming to take them away and eat the children. Some of the women I think really believe this and fly into the bush when you come near their village. Then you have to sit down and send men out in all directions to hunt for them. Once a village has been done several times it is not so bad; they get accustomed to it, though they still hide the budding women (aged about 11 or 12); this is a result of the Belgian occupation; they were not as scrupulous in the matter of women as Englishmen are.[4]

This reluctance to allow women to be examined was also common in the Belgian Congo, although Lyons does not really offer an explanation beyond male efforts to control women.[5] Spence of course seized the opportunity to criticise the Belgians, but his reference to the fear of children being eaten suggests that the mistrust had deeper roots in the history of this area. Yei had been a major slave market in the mid-nineteenth century, and foreigners had long been associated with slave raiding

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[3] Maryinez Lyons, *The Colonial Disease: A Social History of Sleeping Sickness in Northern Zaire, 1900-1940* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 183.
[4] Spence to mother, Yei, 31 Dec. 1914, SAL D12/200/1-28.
[5] Lyons, *Colonial Disease*, pp. 187-8.

and trading.[6] The idiom of 'eating' people cropped up repeatedly in the early colonial reports, and was assumed by the Europeans to indicate the prevalence of cannibalism, but it was of course a powerful expression of the vulnerability and commoditisation of bodies, especially with the expansion of the slave trade in central Africa.

The removal of infected sleeping sickness cases to the quarantine centres no doubt confirmed some of these fears; despite government self-congratulation on the general contentment of patients, they were essentially imprisoned for a number of years.[7] Many only developed the symptoms of the disease after being quarantined, which would obviously have added to the suspicion of the centres. The atoxyl injections used to treat sleeping sickness until the mid-20s also had the frequent side-effects of blindness and even death.[8]

These threats, together with the penetration and pain of the gland punctures, which were carried out following initial detection by palpitation, led to some extreme methods of evasion during a new outbreak of sleeping sickness in Kajo Kaji in 1937:

> These people got local surgeons to excise their cervical glands so as to avoid gland punctures as a test for sleeping sickness. The Senior Medical Inspector retaliated with lumbar punctures to which the local surgeon had no retort. It is not understood why so much expense (and pain) was incurred to avoid the normal test.[9]

Despite the puzzlement of the officials, the deliberate removal of glands was an obvious attempt to subvert the inspections, and an indication that the latter were perceived as a threat. No doubt the retaliatory resort to lumbar punctures only served to confirm the association of Medical Inspectors with force and punishment.

The other disease which prompted a rigorous campaign was Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis (CSM), also largely in Yei district. In 1933 the Governor confidently

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[6] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', pp. 167-8.
[7] The camps are described in G. K. Maurice, 'The History of Sleeping Sickness in the Sudan', *SNR* 13, no. 2 (1930), pp. 211-45.
[8] Lyons, *Colonial Disease*, p. 198.
[9] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99.

predicted that, "[n]ow that the old practice of immediately burning at least the infected huts and perhaps the whole village has ceased, the people will lose their fear of notifying an outbreak".[10] The campaign shifted to quarantines and movement restrictions, together with isolation and treatment of infected cases; it was emphasised that 80% of cases could be saved by treatment. Yet well into the 1940s, people remained reluctant to inform the authorities of cases: "[t]he high death rate is entirely due to the persistence of the people in giving local treatment first and only bringing the sufferer to hospital when that has failed and the patient's condition worsened".[11] In 1942, the Yei D.C. held a 'long discussion' with chiefs and headmen, and discovered that the suspicion and resentment of CSM treatment resulted from the new stomach injections and lumbar punctures, the compulsory burial in the quarantine centres, and the heavy fines for not reporting suspected illness. A year later the proposed solutions - 'propaganda' and home burials - had clearly not succeeded; the people were reported to be convinced that CSM was the result of poison, which should be treated with herbal remedies.[12]

Both the sleeping sickness and CSM campaigns were experienced largely as punitive and invasive inspections and quarantines – the state injecting and stealing bodies - rather than as a source of healing. Similarly the outbreak of relapsing fever in the 1940s led to a delousing campaign by medical dressers with police help, hailed as a general success: "[t]he chiefs responded well to our calls for cooperation and taking into account that it was a strange disease and that they did not like the regular shaving and the disinfecting of their clothing, the people played up well".[13] Yet reported absentees, together with the resentful memories of the interviewee cited at the beginning of the chapter, suggest that once again the medical campaign was experienced more as a coercive and humiliating imposition than as a positive intervention.

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[10] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[11] EPAR 1947, NRO CS2 30/10/32; also SMI EP to D.C.'s, 9 Oct. 1939, D.C. Yei to SMI Juba, 9 Feb. 1942, and D.C. Yei to PMI, 15 Nov. 1943, NRO EP 2/21/78; EPMD Feb.-June 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78; EPMD Jan. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[12] YDMD July 1942, Nov. 1943, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[13] 'Central District Information Book: boundaries, geographical features, history', NRO JD 1/1/1; EPMD Jan. 1943, NRO CS 57/19/74.

The vulnerability of bodies was perhaps most vividly expressed in the stories of *Kulia Batu*, if the latter are read as accounts of the experience of colonial rule, as White does other vampire and cannibalism rumours. The term, presumably a Lingala one, reportedly referred to a belief that at dusk or in the night, "European, Arab or even Indian cannibals" come across the Uganda or Congo frontiers in saloon cars "and carry off the local people for the sake of their meat".[14] The mention of Indians suggests that this was linked to the recruitment of local men to work in Uganda, and the loss this represented to local communities, discussed in the previous chapter.[15] When the body of an alleged victim was discovered, one rumour claimed that the man's tongue had been cut out, perhaps reflecting a sense that the colonial state suppressed the voices and autonomy of its subjects.[16] These stories were thus an expression of a sense of the extractive threat posed by the colonial government, but they also drew on the long history of foreigners enslaving or coercing local people, as the general fears of children being 'eaten' show. There is debate over such vampire/cannibal stories as to whether they were, as White argues, a "new idiom for new times",[17] or whether they reflect longer histories.[18] Shaw overcomes this by emphasising the power of memory even in meeting new threats: "[u]nderstandings of relationships of extraction can both be new stories *and* draw upon prior relationships involving the 'consumption' of human beings".[19]

Such stories in Western Mongalla might therefore also reflect something of the colonial campaigns against sleeping sickness and CSM. Extraction will be shown to be an important aspect of removing harm from the body, but it could also be threatening. The removal of blood or lymph fluid for testing by the medical authorities, especially in cases where the sickness was not yet visible, aroused fear and mistrust.[20] It may have evoked, or been evoked in, the Moru description of the '*mato*':

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[14] EPMD Feb. 1951, NRO DK 57/9/24; EPMD Jan. 1953, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[15] See White, *Speaking*, pp. 279-80.
[16] EPMD Jan. 1953, NRO CS2 30/3/6. See again White, *Speaking*, p. 107: "many African concerns about the power of European therapies were about what they did to African speech".
[17] White, *Speaking*, p. 29.
[18] Maia Green, *Priests, Witches and Power: Popular Christianity after Mission in Southern Tanzania*, (Cambridge, 2003), p. 73.
[19] Shaw, *Memories*, p. 11.
[20] Lyons, *Colonial Disease*, pp. 184, 188-9.

> [T]he mato is essentially a non-corporeal being, although it may reside during the daytime in a human body. The mato is said to suck people's blood whilst they are asleep, thus accounting for any strange lethargy or sickness which may be found to afflict them suddenly one morning.[21]

The association with lethargy might even indicate a comparison with sleeping sickness: the blood and lymph tests may have become suspected as a cause of it, especially as many cases would only display symptoms *after* being detected. The combination of the government medical and tax inspections and the forcible treatment, together with the coercion of labour, ensured that people experienced the power of the colonial state through attempted invasions and appropriations of their own bodies, which in turn evoked the longer history in the region of the consumption of human bodies by slave traders.

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[21] Anon. (prob. Mynors), 'Notes on Evans-Pritchard's Draft Account of the Moru tribe', NRO DK 112/14/95.

## 2. Government and Mission Medicine

Medical treatment, apart from the epidemic campaigns, was initially offered largely by the missions, especially at the Lui station run by Dr and Mrs Fraser. Their system of dispensaries run by locally trained staff was adopted more widely in the Province, and from 1930, 'dressers' were also attached to each chief to treat small wounds and generally promote government and mission medical work. Government hospitals were also opened in the 1920s and 1930s at Yei, Kajo Kaji and Juba.[22] As with agricultural knowledge, medical skills were selectively assimilated; there was also a distinction between voluntary requests for treatment, and forced diagnosis and hospitalisation.

Dr Fraser reported 1,500 patients attending the hospital during its first year in 1921, and an increase to 2,223 in 1922.[23] The local chief, Yilu, worked initially as his anaesthetist, and operations attracted large audiences:

> In those early days, the magic of chloroform, and the greater magic of the knife that could cut down to bone or bowel without pain, and with no undue loss of blood, left them quite speechless, but they soon got used to it, although even now many of them believe the magic to be in my knife.[24]

Surgery, dressing and drugs were soon in demand, especially as the latter two became accessible through the dispensaries. One visitor in 1933 described the apparent success of the mission hospital:

> One case of leopard mauling came in last night... The man's brother was present while they operated. It was interesting to note how completely the brother realised the importance of the treatment for he pointed out each wound on the man's body so that it might be cleansed by anti-septic dressing...

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[22] Gibson, Yei, Sept. 1922, and Giff, Kajo Kaji, 20 Aug. 1930, CMS G3 AL.
[23] Fraser, Lui, 27 Nov. 1922, CMS G3 AL.
[24] Fraser, 'Pioneering medical work in the pagan Sudan', *The Mission Hospital*, Vol. 29, 1925, pp. 32-6.

> It was very interesting to watch the African orderlies giving out medicine, and also giving injections. These latter the people love having! Also they think that the nastier the medicine the more potent it is![25]

The dislike of the sleeping sickness and CSM injections was clearly specific therefore, and did not reflect an intrinsic African aversion to needles.[26] The potency of Fraser's knife and of the medicines and injections were translated into local meanings; one patient referred to pills as "spirits' eggs".[27] At the same time, knowledge of the need to dress wounds no doubt preceded the arrival of the missionaries. Another explanation of the popularity of the mission medical work was inadvertently expressed by Fraser in describing the hostility of the local 'witchdoctors' to the dispensaries:

> They may well feel anxious when they see an educated boy, perhaps the son of a chief or headman, cheerfully ministering all the morning to the sick, invoking only the help of the Great Physician, giving a simple reason for every dressing and dose of medicine, performing for strangers those menial tasks which normally only relatives undertake, and all for eight shillings a month, the price of two goats, which is the sorcerer's usual fee for one case.[28]

The low cost of treatment, together with the claim of the dispensers to know a great healing power, whether this was understood as the distant white missionary doctor or as the divine 'physician', resulted in substantial numbers of people using the dispensaries and mission hospital. Yet the 'menial' and low-paid medical work may also have reduced its status, as later dissatisfaction on the part of the dressers would reveal.

The Lui mission's early medical successes also rested substantially on the personalities of the Frasers and their relationship with the local chief and people, together with their training of local staff for the hospital and dispensaries. The Yei

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[25] Baring-Gould, 6 Feb. 1933/4, Lui, CMS Acc. 21, F7B.
[26] Lyons, *Colonial Disease*, p. 189. White also highlights the profound and contradictory understandings of the ability of Western medical techniques to penetrate the skin: *Speaking*, p. 99.
[27] Mrs Fraser, 'The New Hospital, Yilu', *The Mission Hospital*, Vol. 31, 1927, pp. 244-7.
[28] Fraser, 'Progress at Lui (formerly Yilu)', *The Mission Hospital*, Vol.35, 1931, pp. 294-7.

Civil Hospital, in contrast, was viewed with mistrust as a government institution: it was hoped that chiefs' dressers would bring people in who would not otherwise go, and as late as 1940, the admission of the first patients from Kala was heralded as a milestone in winning greater trust.[29] Even patients at the mission hospital at Loka were reportedly afraid of being sent to Yei hospital, because the orderlies were government rather than mission trained.[30] The connection between hospital and *hakuma* was underlined in one account of a man beaten for suspected poisoning, who was taken to the Kajo Kaji hospital; the case was then reported to the D.C. by the hospital staff.[31] In Yei and Kajo Kaji, the sleeping sickness and CSM campaigns could have added to the fear of government hospitals, but also in Juba district, one official reported that, "[w]hen I first came to this Province in 1928 the natives were very shy and nervous of the hospitals and it was with the greatest difficulty one could persuade a sick person to go to hospital". He suggested that the introduction of chiefs' dressers since 1930 had helped to overcome this mistrust by spreading knowledge of the value of medical work, and claimed that on average each dresser saw 1725 patients p.a.[32] However, a report from 1940 from the same district indicated less success:

> The Chiefs Dressers are satisfactory but require a lot of watching. One is largely dependent on the chief whether they are really active or otherwise… Dressers need quite a lot of attention as it is found that they enter fictitious attendances in their books… Dressers do not patrol their areas as they should. This depends on chiefs. Chiefs are also very negligent at seeing that medicines are kept up to requirements.[33]

Once again, the chiefs were expected to play a central role in the introduction of new kinds of knowledge, placing them in a difficult and ambivalent position. Their enforcement of sleeping sickness and CSM regulations and sanitary measures such as anti-guinea worm wells associated them further with state coercion. But as Lyons notes, their role as chief entailed an obligation to protect the people and their

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[29] Tracey, 'Note on Native Administration, Yei District, Equatoria', 15 Feb. 1939, NRO EP 2/2/8; EPMD Dec. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[30] Mrs Selwyn, Loka, 12 Aug. 1930, CMS G3 AL.
[31] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 17.
[32] 'Memo on Chiefs' Dressers', 1938, NRO JD 1/2/6.
[33] 'Central District Information Book', NRO JD 1/1/5.

health.[34] In the nineteenth century, 'chiefs' were apparently forced to pay tribute to the female prophet Kiden in order to obtain her protection from disease for their communities.[35] Some colonial chiefs similarly sought to obtain western medicine; for example, Chief Yilu at Lui, or Chief Morbe Kenyi in Juba district, who was reported to like being in hospital and to be "influencing his people to follow his example".[36] The fact that some of the new generation of chiefs from the 1930s had been employed in the government medical service no doubt also made them encourage their people in this way. Chief Korokangwa in Moru district, for example, had been a Public Health Overseer, and in 1946 he provided "able and active cooperation" and "invaluable work" in building a system of pit latrines as a 'Village Sanitation Experiment' directed by the Lui mission.[37] But at the same time the chiefs needed to be seen to maintain good relations with respected indigenous doctors. For example, one Dokolo Galaya was taken to court in Moru district after he "threatened an ex-patient of Lui CMS hospital with death if he returned there for treatment". The case for once revealed some of the differentiations among indigenous medical practitioners, which will be discussed further below:

> No evidence was adduced on which any criminal charge could be framed. He appears to be one of the many local Kujur practitioners who enjoy a certain local reputation as a healer by the laying-on of hands but does not exercise any of the anti-social influence exercised by evil witch-doctors. His Chief Luka Jambiri gave him an unexpectedly good testimonial.[38]

This support of Chief Luka, himself educated and Christian, for Dokolo as a doctor thus indicated the balancing act required of chiefs in obtaining and maintaining both government/mission and indigenous resources for the health of their communities.[39]

The idea of a chief's obligation to protect his community from disease was also extended to the government, in its incarnation as a kind of patron. Medical resources played a significant part in the development of ideas of rights of citizenship, and of

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[34] Lyons, *Colonial Disease*, p. 194.
[35] Richardson, 'Bari Notes', pp. 181-2.
[36] EPMD Dec. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[37] EPMD Jan.-Feb. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[38] EPMD March-April 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[39] Chiefs nowadays play an important role in disease prevention and vaccination campaigns: Nasiwa, 'Baseline Survey'. See also van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk, 'Introduction', p. 7: chiefs mediate between Western and indigenous concepts of illness.

anti-colonial feeling, from the 1940s. Even those who became qualified in Western medicine had an ambivalent relationship with the mission doctors and government medical officials. By the 1940s, the orderlies in Lui hospital were striking to demand higher wages, and showing a general lack of 'discipline' and 'Communistic' ideas.[40] The daughter of a medical assistant remembers her father fighting with the British: "he liked the way they trained people, but he used to complain that these people dictate too much, do this, do that".[41] Something of a shift also seems to have occurred towards associating the government rather than the missions with medical work, and to a more definite belief that treatment was a duty of the government, as demonstrated when the Lui mission hospital introduced fees for the first time in 1948:

> Fees… emptied the hospital, which is looked on as a government one, which should therefore give free treatment… *They look on it as their right, since they pay taxes*.[42] [My italics]

The idea of a government medical duty was also emphasised in a report by the Moru district D.C. in the same year:

> Various complaints were heard by District Commissioner Amadi, whilst he was on trek, that many people had died and why had not the 'Hukuma' done something about it. Enquiries revealed that most of the deaths (and there were only a few) were due to pneumonia and that the sick persons had neither visited the local dispensary nor sent for the dresser.[43]

Thus medical interventions had been partially transformed, from an aspect of colonial conquest, to a state resource to which people expected access in return for their taxes.

The net result of mission and government medical work was an ambivalent and contradictory public attitude to Western medicine. The apparent efficacy of dressings and drugs encouraged people to acquire them, but their association with a government whose intentions were never fully trusted would have only increased the need for simultaneous recourse to other kinds of protection. By the 1940s, people

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[40] Bertram, Lui, Sept. 1948, CMS AF AL.
[41] Interview with Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[42] Bertram, Lui, Sept. 1948, CMS AF AL.
[43] EPMD Feb. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.

expected the government to provide treatment and prevent deaths, and yet there was a reluctance to attend hospitals and a general lack of enthusiasm on the part of dressers, chiefs and people towards medical activities. Just as hospitals remained suspect, so other sanitary interventions could be tainted by their association with government officialdom:

> A deputation of local inhabitants petitioned to be allowed to abandon the anti-guinea worm wells dug at Lyria last year. The reason given was that the wells being 'official', evil-minded persons were tempted to poison their waters.[44]

The missionaries in particular were desperately eager to eradicate such beliefs in 'poison', 'witchcraft' and the 'evil eye'; the campaign to build pit latrines launched by a CMS nurse in Moru district was intended to prevent intestinal parasites, and "to demonstrate to the people the fallacy of the idea of the evil-eye causing these diseases".[45] But while people were willing to obtain dressings and drugs, they generally needed resolution and protection beyond the scope of such remedies, as will be explored below. As a result, the missionaries found themselves frequently in conflict with indigenous medicine, as the following account from the Loka mission suggests:

> We had one interesting case of a baby with a large deep-seated ulcer in its knee. The smell was very foul as the cavity had been plugged with manure and decayed leaves... After cleaning it and dressing it, I told the mother to bring Baby again tomorrow. She came, and round the baby's foot I saw the dreaded lion's mane fetish of the witch doctor! My dressings had been removed and more manure applied. Sick at heart, I told her God loved her baby and wanted to heal him, but He could not work while she was going to the witch doctor. If she gave him up, God would heal her baby... Next morning she came again, the bandages intact! The wound was as clean as if it had had a weeks dressing. It was a miracle indeed.[46]

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[44] EPMD Nov. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[45] Miss Read, Lui, 3 April 1946, CMS AF AL.
[46] Mrs Selwyn, Loka, 12 Aug. 1930, CMS G3 AL.

The pragmatic recourse to more than one kind of expert was in contrast to the missionary concept of good and bad medicine; it would be interesting to know if the mother attributed the healing to the same source of miracles as the missionary. Medicine was a contested field of knowledge, as reflected in the account of one schoolboy at Lainya in the 1940s:

> I dare not show my parents that I am ill. I am baptised, but they are not. I must escape and try to reach the local dispensary so that I may be treated correctly. If my parents find out about my illness they call the local witchdoctor and he makes me very ill.[47]

Women played a particularly prominent role in supporting indigenous medicine. One interviewee remembers conflict between her parents, because her father was a trained Medical Assistant, but her mother continued to take the children to the 'witchdoctor'.[48] Similarly, when another interviewee and his schoolboy friends accused an old female doctor of fraudulent methods, it was the women of the village who turned on the boys and chased them out of the village.[49]

The direct attacks by missionaries on 'witchcraft' beliefs entangled them in those same beliefs. One illustration of this was the methods of a Miss Langley at Lui in the late 1920s: she dealt with a suspected case of the 'evil eye' by promising "to heal him with God's good Eye which was more powerful than all 'evil eyes', and in two days his fear had vanished and he was cured". She also discovered that two Dinka men in the leper village had been using 'charms of wood' to threaten the other lepers: "I held these charms in my hands to show the lepers their powerlessness". The subsequent illness of Miss Langley, which led to her rapid departure, may instead have served to display her own powerlessness in these contests.[50] Her language also reflects the way that missionaries more generally found themselves using African idioms, like the power of the eye, rather than imposing their own, resulting in a translation and vernacularisation of epistemologies and discourses.[51]

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[47] Williams, Lainya, 15 Oct 1949, CMS AF AL.
[48] Interview with Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[49] Interviews with Serefino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002 and 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[50] Miss Langley to Miss Nugent, Yilu, 17 Aug. 1928, CMS Acc. 111, F1/14-24.
[51] See Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh, 1999), esp. pp. 55-82; and White, *Speaking*, p. 95: African "epistemologies of causation and cure" altered colonial medical practices.

Despite this idiomatic creolisation and the employment of local dressers and medics, the medical resources of both the government and missions remained external to communities: something to be selectively acquired, and later demanded as a right, but only in conjunction with continuing practices of diagnosis and healing by indigenous doctors. Only the latter could know the deeper implications of disease for the community. Greene argues that understandings of sacred sites, including the body, were fundamentally altered during the colonial period in relation to their spiritual nature, but in focusing on the emerging distinction between material and spiritual worlds, she pays less attention to the social and moral meanings that also permeated bodies and the landscape.[52] Yet these are crucial to understanding why Western medicine was selectively and partially adopted, as the Comaroffs write of the Tswana:

> European medicine… did not address the social bases of their ills. But it could be absorbed into their repertoire of responses to misfortune – without, as they understood matters, challenging the foundations of their world.[53]

In Western Mongalla, the human body and its place in the landscape could not be understood without continuing reference to epistemologies that defied the hegemony of missionary or government medicine.

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[52] Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington, 2002)
[53] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, Vol. 2, pp. 60-61.

## 3. Indigenous Medicine

The missionaries tended to categorise all indigenous practitioners as 'witchdoctors' and indigenous medicine as superstition:

> The people consider that all illness is due to the anger of an evil spirit, or to a curse put on them by someone, and this makes them both fatalistic in outlook and futile in their treatment, which is based upon the advice given by the local witch doctor.[54]

Of course, medicine was far more complex, and the expertise of doctors more specialised and differentiated, than this depiction suggests. There was a distinction between certain common forms of sickness or injury for which doctors had specific remedies, and other kinds of illness that required a deeper or wider diagnosis of the cause, which could often include some form of ill-will on the part of a known or unknown enemy.

In Bari, the term 'bunuk' conveyed the meaning 'doctor', but, according to interviewees, it referred both to the "herbalists [who] specialise and identify certain herbs for the clan", but who had "only expertise in traditional medicine… [without] hereditary or supernatural powers"; and also to the "people who will detect what is wrong with you", and who might "do some witchcraft".[55] In Moru, the former kind of practitioner was said by one D.C. to be called 'Kozo':

> If sickness is not attributable to the more serious forms of bewitchment, attempts may be made to cure it either by home-made remedies or by summoning the local doctor (Kozo)… The Kozo is usually an old woman.[56]

The *bunuk* could be men, but one interviewee described a gender differentiation in terms of functions:

> They have traditional plants for everything, like malaria, stomach pains… They were more often women, but also men. But the men kujurs or witchdoctors, they are supposed to be protectors of the people, they perform certain rituals, put certain roots around the village to keep away these

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[54] 'Mission share plan: introductory letter for Lui Hospital', CMS G3 Sg6.
[55] Interviews with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum; Barnaba Dumo Wani, written answers, 2003, Khartoum.
[56] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.

> warriors from attacking the village… It is the men usually who practice that, but the women are more concerned with curing.[57]

According to a Mandari interviewee, "the spiritual health is also liked with the physical health, because these things are interrelated… and therefore you must get cleansed up appropriately". But "*otherwise* you may be given medicine or their own herbs".[58] These accounts all suggest therefore that there was a distinction between spiritual or supernatural kinds of affliction, and common sickness which could be treated with herbs and medicines, and that some experts, especially women, were restricted to the latter.

Some doctors relied on their exclusive possession of substances or objects, as a missionary observed in relation to leprosy cures:

> There are some native medicines for leprosy but their owners, who make much profit through them, guard their secrets with even more care than the producers of proprietary medicines do in England. I have a bulbous plant which a man brought to me with great stealth, which I want to get analysed one day; a man with quite a wide reputation uses it.[59]

As the missionary realised, secrecy was integral to the political economy of medicine: one interviewee also explained that, "these people don't tell you what the things are because if everybody knows then they will lose their profession or their support".[60]

The performative techniques of doctors also relied on a degree of secrecy and mystery; another informant explained that fertility treatment would not be "done in the open".[61] A common element of their rituals involved the extraction of an object from the body of their patient: "[t]here are medicine men among the Moro who extract various things out of people's bodies to cure them of sickness".[62] The doctor

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[57] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[58] Interview with Gajuk Wurnyang Lupaya, 28 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[59] Lui Hospital Report, 1944, CMS G3 Sm2.
[60] Interview with Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[61] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[62] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95; Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', p. 28; John Middleton, 'Oracles and Magic among the Lugbara', in Mary Douglas and Phyllis M. Kaberry (eds.), *Man in Africa* (New York, 1971), pp. 262-78, at p. 271. See also White, *Speaking*, p. 99 on extraction treatment.

'discovered' by one interviewee and his school-friends as a 'fraud' had a ball of hair and oil, which she chewed in her mouth and then 'sucked' out of the chest of her patient.[63] For the boys who watched this and then found the hair afterwards, the substance was proof that her technique was fake, and yet for the women who chased them from the village, it was perhaps the performance of extracting the disease that mattered, not whether the object had actually come from within the body. A similar practice for sorcery extraction is described in Mayotte by Lambek, in which a *sairy*, or small bundle of substances like hair, is removed from the body or home of the sick person:

> The cure is based on the clients reaching certainty that any harmful influence sent by a sorcerer that was recently within their bodies has been removed… the construction of *acceptance* that one has been cleansed. The *sairy* is the chief prop of the conventional performance through which acceptance is produced, the focus around which it can be socially enacted.[64]

The act of extraction of a harmful influence may have been replicated in surgery, helping to explain the reported popularity of Fraser's operations. Injections, on the other hand, particularly those administered forcibly in the epidemic campaigns, could have been seen to implant and invade rather than extract sickness. This was certainly suggested in the case of CSM, when there was "suspicion that the new treatment of injections in the stomach and lumbar punctures have caused the high mortality".[65]

Neither the rituals nor the medicines of indigenous doctors were entirely external objects of knowledge. The accounts by Evans-Pritchard of Moru doctors expresses some of the complexities of local medicine. The *odraba* were said to have originated as a profession when one man brought a medicine from people to the west, possible a syphilis cure, and it was passed from father to son. The nephew of a present owner of it "became very ill with sores", but his uncle failed to cure him:

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[63] Interviews with Serefino Wani Swaka, 20 Oct. 2002 and 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[64] Lambek, *Knowledge*, pp. 292-3.
[65] YDMD July 1942, Nov. 1943, NRO EP 2/24/87.

> His uncle then asked him 'Do you want to die? You had better take over knowledge of the medicine and become an odraba yourself. His nephew followed this advice and became cured.[66]

This suggests a symbiotic relationship between disease and cure; the disease itself could signify possession of the knowledge to cure it. In the same area, the *bori* rain-makers also acted as doctors, especially in cases of illness resembling spirit-possession by 'Lu'. The prominent *bori* Labi explained his techniques:

> In the early morning Labi takes a pot with some water in it, kills a fowl over it, and with his hands throws some of the water on to the sick man. The illness leaves him, he rises, pays his fee, and departs. But the illness having left this man now comes into Labi who shortly afterwards becomes sick in his place. However he takes an old spear-head from one of his pots and rubs his flanks with it so that his sickness will soon pass away…
>
> I asked him whether a tall son of his who was standing near would inherit his powers and practice his craft. He replied that he had already taught his son much of the technique, but that when the youth cured someone afflicted by Lu and as a result became sick himself, he suffered too long and too severely to relish the position. A younger boy, the son of one of Labi's brothers, was now learning the craft.

In this case, the extraction of the sickness carried the threat of the extractor taking the sickness into his own body. This embodiment of medical knowledge could also endanger anyone who came into close contact with the *bori*; they were thus a source of infection in themselves.[67] This was similarly expressed in the belief that the Bari rain chiefs at Sindiru possessed "large earthenware pots believed to contain various kinds of contagious diseases like smallpox, chicken pox, scabies, rinderpest which could affect humans and animals alike". These gave the rain chief the ultimate threat or sanction; he "would not release any of the epidemics or curse the tribe unless there had been a gross disobedience to his orders by the people".[68] Lugbara rain priests were also responsible for preventing epidemics; the role of the rain priest in

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[66] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.
[67] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.
[68] Venanzio Loro Lado, written answers, Jan. 2003, Khartoum.

guaranteeing the well-being of the community therefore included collective protection from disease as well as the threat of it.[69]

Knowledge of cures thus implied knowledge of causes, and so the *odraba* and other professional doctors could also be paid to cause disease. This often gave them a judicial role in the community, which will be discussed more in Chapter Six. According to Evans-Pritchard, if a man became ill with syphilitic sores, it was known that an *odraba* had probably been paid to afflict him as punishment for adultery, and the sick man would have to visit the same *odraba* for treatment. In general, an element of confession was a common part of any cure:

> One of the odraba told me that when a sick man came to one of his profession to be cured he often has to ask the ill man what he has done and will be told by him that he had committed adultery with someone's wife or had stolen someone's goods.[70]

Illness could thus be the result of the crimes or omissions of the individual or their family, punished by ancestral spirits or divinities, as well as of a deliberate curse by an enemy; doctors therefore often needed to be diviners.[71] Illness could be read as a sign of the inversion of the moral or social order.[72] It is for this reason that Lugbara doctors and diviners were counted as *'ba rukuzu* (prominent men), because, according to Middleton, they needed much the same kind of skills: "the *knowledge* of local 'politics' and the ability to help resolve their problems, whether by giving oracular statements or acting as mediators".[73]

Buxton documented the Mandari reports in the 1950s that *jok*, "new forces affecting health and well-being... illness from a foreign source", had appeared recently in their country, requiring new forms of diagnosis.[74] *Jok* were perhaps both a means of

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[69] Middleton, 'Oracles and Magic', p. 263; Seligman and Seligman, *Pagan Tribes*, p. 254.
[70] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.
[71] Bari diviners were *bunuk kagubak*, as distinct from *bonok kadumak* (doctors who extract), and played an important role in 'social cohesion': Seligman and Seligman, *Pagan Tribes*, p. 251-2.
[72] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, Vol. 2, pp. 343-4.
[73] Middleton, 'Oracles and Magic', pp. 272-3. The equivalent of *'ba rukuza* were the Bari *ngutu duma*: Seligman and Seligman, *Pagan Tribes*, pp. 252-3; or Mandari *nutu dun*: Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 79.
[74] Buxton, *Religion*, pp. 64-113. *Jok* is a widespread Nilotic term for divinity. 'Free-divinities' also appeared among the Nuer and Acholi in the late nineteenth-century: Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 65-70; Heike Behrend, 'Power to Heal, Power to Kill: Spirit Possession and War in Northern Uganda

expressing the effects of socio-economic relations with the Dinka in particular - an incarnation of 'outside' forms of knowledge - and a general way for practitioners to claim new methods of curing, thus establishing themselves as mediators with external knowledge and power, alongside chiefs, diviners and other experts. Far from being 'fatalistic' or 'futile', indigenous medicine was relevant, adaptive and dynamic. It entailed reading physical symptoms as signifiers of the state of social and spiritual relations in a family or community, and with the worlds beyond, and it was about protection of the body, as well as curing. It was also significant in the strategies pursued by local people in the face of the appropriation of violence by the colonial state.

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(1986-1994)', in Heike Behrend and Ute Luig (eds.), *Spirit Possession, Modernity and Power in Africa* (Madison, 1999), pp. 20-33, at p.22.

## 4. Force, Violence and Punishment

### *4.1 State Violence*

In the earlier decades of the Condominium, the violence of the colonial state was displayed directly and visibly through punitive patrols and floggings. In 1925, a Public Works Department official photographed and reported the flogging of a young boy of about ten years old at the district headquarters in Rejaf, prompting something of a political storm which reached Parliament and the British press. A report in the periodical *John Bull* drew attention to the fact that the boy had been tied up to a British flagpole, with the screaming headline: "Blot on the Union Jack – Lash and Torture for Black Boy – Bound under the Symbol of Freedom". The accounts given by the various officers involved were often conflicting, but the local police officer admitted that he had flogged the boy with a corbag (hide whip).[75] The incident was used as an excuse to remove the Egyptian mamur who was made the scapegoat in place of the D.C. But the early provincial administration in general relied on a substantial use and display of force and violence.

The establishment of 'native administration' involved the attempt by the state to centralise and control violent force, as embodied in the chiefs' police. Physical punishments were an integral part of the functioning of local government, and the force of the colonial state was in a sense channelled through the hierarchy of the local authorities, as the following account of road maintenance shows:

> Each clan Chief had a piece of road to look after, but they had to be forced to do it, especially during the rainy season... The District Commissioner worked through the chief and then the sub chief and then the clan chief... If that particular piece was always not kept clean, the owner of the piece, the clan chief, would be given a flogging, a corporal punishment, and sometimes a fine. The fine would be imposed on the Chief, maybe a goat or a cow. I remember once the sub-chief Lado Kose was given fifteen strokes because he had not been forceful enough in forcing people to go out and clean the

[75] Correspondence and reports in 'Alleged flogging of boy at Rejaf', 1925, NRO CS 41 2/5.

> roads. He and then the clan chief, both of them were flogged by the Chief's man, the policeman. The Chief had someone - each chief of a locality had one or two - for collection of poll tax and forcing people to work: the Chief's policeman would go and supervise the work, carry out the Chief's orders.[76]

In discussing court regulations in 1932, the Province Governor asserted that, "beating is apparently traditional, and we think should be allowed, up to say twenty lashes".[77] This idea of tradition has survived, and was echoed by another interviewee:

> Corporal punishment… of course there are these traditional issues or crimes in society, and some of them are punished by lashing. But of course society accepted it as a punishment.[78]

The idea that 'society' accepted the traditional legitimacy of corporal punishment is highly questionable; the idea of a measured, prescribed dose of non-lethal pain as a tariff for a particular offence was a novel introduction.[79] This claim does however represent the development of a definition of when such flogging was appropriate, and therefore also when it was not. The value of having a chief who could enforce court decisions and punish anti-social behaviour was recognised, even as his coercions might be resented. This *quid pro quo* is evident in the account of the fear felt by people towards the chief's policemen in the village of an interviewee, together with the concession that they were necessary for preserving order:

> In their absence there would be a sort of jungle. But if there was any resistance given to these police, then in the absence of the Chief or District Commissioner, then they would set up a sort of summary court and punish people, so people had to be very, very careful for fear of any reprisals. They were never liked by people of the village. Because some of them were dishonest and corrupt. For instance if they had to go and collect a fine, maybe a few goats, they would go and add one or two for themselves. So they were usually never liked.[80]

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[76] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[77] Governor MP to Governor UNP, 'Notes on native courts', 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[78] Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[79] See Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 223-7: nineteenth-century punishments took the form of fines; physical force was instead used to demonstrate the power of the king or to take personal revenge.
[80] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

This account suggests that it was the dishonesty of these policemen which aroused dislike, not necessarily their use of force, which was tolerated in the interests of stability. Another interviewee disputed their corruption, describing the *sirkalis* or chiefs' police as 'honest', and explained that force was part of their work:

> They were ok but when you see the policeman coming for you being sent by the chief, you know he is coming to collect you for what you have done, you must have done something. So people were afraid of them.[81]

The continuing use of this linguistic term, as discussed in Chapter Three, is also revealing of the historical connection between government and military force.

### *4.2 Age and Violence*

However, the chiefs usually had only three or four policemen, and could only seek recourse to state backing occasionally if they were to be useful to administrators; they could therefore not afford to exist in opposition to the entire community. Their position relied not only on their access to violent force, but also upon both their own alliances with sections of society, and the existence of other antagonistic or oppositional relationships, into the midst of which they could insert themselves as peacemakers or balancers. One of the most obvious antagonistic divisions in society was between the young men with peak physical power, and the elders, as the previous chapter showed in relation to labour control. The latter needed the labour and physical protection of the former, and so sought to use ritual, age-sets, patronage, cattle-exchange and marital systems to maintain control over them. In the past the younger men might have asserted themselves through warfare, fights and hunting. Among the Lokoiya and Luluba, the generation-set system involved the overthrow of the ruling *monyemiji* every twenty years or so, through the critical and often violent attacks of the younger generation on the retiring one, which Kurimoto and Simonse describe as a form of "oppositional dynamism".[82] Throughout Western Mongalla, once retired from warfare or active community government, the elders relied on ritual threats - and blessings - to maintain their authority.[83]

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[81] Interview with Dr Rubena Lumaya Wani, 22.2.03, Khartoum.
[82] Kurimoto and Simonse, 'Introduction', to their *Conflict*, pp. 1-28, at p. 7.
[83] For examples of such rituals see Beaton, 'A Luluba Burial', 22 May 1934, and Reiland, 'Note on Lyria', June 1933, both NRO JD 1/1/2. Willis highlights the importance of ritual and practice – and

The imposition of colonial government introduced a new dynamic into these relationships, by greatly restricting group and personal violence.[84] In the early colonial period, it was often the young men who resisted government control. As Simonse shows, in 1918 attacks by Lokoiya on police, mail and merchants were blamed on the juniors: "only a few young bloods were responsible in their desire for the notoriety to be gained by killing someone".[85] Such resistance was quickly crushed however. *Pax britannica* - the monopolisation of violence by the state - could be seen to involve the emasculation and disempowerment of colonial subjects, especially in the face of the kind of humiliating and invasive medical interventions already discussed. The results in Western Mongalla were complex however: violence was not entirely annexed to the state, but was rather channelled into new forms of ritual or hidden violence. It also exploded in sudden outbursts of open conflict or torture, in which the chiefs often played an important role, either as instruments or peacemakers.

### *4.3 Rituals and Categorisations of Violence*

The kind of open violence which continued throughout the period was largely a controlled and even ritualised form of feuding with relatively close neighbours. There was a tendency on the part of Europeans to depict all kinds of pre-colonial conflict as sporadic or uncontrolled raiding, but there were clearly rules and categorisations for it.[86] For example, there was reported to have been a "continual state of war" between Kakwa and Lugware, but raiding was confined to the period after the rainy season.[87] As Kurimoto and Simonse show, enemies were categorised according to the degree of violence that was used in mutual confrontations.[88] A

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the role of alcohol – in reproducing the authority of male elders: *Potent Brews*, pp. 50-75. See also, e.g., Berman, *Making*, pp. 40-41.

[84] See Ali A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (Beverly Hills, 1975), pp. 55-64, for 'the decline of the warrior tradition'.

[85] MPIR Sept. 1918, NRO IN 2/48/408; Simon Simonse, 'Age, Conflict and Power in the *Monyomiji* Age Systems', in Kurimoto and Simonse, *Conflict*, pp. 51-78, at p. 72.

[86] See Reid, *Political Power*, pp. 178-9, on depictions of pre-colonial warfare.

[87] *SIR* 195, Oct. 1910, PRO WO 106 234.

[88] Kurimoto and Simonse, 'Introduction', p. 5. See also Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40: "inter-village fights: a challenge would be sent to the opposing clan to meet early one morning in some open toic, and the fight would go on until a few had been killed on each side and the

simplistic distinction might be that within a community, sticks would be used in either real or ritualised confrontations, whereas spears or arrows were employed against outside enemies. During the Ugandan administration, the Luluba seized the opportunity to attack the Gondokoro area, reportedly because the Bari were trusting in the rifles of the police to protect them and were walking about with sticks instead of spears.[89] This resulted in a government patrol, reflecting the way in which this kind of warfare was suppressed under colonial rule.

The collective violence during the colonial period was usually more localised, and hence controlled in the extent of damage caused. Even a relatively serious fight in 1932 between the villages of Ngangala and Ngulere resulted in twelve wounded, but no deaths.[90] In 1938, affrays in Mongalla and among the Mandari were described as "desultory fighting" with mostly minor injuries: "[t]here is no wider significance to this affray; and the Bari seem surprised at the fighting spirit they showed but with no desire to reproduce it".[91] In the same year, a "tremendous drunken brawl" occurred at Tokiman: "[t]here were no serious injuries as the combatants were all armed with the favourite Bari weapon – whips", clearly showing that community violence was regulated in terms of the weapons permitted.[92] In 1942, a Moru district report reflected the limited nature of such violence:

> [A]ffrays at dancing parties have been frequent – fortunately resulting in nothing more serious than a few bruises. A policeman sent to investigate one such disturbance added gratuitously in his report 'These injuries are like bruises got while playing football and no government action is required'.[93]

At times there were more serious outbreaks of violence, which might lead to deaths and which therefore required peace-making and the purifications of blood from the communities involved.[94] Again this related to the category of enmity; where blood money was paid from outside the community, it was believed to be tainted and to

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elders decided it was time to call it off. Otherwise it was considered definitely anti-social to kill people from neighbouring tribes".

[89] Beaton, 'A short history of the Luluba Hills', 1934, NRO JD 1/1/2.

[90] (Anon.) 'Tribal no. 20 Liria', NRO JD 1/1/2.

[91] EPMD Sept.-Oct. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.

[92] EPMD Nov. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.

[93] EPMD July 1942, NRO CS 57/16/60.

[94] EPMD Sept. 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24; Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 126-7.

bring disease.[95] This probably explains the refusal of a group of Kuku whose relatives were killed while hunting in Uganda to accept the compensation offered by the Uganda government.[96] However, the role of the rainmaker in the past in safely receiving blood money was increasingly taken on by the chief or government.[97] Similarly, the importance of the curse of rain priests or other arbitrators as a sanction by which to enforce a truce, may have been partially taken over by the chiefs as peace-makers.[98] In the 1940s, for example, there was serious violence between Aliab Dinka and Mandari as the former increasingly crossed into the province for grazing; these conflicts were settled by chiefs in court, by agreeing blood-money and holding peace ceremonies.[99]

One particularly striking example of the peace-making role of a chief involved Chief Lolik Lado of Lyria. In 1953 he presided over a special court following another Mandari-Aliab fight; two months later though, he hosted a meeting in Lyria with Latuka chiefs and headmen to resolve outstanding disputes and boundary questions, which erupted into violence:

> The Lokoya, being hosts, gave an exhibition of some of their better known war dances which were most impressive. Unfortunately however one or two of the participants took it as an opportunity to settle old scores. Two people were killed and nine injured. Chief Lolik distinguished himself in the way that he dealt with this sudden outbreak of fighting. He received news of it when he was walking home in the evening from his cultivation at Lomeiga, about 20 miles away. He promptly set off on foot with his two rifles and 2 surkalis and arrived at Lyria as the cocks were crowing. He first located the murderers, disarmed them, and then exhorted his armed and angry people to listen to reason. When the Police arrived from Juba, Chief Lolik was sitting on a chair with his two loaded rifles in front of him and on either side of him,

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[95] Nalder, *Tribal Survey*, pp. 43-4.
[96] YDMD Sept. 1943, June-Sept. 1944, Feb. 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[97] Nalder, *Tribal Survey*, pp. 44-5.
[98] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95; Beaton to Governor, 'History of the Nyori district', 2 Nov. 1932, NRO EP 2/34/127; Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40; Johnson, 'Judicial Regulation', p. 72.
[99] EPMD Feb.-March 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5; EPMD Jan. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46; EPMD July, Sept., Nov. 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24.

> sitting quietly on the ground, were between a hundred and fifty and two hundred sheepish looking warriors.[100]

It was not only Lolik's guns and policemen, but also his persuasive abilities which made him a successful peacemaker; as Komma shows in the case of the Kipsigis of Kenya, peacemakers required a special eloquence, and a neutral marginality, which could be taken on by the colonial chiefs as mediators.[101]

Chiefs also played something of a balancing role between elders and youth. They too needed the labour of the latter, and seem to have succeeded in mobilising it in some cases through age-set systems; newly initiated adults spent a period of time working for the chief.[102] In addition, the tax system even seems to have become a form of initiation:

> [T]he youths had all been paraded for admission to the Tax Lists and, as is not unusual, the whole of one Age-Class was present. The majority passed the test, but a few of them were excused for another year, until they had grown stronger. They followed me along the road, pleading to be admitted with their fellows, as they feared to return to their village, where, they said, the scornful glances of the girls awaited them – a thing not to be endured.[103]

This suggests that the payment of taxes had become a symbol of manhood in a way that must have helped to ensure payment. Yet as the account by the interviewee at the beginning of the chapter showed, there was also a humiliating emasculation inherent in the tax parades. Faced with this, many young men, as the previous chapter showed, increasingly asserted their independence by working abroad or moving to the urban centre of Juba. In 1938 a round-up of unemployed young men in Juba found a hundred such, aged 15-25 years old; in Yei district a "younger class of lads" were also said to be joining the migration to Uganda.[104] In turn the elders

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[100] EPMD Oct., Nov. 1953, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[101] Komma, 'Peacemakers', pp. 193-4, 198.
[102] Lewis, 'Notes on Bari', SAD 600/7/1-49; Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105; Lomodong Lako, *Lokoiya*, pp. 69-71 on age-sets working as mutual labour parties.
[103] Beaton, 'The Bari', p. 143.
[104] EPMD April, Dec. 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.

sought to maintain community obligations, including through the rituals of dances and stick-fights.[105]

*4.4. Secret Violence*

The normalisation and routine visibility of coercion and corporal punishment by the government, chiefs and courts was also about *open* violence. As the right of ordinary people to physical retaliation or assault was partially curtailed, so more closed forms of violence may have become increasingly significant, both as the means of protection and as the most feared kind of power. According to a Moru district D.C., Mynors, the *odraba* and similar experts were a relatively recent profession, imported perhaps from the Nilotic peoples to the north. This may simply reflect a common British belief that certain kinds of ritual practice were not indigenous, as with the Nuer prophets.[106] But Mynors' suggestion that their rise had occurred "since the introduction of settled government discouraged violence and necessitated the employment of subtler methods to protect oneself", may have held some truth.[107] Far from eradicating belief in such powers, as the missionaries and officials hoped, the imposition of colonial knowledge and administration only increased the need to find means of protecting the body from a proliferation of unknown potential forces, and from the sense of helplessness which the intrusive government medical and tax inspections engendered. The suppression of such experts by the administrators, and sometimes also the chiefs, would have only added to their secrecy and mystery, and therefore further enhanced their power.[108]

The frequent claim then that poisoning and 'witchcraft' were increasing during the colonial period, may have partly reflected an increased tendency for people to employ supernatural methods of personal attack and defence, in reaction to the growing monopoly over violence and physical force by the government and local authorities. 'Witchcraft' definitions will be discussed further in Chapter Six in terms of the morality of secret knowledge. But in the sense of deliberately causing harm by

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[105] Beaton, 'Bari Studies', esp. p. 80, 83; see also Bravman, *Making*, pp. 150-1.
[106] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 24-9.
[107] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[108] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.

invisible methods, witchcraft was a kind of closed violence, operating in an underworld below the visible routines of state violence. It therefore re-empowered its practitioners and their clients, and simultaneously contributed to the spiralling sense of physical vulnerability and the need for protection. The colonial state even removed the use of violence in the form of ordeals to detect the source of harm; similarly in 1920s Ghana, it was believed that the ban on medicine oracles to detect witchcraft meant that "the white man had come to take their protection away so that they could treat them the way they wanted".[109] Witchcraft was therefore intimately linked to the state monopolisation of violence and the resulting sense of loss of control and protection.

There was also a specific kind of open violence which took the form of sudden collective outbursts of beating or torture, and which usually occurred when there was an unexplained death or illness. People increasingly pressured their chiefs to offer them protection from witchcraft, which at times led to public and collective attempts to exorcise the sources of harm and regain a sense of control through violence. In 1944, it was reported that Chief Ruba had obtained by force a confession from an alleged murderer, who was probably suspected of witchcraft. The D.C. was disturbed by "the attitude of the ordinary folk, who seemed to regard it as perfectly normal" that the chief had employed 'torture' methods.[110] Similarly in Kajo Kaji, the use of torture to detect poisoners (about which more will be said in the next chapter) was reported to be the result of popular pressure. In another case of suspected witchcraft, "a number of people" beat a man and forced a woman to drink the sick man's urine, all with the cooperation of the chief.[111] This kind of collective assault was employed at times against rain-makers, 'witches' or 'magicians', and even against chiefs or their police. Simonse argues that it was an integral part of the balance of power between people and their 'scapegoat kings', employed when the latter failed to provide rain.[112] 'Torture' by chiefs, as opposed to 'corporal punishment', was usually only reported in relation to witchcraft

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[109] Natasha Gray, 'Witches, Oracles and Colonial Law: Evolving Anti-Witchcraft Practices in Ghana, 1927-1932', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 2 (2001), pp. 339-63, at p. 347.
[110] EPMD March 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78.
[111] EPMD Jan. 1940, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[112] Simonse, *Kings*, esp. pp. 345-73.

suspicions, reflecting the way that this kind of violence operated outside the normal routines of state coercion.

## Conclusion

Not only was the force wielded by the chiefs less terrifying than more supernatural forms of harm, but the monopoly of the chiefs and colonial government over violent force may have also driven people more towards those who could offer other methods of reprisal and protection. The colonial state demonstrated its power over the bodies of its subjects through injections, isolations, floggings and forced labour; but these invasions and appropriations only led to a re-emphasis of indigenous knowledge of the body and its interrelation with society and morality. As the state invaded and extracted the bodies of its subjects, so the latter underlined and emphasised the inseparability of those bodies from their origins and social connections. Only those who knew and understood the situation in time, place and community of a body could know what it needed or what its symptoms indicated. Holistic curing involved a restoration of the body to a harmony within that situation, and thus reaffirmed the community to which it belonged. People might assimilate new kinds of medicine and external treatment, but nothing could eradicate or substitute for the exploration of causation within the community. Knowing the body meant knowing the person and their place in society.

# Chapter Six

## Knowing the Community:
## The Morality of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Morality

### Introduction

The previous two chapters have discussed the resistance of local communities to the imposition of state knowledge in relation to the land and their own bodies; their preservation of multiple sources of profit, protection and expertise; and their willingness to experiment with new kinds of knowledge. This chapter will explore in greater detail this kind of experimentation within communities, and it will follow Allen's use of the concept of 'moral knowledge' as linked "to the implicit texture of communal identity, to the underlying notions shaping social networks, and to the ideas used in the drawing of lines between what is socially and morally inside and what is outside".[1] As Bravman argues, 'community' membership implies both a positive 'belonging', and a pressure to conform to hegemonic definitions of community ways.[2] But those definitions - of what was inside or outside - were continually being contested. Once again the authority of the chiefs will be shown to have been limited; despite being treated in many cases by the colonial government as the repositories of local knowledge, they were only one among the multiple claimants to such knowledge.

In Africa generally, male elders and chiefs have been seen to have benefited from colonial courts and the formation of 'customary law'.[3] In Western Mongalla, the importance of the courts as the source of hegemonic discourse was limited, in the first place because the discourses emerging in the courts may have been formulated selectively for presentation to, and in the language of, the colonial government; and later on because the courts also became arenas of debate, as people increasingly used them to challenge and question. It also appears that court cases were often only the

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[1] Allen, 'Violence' p. 51.
[2] Bravman, *Making*, pp. 4-7.
[3] E.g. Chanock, *Law, Custom*; Ranger, 'Invention'; Iliffe, *Africans*, pp. 198-9.

tip of the iceberg of bigger debates that were clearly going on in other contexts. Court decisions did not always address these wider issues or provide the kind of resolution and cleansing needed by the community. It is therefore important not to take the discourses developing in the courts at face value; they reflected complex debates, tensions and adjustments in the moral economy.

This chapter will also seek to identify some of the ways in which knowledge was categorised and differentiated by communities. It will make use of the term 'mantic', adopted by Johnson from Chadwick: "[m]antic activity refers to the acquisition, cultivation and declaration of knowledge; knowledge of the *commonly unknown* present and past, as well as of the future" (my italics).[4] Those who claimed to know the commonly unknown operated largely in the hidden realm of local politics, and they were powerful in forming discourses of community morality. But the possession of specialist knowledge also conveyed a moral responsibility as to its use; the discourses on this morality of knowledge helped again to redefine the boundaries of the moral community. The use of secret and esoteric knowledge was particularly contentious; as the debates over 'witchcraft' reveal, it could be the most powerful kind of knowledge, but also the most morally ambiguous.

Knowledge of local history and community ways was formulated through debate, and its diversified ownership "preserved the openness of intellectual alternatives".[5] This chapter will argue that the colonial period did not see the imposition or formation of a single hegemonic discourse either by the state or by particular individuals or groups within communities. Instead, a number of different idioms were used to claim moral knowledge, and to enforce or challenge the moral economy. The language and rituals of the courts, 'Christian' ideology, and various kinds of intellectual activity were experimented with and drawn upon to compete for the right to define community ways. But this competition and debate ensured that new ideas or challenges were ultimately translated into a local meaning, and that therefore the community maintained autonomous and dynamic 'traditions' and epistemologies.

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[4] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, p. 35.
[5] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, pp. 109-11.

## 1. 1930s Mongalla: A Case of Poison and a Christian Revival

The colonial records are naturally limited in their illumination of the internal debates in local society, but they do offer occasional windows into communities. In the late 1930s, the economic difficulties and growing resistance to the chiefs prompted greater experimentation with different kinds of knowledge, and brought more of those debates and tensions to the attention of administrators, as the following narratives illustrate. The accounts both of suspected poisoning in Kajo Kaji and of the Christian revival in Moru district reveal the existence or development of alternative claims to knowledge, subverting the authority of government, chiefs or elders, and generating contests and moral debates within communities.

### *1.1 Poisoning Cases in Kajo Kaji Sub-District*

In 1932, one of the first missionaries to Kajo Kaji reported the deaths of four women at "a big Trial by Ordeal… conducted by an evil poisoner-hunter brought in for the purpose from another district by several of the local chiefs".[6] The trial occurred after the sudden death of a prominent rain priest, and the 'poisoner-hunter' was an expert from Opari district, invited to Kajo Kaji by Chief Yenge to solve the case by poison ordeal. The expert, Ajuke, was afterwards imprisoned for manslaughter.[7]

A few years later, a major outbreak of suspected poisoning was again reported in the area. By 1937-8, the Kajo Kaji people were clearly struggling after recent forced relocations of villages, new outbreaks of sleeping sickness and CSM, increasing erosion on the plateau, and recurring drought and food shortages. According to the local missionary, after a tin of alleged poison was discovered in an old woman's hut, "the tribe was seized with mass hysteria" and a major hunt for poisoners and witches resulted in over two hundred women being imprisoned and many of them physically tortured by the chiefs and elders in the public court. A collective fine was imposed on chief and people afterwards.[8] The D.C. added that often "the only person in a

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[6] Mrs Selwyn, Kajo Kaji, Aug. 1932, CMS G3 AL.
[7] Winder, 'Fifty Years On': Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32.
[8] Finch, Kajo Kaji, 8 Nov. 1938, CMS G3 AL.

small community who does not believe implicitly in her power to poison is the woman herself: but the power wielded by a reputed poisoner is a bait she cannot resist".[9]

Two years later, a suspected case of 'poison' again reached the provincial records, although this time it actually involved a very different recourse to professional expertise:

> The case arose from the death of a woman [Gune] in child birth who had been induced by the sorcery of her first divorced husband [Karibbe] to return to him from the house of her new husband [Paulo]. The former husband who was sterile, had enlisted the aid of a local Kujur first to cure his sterility and later to get his ex wife back.[10]

The 'Kujur', known as the 'Khalifa', practised primarily as a doctor, using his Koran and Islamic written charms.[11] Paulo was a young man who had been baptised Christian and had spent six months working in Uganda. Gune had met him at a dance while her husband was in prison for failing to obtain a sleeping sickness pass to trade in Uganda; he had been trying to earn the money to pay the Khalifa to cure his sterility. Gune's uncles were Chief Abina (Yenge's son) and the leading rain-maker Yacobo.

The poison accusations first surfaced when Gune claimed that Karibbe had drawn patterns on her body with oil from an ink bottle thrown away by the police office. Chief Abina was afraid of the talk of poison reaching the government, and decided not to act until Gune showed any ill-effects from the magic; when Karibbe was beaten by Gune's brothers he imprisoned two of the latter. The question of divorce was taken to Chief Tete's court and Karibbe received his bride-price of cattle back; the Yenge family lost out in the process because Paulo could not afford such a high price. While he was working in Juba, the pregnant Gune heard that Karibbe and the Khalifa were 'praying' to make her return to Karibbe, which she then did out of fear

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[9] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99.
[10] EPMD Oct 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42.
[11] The rest of this account is taken from (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, based on the records of the police sergeant, who wrote down "the words of each witness in turn".

of their power. Paulo demanded his bride-price back, and the case went to court yet again, to the dismay of Chief Tete: "the case was a dangerous and persistent nuisance". Gune was remarried to Karibbe, but she haemorrhaged during the birth of Paulo's child, and died despite the attentions of the Khalifa. Her brothers accused Karibbe and the Khalifa of poisoning her and the case finally went before the D.C., who reprimanded the chiefs for their "concealment of matters of importance such as poison and magic". The court sentenced Karibbe to a year's imprisonment, but was reluctant to sentence the Khalifa; they left it to the D.C. "who could better afford to carry the onus and peril of such a judgement". He sentenced Karibbe to six months imprisonment, and the Khalifa to three months and to exile from the district.

### *1.2 Revivalism in Moru District*

At the same time as these poisoning cases in Kajo Kaji, a 'Christian Revival' was reported in Moru district:

> I met Chief Jambo... in a very disturbed state of mind. He complained that his people, with whom hitherto he said he had never had any trouble, were disobeying him and refusing to work on the roads and on their cultivations... These people, said Chief Jambo, refused to do anything unless directed to do so by God in a dream. They were predicting that the end of the world would come shortly and that a star would fall and wipe out Jambo. They foretold the fate of Governors, District Commissioners and Missionaries as everlasting fire. They were arranging marriages by signs received in dreams and were not always waiting for the preliminaries to be settled, they were also advocating poverty, but chiefly they were flouting the authority of Chief Jambo... I hear that a small section of Chief Ngere's people (neighbours of Jambo's) are also infected with this enthusiasm for what Chief Jambo called 'the new God'.
>
> He added that he infinitely preferred the old one.[12]

[12] Harrison, A/D. C. Juba, to Governor, 8 Sept. 1938, NRO EP 1/5/26.

The Revival was apparently started by some ex-schoolboys from the CMS Nugent School at Loka, particularly one Matteo. The Lui mission sent two teachers to Jambo's to calm the people, but this only led Matteo to return to the area:

> Matteo... attacked Chief Jumbo in public for reporting matters to Lui; he informed the Chief that Governors, DCs, Chiefs and missionaries worshipped only their bellies and were all fuel for the fires of hell... Chief Jumbo did not reply to this attack but noted Matteo's words.

Jambo indeed appears to have 'noted' Matteo's words; soon afterwards, according to this report, people had settled down but everyone, including the Chief and the mission teachers, was convinced of the authenticity of the reported visions, and Jambo was holding the prayer meetings in his own house. 'Witchdoctors' were also reported to be voluntarily destroying their own 'paraphernalia'.[13] The Revival spread beyond Jambo's, and by 1939 there were reported to be 2,000 Christians in the area, who were "increasingly vocal, increasingly insistent on the prohibitions of dancing, of beer-drinking, and of the ancestor-cult which their new faith demands".[14] By the 1940s, however, the missions reported a continual decline in church attendance as the Revival waned[15]

These accounts are revealing of some of the internal debates within communities, which will now be explored, particularly in relation to marriage, divorce, bridewealth, migrant labour and 'witchcraft' or 'poison'. They also offer glimpses into the alternative claims to knowledge, and the multiple arenas for their expression.

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[13] Morrison, 'Report on Religious Revival in Chief Jumbo's country, Moru district', 28 Sept. 1938, NRO EP 1/5/26.
[14] Moru District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[15] Read, Lui, 3 April 1946, CMS AF AL.

## 2. Courts and Custom

Trials and judgements were a prominent aspect of the episodes outlined above. Chanock's study of British Central Africa is useful in demonstrating that 'customary law' was neither immutable tradition nor a colonial invention but rather the result of the interaction between Africans and Europeans in the specific colonial context.[16] However, his emphasis on the rigidifying nature of the codification and recording of laws, and on the domination of this process by male elders is more open to question. Mann and Roberts show the contested nature of this process, and the opportunities it also offered subordinate groups to use in struggles against elites. But their discussion of the fundamental impact of the colonial courts still over-emphasises their significance. Despite showing the role of Africans in the shaping of law, they declare that, "[i]n the process of these struggles influential Europeans called into being that which they expected to find in Africa".[17] Similarly Chanock writes that the courts developed in the image of the colonial administration, securing obedience rather than arbitrating disputes. This contradicts his own argument that the number of marital disputes brought to the court reflected a genuine need or desire among the people.[18]

These studies of colonial courts have tended to privilege the court records, and to take these discourses as a representation of reality, when it was more the case that the courts encouraged the formulation of sets of knowledge of 'tradition' and 'customary law' *for presentation to the external world*, and to the government in particular. As Scott argues, "public transcripts" performed in the presence of the dominant often distract from the backstage "hidden transcripts" of resistance to them.[19] In the chiefs' courts of Western Mongalla, complex social and economic issues were translated into a particular language, which was itself the creolised product of European legal procedure and moral ideologies, and the search for

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[16] Chanock, *Law, Custom*.
[17] Mann and Roberts, 'Law in Colonial Africa', p. 22; Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', pp. 13-16.
[18] Chanock, *Law, Custom*, pp. 123-4, 229.
[19] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 3-4.

African 'customary law'. As Mann and Roberts also argue, it was therefore the *ideology* of the rule of law that was more prevailing than its actual practice.[20]

*2.1 Courts and Adultery*

As Chapter Three showed, even if the courts started out as institutions through which the chiefs could enforce their own authority and shape 'customary law', they soon became arena of debate, invaded by communities and even used to pressure the chiefs. However, they could nevertheless be seen to exclude women and to impose a hegemonic elder male control over them, especially in the face of greater opportunities for young men to earn independence in marriage. Certainly the construction of formal court houses excluded women: according to one informant, they would "come to the court and sit some distance away... but they speak from behind the doors, they can't enter", whereas, "when the elders meet themselves to settle cases, then the women are present".[21]

The discourses of the courts in relation to women and adultery, if taken at face value, would also appear to reflect the imposition of a brutal and controlling male view of female sexuality, using the rhetoric of customary law very much in the pattern discussed by Chanock. In 1931, chiefs and elders in Yei district expressed concern that adultery had "always been regarded in *native law* as an offence" and had been punished harshly by beating the woman and possibly killing the man; the increasing incidence of adultery was felt to be threatening "the bedrock of society". [my italics][22] The following year, "Chief Sanambia again asked for the Courts to be given powers to beat adulterous women on the grounds that short terms of imprisonment are no deterrent".[23] In 1929, the Kajo Kaji chiefs' lukiko, claiming to be 'cleaning up the morals' of their people, forwarded resolutions through the D.C. calling for harsher punishments for adultery, including enforced prostitution in the *merkaz*, or district headquarters, for guilty women. They also described women who had been married to northern Sudanese or foreign officials or merchants and then

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[20] Mann and Roberts, 'Law in Colonial Africa', p. 35.
[21] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[22] Logan Gray, ADC Yei to Governor, 30 Sept. 1931, NRO EP 2/23/86.
[23] 'Diary July 1932', NRO CS 1/39/105.

abandoned, as prostitutes who "upset the morals of the other women of the district".[24] These various claims thus appear to reveal a male fear of female sexuality, and especially of women who had been somehow corrupted by foreign marriages, and the desire to either re-impose control by beating, or to exclude them from the community by banishing them to the territory of government.

But these claims also reflect a particular construction or defence of community morality. Chanock argues that such depictions of a 'traditional' moral order were more a reflection of current concerns than an accurate picture of the past.[25] The Kajo Kaji court's resolutions can be understood better in the context of a growing resentment at the behaviour of northern or foreign officials and traders, who were forcing parents to agree to marriages with a very low bride-price, and then later abandoning the women. The suggestions for enforced prostitution thus also express a view that the *merkaz*, taken to represent government and foreigners, should take responsibility for the women it had extracted from their communities. The chiefs also called for a fixed high bride-price for such marriages, and for them to come before the court to ensure parental and female consent. Above all, "[t]he Chiefs said that if an outsider marries one of their women that they should abide by their customs whilst living in the district."[26]

More generally, the court rhetoric reflected the imposition of a government judicial system, which, while claiming to be based on customary law, was introducing new ideas of crime and punishment. Even the category of 'adultery' obscured the nuances of marital relations, and in particular merged together issues of private sexual fidelity with more public marital disputes and divorce claims.[27] Something of this was expressed by one administrator:

> Before our coming the injured husband punished his wife himself... Private punishment of this kind we do not allow: but have put nothing adequate in its

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[24] Whalley, A/D. C. Opari and Kajo Kaji, to Governor, 'Resolutions from Kuku chiefs of Kajo Kaji Lukiko', 19 Nov. 1929 and 22 Nov. 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[25] Chanock, *Law, Custom*, pp. 7-8; Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', p. 6.
[26] Whalley, A/D. C. Opari and Kajo Kaji, to Governor, 'Resolutions from Kuku chiefs of Kajo Kaji Lukiko', 19 Nov. 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104. For the long history of prostitution associated with foreign merchants in the area: see Toniolo and Hill, *Opening*, p. 189.
[27] See also Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, pp. 219-21: British rule transformed adultery from a "private delict" into a criminal offence.

> place. A short term of imprisonment merely penalises the husband and is probably regarded by the woman as a not unpleasant holiday.[28]

Administrators were confused about suitable 'punishments', aware that imprisonment was a novel and perhaps unsuitable penalty, and that flogging was potentially viewed with some distaste by superiors. Increasingly fines were imposed instead, although even then there was concern that if they were paid direct to the husband, he might encourage his wife to repeatedly commit adultery in order to profit.[29]

In fact, a major influence on the court discourses regarding adultery were the British administrators themselves. They described native women as "incorrigible whores", and sympathised with chiefs' requests to "whip whoring wives".[30] In 1929, the Governor of Bahr El Ghazal Province reiterated the prevailing view of women:

> [A] moderate beating is undoubtedly good for the women and often well-deserved... They are largely whores at heart... When, if ever, the women become fairly moral, the matter will right itself and Chiefs Courts and Criminal Courts will have little work to do.[31]

With such blatantly held stereotypes of African female sexuality, it is hardly surprising that administrators imprinted the early courts with their moral interpretation of marital disputes. As late as 1947, they could still be categorised as "sexual offences".[32] In reality it seems unlikely that many of these court cases were actually about sex, as opposed to cohabitation or elopement, as the 'Case of Poison' suggests; it was not until Gune actually moved in with Paulo that her divorce case reached the courts.[33] In the Yei and Loka courts in 1924, there were a total of 295 cases relating to bridewealth, divorce or "restitution of conjugal rights", and "women refusing to live with their husbands", but only 23 listed specifically as

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[28] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.
[29] YDMD June 1944, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[30] Holland, 'Lukiko District order no. 3', 30 Sept. 1923, NRO MP 1/1/2; Governor MP to Governor UNP, 'Notes on native courts', 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[31] Brock, Governor BGP, to CS, 4 July 1929, NRO CS 1/13/43. Johnson highlights Brock's "extreme moral zeal" and "simplistic approach to African culture": Douglas H. Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy: The Case of the Zande 'Secret Societies'', *Past and Present* 130 (1991), pp. 170-200, at p. 180.
[32] EPAR 1946, NRO DK 57/10/32.
[33] Shadle, 'Bridewealth', p. 250.

'adultery'.[34] In the same district in 1929, it was reported that adultery was "treated as damages for trespass upon the owner's rights and the adulterer is fined".[35] By the 1930s fines were the usual punishment for adultery.[36]

The approach of British administrators was particularly crucial when 'adultery' actually involved a divorce claim by the woman. They assumed that the financial transactions involved in marriage would make divorce too disruptive, and they therefore ensured that the early courts invariably ordered women to return to their husbands.[37] Those who refused were imprisoned, so that, as the Yei D.C. explained in his 1939 annual report, "the woman can reconsider her personal reasons for rebelling against the accepted rules of the society into which she has been born".[38] Yet the extent to which these were the 'rules of society', let alone 'accepted', is questionable. As the case of Gune showed, divorce was granted (twice!) provided the bridewealth exchanges could be agreed, and there was no suggestion of judicially punishing her or Paulo. Not surprisingly, it was reported in 1930 that adulterers would admit their 'guilt' in a chiefs' court, but not before a British first-class magistrate; the latter treated their actions as a 'crime' while the former treated the case more as a dispute over rights.[39]

*2.2 Debating Marriage*

The rhetoric of customary law which developed in the courts was thus a colonial creolisation of British and African male discourses about female sexuality, and confused understandings of marital law. But such discourse should not be assumed to indicate a simplistic reality of senior male dominance beyond the colonial records themselves As Shadle argues, African case law was in practice far more nuanced than the versions presented to colonial administrators, due "to debates among 'senior men', and to the ability of women to exploit the cracks in the edifice of the

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[34] 'Notes on Chiefs Courts in Yei and Loka', 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[35] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[36] Winder, 'Fifty Years On: Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32.
[37] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42. See Richardson to D.C. Yei, 29 May 1931, Gray to Governor, 30 Sept. 1931, Richardson to Gray, 3 Oct. 1931, Gray to Richardson, 7 Oct. 1931, NRO EP 2/23/86, for brief experiment with allowing divorces.
[38] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94.
[39] Wallis, Governor Bahr El Ghazal, 7 March 1930, NRO CS 1/13/42.

'patriarchal' courts".[40] Even without the kind of court records used by Shadle, similar processes are evident in Western Mongalla, as adultery and divorce cases forced debates about marriage into the courts more from the 1930s, and as women and younger men found ways to influence these debates.

As in Gusiiland, a significant increase in bridewealth in Western Mongalla meant that parents were increasingly marrying their daughters to wealthier older husbands, which in turn contributed to the reported increase in adultery as young wives resisted this control by husbands and parents, and as young men hoped to use elopement to force parents to reduce or defer bridewealth payments. As a more discerning D.C. explained, adultery had only become problematic because "the punishment of the Courts tends to be stereotyped and ineffective, whilst lack of cash for dowry leaves present-day youth with little alternative".[41] In the case of Gune, the younger Paulo could not afford the high bridewealth paid by the retired policeman Karibbe. As Shadle shows, divorces in such situations were usually only granted if the woman's family supported her claim and were willing to return the bridewealth to the first husband.[42] This was unlikely in this case; Gune had brothers who would have been relying on her bridewealth to make their own marriages. However, Gune won her family over: firstly the women were convinced by her complaints about Karibbe's infertility and his subsequent beating of her; they then influenced her uncles not to force her to return to Karibbe. Gune then claimed that Karibbe had poisoned her, and this finally persuaded her brothers, who tried unsuccessfully to use the poison accusation to avoid repaying the bridewealth. Not only did Gune and Paulo succeed in having their marriage recognised, but Paulo also convinced her family to accept cash rather than cows as the bridewealth, which was already less than that paid by Karibbe. The story is thus revealing of a number of significant points.

Firstly, women were contesting the definition of legitimate marriage. Under the direction of the British administrators, the early courts had consistently refused to grant divorces to women, who had nevertheless cited ill-treatment by husbands as

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[40] Shadle, 'Changing Traditions', pp. 425-6; and 'Bridewealth', p. 262.
[41] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[42] Shadle, 'Bridewealth', p. 259.

justification for leaving them.[43] An account from the early 1920s by a Syrian medical officer, Negib Yunis, stated that women in Kajo Kaji district had always been able to avoid a marriage or achieve a divorce by eloping with their choice of husband, and that fathers kept the bridewealth secure, ready for repayment, in anticipation of such an event.[44] Girls are said to have threatened suicide in order to avoid forced marriages, and young people increasingly arranged their own marriages through meeting at dances, contributing to the general "growth of freedom from parental control".[45] Women frequently refused to accept court decisions in cases of adultery and divorce, preferring to spend time in prison than return to husbands.[46] Women also used the B courts to appeal sentences of adultery, suggesting that they were seeking to use the court system to their own advantage, rather than viewing it as a hostile male domain.[47] They also increasingly used the issue of original consent to claim divorce.[48] This was the one justification that had won some support from administrators, who were concerned about child betrothals, as well as from chiefs.[49] In one court in 1940, chiefs blamed child betrothals and marriages for increased adultery and divorce, and proposed that "[a]ny girl who refused her parents choice should have the opportunity of saying so before a native court which would point out to her parents the dangers of a forced marriage".[50]

More generally women were also trying to define when it was legitimate to divorce, even if they had consented to the marriage originally. Gune's complaints about Karibbe's infertility and poisoning represent her definition of the requirements and obligations of a husband.[51] The account by Yunis from the 1920s suggests that a husband's infertility had long been used as a justification for divorce.[52] Increasingly another justification related to migrant labour, especially if husbands remained abroad during the cultivation season. In 1937, it was reported that, "the exodus to

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[43] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[44] Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', pp. 15-17.
[45] Interview with Lubari Ramba, 31 Aug. 2004, Mitika, Yei; Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[46] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[47] EPMD Oct. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[48] Shadle, 'Bridewealth', p. 255.
[49] Davidson (LS), 'Note on Chief's Court at Yei', 15 May 1929, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[50] EPMD Sept. 1946, NRO CS 57/12/46.
[51] See Shadle, 'Bridewealth', p. 253.
[52] Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', p. 16.

Uganda, from Amadi district seems to have stopped, the young women having taken the matter into their hands, i.e. refusing to be left as grass widows and claiming their freedom to remarry."[53] By the 1940s, courts were granting remarriages in such cases.[54] In addition, "many cases have been seen in native courts connected with complaints by wives against husbands for failure to cultivate", and 'idleness' was reported to be a legitimate reason for divorcing husbands.[55] Women were thus using the courts to define and enforce their rights in relation to the labour (and presence!) of their husbands. This partly limited the independence of the men, the majority of whom remained at home during the cultivation season.[56]

A second point revealed in the story of Gune is the unwillingness of senior men to forcibly return her to Karibbe, let alone to physically punish her themselves, despite all the rhetoric about beating adulterous women. More generally, by the late 1930s, it was reported that the courts tended to be more severe towards the men committing adultery than to the women, and that most courts displayed a very 'fair attitude' towards women.[57] The story of Gune also showed the receptivity of the chief and senior men to the influence of women, and therefore the role of the latter in marital decisions generally. Interviewees emphasise the importance of this female role, both in mediating marriage arrangements, and in resolving marital disputes; it was the mother of the bride who received the first share of the bride-wealth.[58] The fact that it was the colonial government, rather than 'native law', which had privileged an entirely male discourse on adultery and marriage was finally brought home to one administrator in 1948:

> Impressed by the difficulties confronting a group of elders in investigating the case of an erring young woman unhappily married, District Commissioner Yei asked if it might not be a good thing to allow one or two women of good repute to sit with them when hearing matrimonial cases.

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[53] EPMD Oct. 1937, NRO CS 57/4/17.
[54] YDMD Sept. 1944, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[55] YDMD April 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87; 'Application of the Southern Sudan Teachers and Dressers to Governor and Bishop of Southern Sudan', 29 May 1944, NRO EP 1/4/17.
[56] EPMD April 1938, NRO CS 57/7/29.
[57] Yei District AR 1939, NRO EP 2/26/94; EPMD Jan. 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[58] Interviews with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Simon Wani Ramba, 10 Jan. 2003, Khartoum; Barnaba Dumo Wani, written answers, 2003, Khartoum; Whitehead, 'Property'.

> Their reply, which has since been confirmed by elders of other courts, was that formerly this had in fact been the custom but the government had prevented it.[59]

By 1949, there were two women members of the court, and they were demanding equal pay to the male members.[60] Even if the courts had started out as the arena for elder male dominance, they did not remain as such; women could also make use of 'custom' to claim rights.[61]

Thirdly, the story of Gune demonstrated that both young men and women were pressuring parents and elders over bridewealth, and forcing its renegotiation. Chiefs were in an ambivalent position in this regard: as some of the wealthiest men in the community, they would if anything benefit from high bridewealth. Chief Okopoi was reported to have made further profits by making bridewealth payments for most of the young women in his chiefdom, and then accepting payments for them from young men wishing to marry them.[62] Chiefs also defended the tendency for parents to increase bridewealth amounts to compensate for the increase of migrant labour, by arguing that, "it was a good thing to squeeze as much as possible out of those working outside the district, thereby increasing the wealth of the district", and that "parents-in-law expect their sons-in-law to work in their cultivations, and that if they are in work elsewhere must demand a higher bride price to compensate for the loss of their service".[63]

However, chiefs were also sensitive to the consequences of high bridewealth, citing parental greed as the cause of later "unfaithfulness and troubles", and recommending a fixed limit in 1924.[64] By the 1940s chiefs were reported to be concerned at the high bridewealth, because it was contributing to increased wrangles in court over

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[59] EPMD July 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13. See also Interviews with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, and Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[60] EPMD Jan., Nov. 1949, NRO DK 57/5/13.
[61] The Governor was soon referring to the female membership of Yei court as 'local custom': AR 1948, SAD 777/10/1-52.
[62] EPMD June 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53.
[63] EPMD April 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[64] Mamour Mongalla, 'Bari-Mandaris Habits and Laws of Legislation together with adopted rules for Mongalla district chiefs court', 11 Sept. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.

amounts paid.[65] The Tali court chiefs were particularly worried that wealthy Aliab were marrying too many Mandari girls, and that Mandari men could not afford the inflated bridewealth.[66] In 1946 the Kajo Kaji court recommended legislative action in a letter saying "that many girls are staying unmarried in their fathers' homes because the average young man cannot afford to pay the bride price demanded".[67] Across Western Mongalla, courts therefore imposed maximum limits on the bridewealth.[68] As Paulo's cash payment reveals, younger men also sometimes succeeded in obtaining an individual reduction or deferment, and they were contributing to a gradual and partial monetisation of the payments, as Chapter Four showed.

The issues of labour migration, bride-wealth, divorce and adultery generated debates about the moral economy which increasingly entered the courts and gave voices to younger men and women, even if they had less weight in the official records than the chiefs and elder men. The result was ongoing renegotiation and conflict, rather than the absolute hegemony of the latter. 'Custom' was not made wholly rigid through its definitions in the colonial courts: chiefs and other court members had to adapt their strategies for dealing with marital disputes and the changing economy.

### *2.3 The Limitations of the Courts*

People were also increasingly demanding satisfaction from the courts in terms of achieving resolution of disputes and protection from disease and drought, as discussed in the previous chapters. The accounts of poisoning cases in Kajo Kaji reveal similar pressures on chiefs and their courts. Chanock argues that accusations of witchcraft, and the use of ordeals to detect it, were a powerful way of enforcing political power in nineteenth-century Central Africa.[69] However, in Western Mongalla, chiefs had generally not held such a monopoly, and it was the popular discourse in relation to witchcraft which pressured chiefs into taking action. As

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[65] EPMD Sept. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[66] EPMD Aug. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[67] EPMD Nov. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[68] EPMD Dec. 1947, NRO DK 57/2/5; Interview with Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[69] Chanock, *Law, Custom*, pp. 89-92.

Fields argues, the significance of the ordeal in central Africa had been its expression of the power of the collectivity; the chief or diviner had merely been the agent of the latter.[70] In 1937, the local missionary in Kajo Kaji sought to excuse the chief's actions by declaring that he "had reverted to tribal custom through being pressed by the whole tribe to take action".[71]

Yet these cases also revealed the limitations of the courts. In reporting the 1937 poison case in Kajo Kaji, the D.C. recognised the difficulties faced by the chief in avoiding further punishment by government and yet dealing effectively with the poisoning fears: "he felt that if he could obtain a clear confession somehow the mystery would all be cleared away".[72] People expected their chiefs and other authorities to know how to protect them from witchcraft, and yet the accusations exposed their very lack of knowledge. Without ordeals or divination, it was frequently very difficult to discover the unknown cause or culprit of suspected harmful acts. As late as 1948, the Mvolo court "put in a plea for the reintroduction of trial by ordeal to try... to stem the tide of witchcraft cases".[73] In the official absence of ordeals, the Amadi B court "summoned all known wizards to attend the B court... and their spells were burnt amid much applause."[74] But this was only effective where 'wizards' were 'known' and in possession of tools. Often the colonial courts could only deal with such cases after a culprit had been identified through other specialist kinds of knowledge.

Also, the courts remained linked to government, especially as a result of the recording of court cases. The Kajo Kaji cases demonstrate the desire to deal with such issues before they reached the government, in order to maintain local autonomy and control and avoid reprisals. The chiefs can once again be seen to be acting as gatekeepers, concealing knowledge from the government. The B courts functioned largely as the interface between government and people; we thus return to the idea that court discourses were at least partly formulated for presentation to the

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[70] Fields, *Revival*, p. 264.
[71] Finch, Kajo Kaji, 8 Nov. 1938, CMS G3 AL.
[72] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 15.
[73] EPMD Dec. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13. See also EPMD Aug. 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42.
[74] EPMD April 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13. See also chief using chicken oracle, in Winder, 'Fifty Years On: Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32.

government. Interviewees emphasise the efforts made to settle cases within the village community, the "domain of the chiefs and elders": "if it could be possible, these elders would sit as a sort of traditional court and try to settle this dispute, outside the court".[75] It is important to place the cases reported by the government in this context; they were only the most difficult or prominent symptoms of wider debates that were worked out largely outside the arenas of the courts. The Kajo Kaji poison case was discussed endlessly before reaching the court, through general social meetings, gossip and rumour.

As Johnson argues, there might also be a need for a deeper community resolution to disputes than could be achieved within a court that sat at the interface between government and people.[76] In 1924, the first Yei court regulations included one that "[i]f a man causes blood to be spilt he will pay six sheep to the Chief to purify the village".[77] This idea of the need for purification or cooling of a community after bloodshed or conflict was however generally excluded from the remit of the colonial courts as they developed further. The British notion of individual punishment instead prevailed, and by 1933 the courts were reported to be awarding punitive rather than compensatory sentences.[78] Communities thus had to turn elsewhere for the kind of resolution required in some cases.

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[75]Interviews with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[76] Johnson, 'Judicial Regulation', pp. 73-4.
[77] Major Maynard D.C. Opari-Yei district, to Governor, 2 Jan. 1924, NRO MP 1/1/2.
[78] Nalder, 'Mongalla Province Summary of Information', Nov. 1933, NRO CS 57/35/131.

## 3. History and Tradition: Intellectual and Mantic Activity

The frequent inability of the colonial courts to establish the causes and truths of cases ensured that other experts and other arenas continued to be as much or more powerful and important in community life. In the 1932 poisoning case in Kajo Kaji, Chief Yenge turned to Ajuke, "a well known man for investigations into such matters".[79] In the 1939 case, the 'Khalifa' was said to be able to "tell a man what is right and what is wrong; and how to protect himself... For he can cure the future in truth."[80] Such mantic specialists claimed to know the commonly unknown, and, together with 'peasant intellectuals', were powerful in formulating community discourse.[81]

### *3.1 Peasant Intellectuals*

Chapters Three and Four showed the way in which claims to know history and tradition were increasingly used to assert authority, clan identity and rights over land. The report of a meeting to discuss government plans to make the Bala Hills in Yei district into a reserve is particularly revealing in this regard:

> The people objected very strongly to the name Bala Hills and speaker after speaker rose to prove that the name should not be Bala at all. The audience were carried back over the past, in one case as far back as the time when the Nile divided to allow the original ancestors of the Bori tribe to cross over from the East... The most dramatic bard of all was one who argued that the hill should be called Jebel Alima after a remarkable and undoubtedly fascinating woman chief of that name.[82]

Hills have been shown to be of particular significance to definitions of social groups and their histories more widely in Africa.[83] This report is an example of the way in which community knowledge was constantly open to debate and contest, but it also reflects the authority attached to skilful speakers. The use of the word 'bard' was

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[79] Winder, 'Fifty Years On: Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32.
[80] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 3a.
[81] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*.
[82] EPMD Feb. 1953, NRO CS2 30/3/6.
[83] Leopold, 'Roots of Violence', p. 190.

very apt; those who could combine discursive and oratorical skills with their knowledge of history were the local intellectuals shaping moral communities in Western Mongalla. They are hard to detect from archival sources, in which educated government staff or chiefs are more prominent; while the latter may have also been 'intellectuals', their creolised knowledge was less powerful *within* the moral community.[84]

The construction of moral discourses involved a subtle representation of hegemonic decisions, often in the context of arbitration of disputes, so that they appeared to be the reflection of community consensus. One skill of the intellectual was to listen and to speak in such a way that they were accepted as community leaders. As Johnson shows, the 'power of words' held by the Nuer 'statesman', relied upon his articulation of "the feelings of his own people".[85] In Western Mongalla, various figures might fulfil this role of moral spokesman. Mandari communities were defined in part by acceptance of the authority of the *Mar*, whose mouth was "given by God, that is why we heed him", and who was there to 'talk'.[86] Even the colonial courts became arenas for demonstrating and evaluating skills of speech.[87]

The leading elders of communities were therefore those with the most respected oratorical and discursive skills: "the way one talks entitles one to certain positions"; the elders were those who "talk and advise".[88] Certain elders succeeded in being seen to know the history and traditions of their community.[89] Buxton emphasises the importance of Mandari clan histories in claiming not only land rights but also community membership; to lack known origins implied marginal social and moral status.[90] Historical knowledge gave weight and legitimacy to authority or privilege: thus a Yei district chief, Baraba, claimed descent via his mother from Wai, the first

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[84] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, esp. pp. 5, 120-3.
[85] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, p. 58; see also Lonsdale, 'Contests of Time', pp. 216-7.
[86] Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 77.
[87] 'Juba District Information Handbook', NRO JD 1/2/6; Governor MP to Governor UNP, 'Notes on native courts', 7 Sept. 1932, NRO CS 1/13/42.
[88] Interview with Festo Limi Sominda, 14 Jan. 2003, Khartoum; Lewis, 'Notes on Bari', SAD 600/7/1-49.
[89] Shadle, 'Patronage', p. 43. The pre-literate orators of Kikuyu *mbari* (subclan) traditions were similarly "those for whom the negotiation of knowledge was of value in the intricate exchanges of *mbari* power": Lonsdale, 'Contests of Time', p. 205
[90] Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 18-33.

ancestor of the 'Bora rain-making clan in that area, a claim that must have needed the backing of local intellectuals.[91]

Songs were one of the most important ways in which history was recorded and discussed. There was therefore also an established intellectual in the person of the 'song-maker':

> They have wisdom in writing songs. This man is a great poet, he composed very meaningful songs. He goes from area to area and picks prominent persons to talk about, and events, and it becomes very representative of what has been happening in that area at that time.[92]

Similarly in Moru district,

> In the center of every dance is to be found the 'loygoba', or song-leader, a position of eminence much prized: the tunes appear to be more or less traditional, but the songs are always new, - topical and personal, related to the events of the moment, and responsible for many a quarrel.

Songs were thus as contentious a form of local discourse as any other. This account added that community dances provided an opportunity generally for discussion: "speeches are made on any subjects of particular local importance".[93] Dancing was a way in which to bring the community together visibly: one interviewee suggested that, "usually good dancers are also very good people, with good knowledge of the community and good understanding".[94] Dances also brought together wider networks, which in turn maintained the inter-personal knowledge that has been shown to be vital to local government:

> These dances are where you do the courtship and also where you know these colleagues of yours, these age mates. And therefore when someone is chosen [as chief] from that area, you will know because you have met in so many dance places.[95]

Alcohol was drunk by the elders as part of the ritual of such social and ceremonial events, and the provision of food and beer by community or age-set leaders was

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[91] Interview with Lubari Ramba, 31 Aug. 2004, Mitika, Yei.
[92] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum; Spence to mother, Yei, 10 Jan. 1915, SAL D12/202/1-19. See also Deng, *The Dinka*, pp. 78-95: songs are "a mirror of society".
[93] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[94] Interview with Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[95] Interview with Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.

crucial in the reinforcement of moral obligations.[96] When the Christian Revivalists in Moru district attempted to overturn the community authorities, the elders were reported to be particularly concerned at the decline in attendance at dances.[97] Yet elders themselves also disliked dances if they were felt to be undisciplined; songs and dances could thus represent the conflicts as well as unity of communities.[98]

In particular, songs were an opportunity to express resentment, anger, sadness and longing for a golden past. Buxton translates a number of songs from the Mandari area in the early 1950s, which described the harshness and extractions of the government. Amalgamations and loss of local autonomy were expressed as 'death' and nostalgia for lost sovereignty: "don't you regret the dying out of this, our stronghold?"[99] Similarly songs from Moru district in the 1930s criticised chiefs, prison and government 'stealing' of livestock.[100] Nyangwara songs translated by Beaton in the same period lampooned the court clerk for enforcing the orders of 'foreigners'.[101]

Song-makers thus had a license to be openly critical of chiefs and government; anonymously-authored songs could be sung collectively, adding to the power of this form of discourse. They provide an example of the way that history is constructed through a process of negotiation and contested claims, not created as a coherent single 'text'.[102] The songs also reflect the way that communities may have defined themselves in part against the 'government' and 'foreigners', including other communities or neighbourhoods. But their common discourse of moral deterioration and spiritual death also provided a context within which holders of knowledge could offer guidance on remedying these ills.

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[96] Barnaba Dumo Wani, written answers, 2003, Khartoum; Lewis, 'Notes on Bari', SAD 600/7/1-49. See also Willis, *Potent Brews*.
[97] 'Extract Moru Monthly diary, Feb. 1939', NRO EP 1/5/26.
[98] E.g. Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40: elders 'lament' the 'craze' for dancing.
[99] Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 148-53.
[100] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[101] Beaton, 'Bari studies', p. 69.
[102] Willis, 'The Makings', pp. 192-3, 207-8.

### *3.2 Mantic Experts*

Johnson argues that mantic activity among the Nilotes defines and sustains the moral community, primarily through uncovering the 'truth' about individuals and society.[103] It is important to see claims to such 'truth' as a powerful form of discourse; versions of history or custom were open to debate, whereas a claim to know the 'commonly unknown' was less easy to challenge. It is not surprising that mantic figures, like rain and earth priests and diviners, are remembered as having been more powerful than the chiefs.[104] According to Yunis, in 1924, for example, the 'Kujurs' among the Kuku communicated directly with the supreme divinity *Ngulaitait*, and as a result their word was "taken as law" by the people.[105]

The most potent mantic activity was usually related to knowing the rain; rain priests were intermediaries with divinity.[106] Simonse argues that the central value of the moral community is 'coolness': "a state of non-violent togetherness undisturbed by hunger and disease", and signified above all by rain.[107] Other studies have also drawn attention to the role of leaders in 'cooling' the land to bring peace and harmony to the community, as symbolised by rain.[108] Rain and earth priests succeeded in drawing on rain and other relationships with divinities to claim that they knew how to restore health and peace, in the process of which they could reinforce discourses about their own role and the moral and social order. One interviewee described the *Monye lori* from his childhood:

> It's the man who takes care of the situation of the village, the peace of the village, he sees to the good of all the village. And he is the man contacted if there are problems, if there are constant sickness in the village then he is

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[103] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, p. 35.
[104] Interview with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[105] Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', pp. 25-8.
[106] Barnaba Dumo Wani, written answers, 2003, Khartoum; Nalder to D.C.'s and CS, 'The future of Native Administration in Mongalla', 5 Feb. 1935, NRO CS 1/39/105.
[107] Simonse, *Kings*, pp. 337, 419; Interview with Chief James Josea Ramadalla, 31 Aug. 2004, Yei.
[108] Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, p. 329; Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, pp. 6-8; Buxton, *Chiefs*, pp. 85-9, and *Religion*, pp. 353-62; Mitzi Goheen, 'Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs and Local Control: Negotiations over Land, Struggles over Meaning', *Africa* 62, no. 3 (1992), pp. 389-412, at p. 400; Paul S. Landau, 'When Rain Falls: Rainmaking and Community in a Tswana Village, C. 1870 to Recent Times', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, no. 1 (1993), pp. 1-30, esp. pp. 10, 28-9.

> asked what is happening, then they will decide with the people what to do. Maybe… we have not done this, grandfather is angry about this.[109]

Threats, problems and crises prompted self-examination and internal discussion by the community. For example, the infertility of a chief's wife in Moru district led her family to debate the cause and come to the consensus that her deceased father had not been paid the rites due on her betrothal and marriage, and was therefore angry; a ceremony was performed to appease him, perhaps reflecting a reinforcement of patriarchal authority within the family.[110] In Juba district in 1939, a lion killed a number of people, and the consensus in the local court was that it had been sent by a man whose bride-wealth had not been repaid as it should.[111] This case is revealing of the processes of 'judicial' resolution by the moral community: they already *knew* that the bride wealth needed to be paid, and the failure of the man to come and claim it aroused unease at the knowledge of the debt. The lion could therefore be seen as an expression of their sense of his anger and jealousy.

The direction of such processes by mantic figures was a central aspect of the negotiation and defining of moral communities. In Moru district, *lendriba* diviners could "trace the source of your suffering, the source of death, the source of misfortune… he can read and find the source of any problem".[112] During a famine, one female mantic was reported to have "appeared at the psychological moment, and informed the people that one of their old gods was angry, and if they did not renounce 'Christian God' they would all die of hunger and their crops would fail again".[113] The ability of mantic practitioners to provide credible answers and solutions to the questions and crises facing communities was crucial to their status, and thus had to meet an existing need or source of doubt. Their success rested on knowing how to put their finger on the heart of the matter. In this example, it may be that the presence of Christianity was widely felt to be causing harm to the community.

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[109] Interview with Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[110] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[111] EPMD Jan.-March 1939, NRO CS 57/11/42.
[112] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[113] Allison, Juba, 20 April 1942, CMS AF AL.

Mantic experts' ability to uncover truth also ensured a continuing judicial role. For example, it emerged that "a series of magician's 'courts' had sprung up in various parts of the Meridi area which were tending to usurp the functions of the Chiefs and State Courts", especially in adultery cases, because people believed they would die if they did not tell the truth before them.[114] Administrators, not surprisingly, saw this as dangerous and exploitative, and in Moru district, rain-makers and diviners like the *Bori* were imprisoned and threatened by government.[115] Yet one Moru D.C. also had to admit that their skills had been harnessed in the pre-colonial past to assist in judicial processes.[116] Often chiefs and courts welcomed the expertise of mantic figures to assist in the resolution of difficult cases, as Yenge's recourse to the poison expert Ajuki revealed.[117] In the early 1930s, Evans-Pritchard also observed a case of adultery in Moru district, in which the *Bori* "were working hand in hand with the chief towards maintenance of order" and formed one of his means "of enforcing legal prohibitions".[118] The fear of the curse of such people thus remained a means of enforcing judicial authority and could be utilised by the chiefs or even administrators: in Kajo Kaji, the D.C. "made use of [a] kujur's reputation by having secured a spear-like iron-rod belonging to him and placing it in the Office for the purpose of swearing people with it when evidence is required".[119] Other oath rituals and the evidence from divination practices (such as chicken feathers) were also employed in the chiefs' courts.[120]

Chapter Five argued that the coercive force of chiefs and government might have been less frightening than supernatural kinds of force. Mantic experts were very successful in emphasising the threat inherent in their possession of knowledge, and also their inability to fully control it. Like spirit possession, their knowledge of divinities, spirits and powers could be so embodied within them, or even within their

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[114] EPMD Sept. 1943, NRO CS 57/19/74; also EPMD Sept. 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78.
[115] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.
[116] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[117] Mrs Selwyn, Kajo Kaji, Aug. 1932, CMS G3 AL; Winder, 'Fifty Years On: Service in Mongalla Province, 1930-33', (1979) SAD 541/7/1-32.
[118] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.
[119] Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', p. 27.
[120] EPMD Nov. 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53; Interview with Dr Rubena Lumaya Wani, 22.2.03, Khartoum.

families, that it was inseparable from them, and thus uncontrollable.[121] The Lokoiya 'masters', for example, might cause all kinds of misfortune if they were wronged, and yet this was not believed to be their fault, but rather the fault of whoever had provoked them.[122] A Moru interviewee emphasised the threat in the power of magic practitioners generally: they were the "community leaders more or less, so they were powerful, they were feared and respected because they could do harm to you".[123]

The embodied nature of their knowledge thus meant that mantic experts could be excused moral responsibility for this harm. They could also be seen to be outside the jurisdiction of chiefs and courts; for example in the 1939 poison case in Kajo Kaji, the chiefs and court were wary of sentencing the 'Khalifa'.[124] Interviewees explain that people used to be afraid to take such figures to court even if they were 'caught red-handed'.[125] In 1926, Dr Fraser described Moru specialists as 'anti-foreign' and extremely powerful: "[n]o one dare claim redress from the government against these people". However, five years later he declared that, "[t]he chiefs are no longer afraid to inform the government officials of the doings of even the most powerful of these incredibly evil charlatans".[126] The D.C. also reported "a very considerable latent antagonism to their activities, particularly, of course, amongst the chiefs, who violently oppose any rival to their authority".[127] This appears to contradict Evans-Pritchard's account of the cooperation between chiefs and *bori*, but it probably also reflected British assumptions that any inspired religious figure must be an alien usurper of authentic authorities like the chiefs.[128] Though there might indeed be rivalry, chiefs also needed to turn to such experts to assist in cases where their own knowledge was limited and there was community pressure to achieve resolution. They might also be close relatives of course; Chief Jambo in Moru district is

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[121] See Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, p. 86.
[122] Interview with Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[123] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[124] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 31.
[125] Interview with Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[126] Fraser, 'Witchcraft and Healing in the Moro Tribe', and 'Progress at Lui (formerly Yilu)', *The Mission Hospital*, Vol. 30, 1926, pp. 159-62, and Vol. 35, 1931, pp. 294-7.
[127] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[128] See Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 24-9.

remembered as having good relations with the local rain-maker, who was also his maternal uncle.[129]

From the 1920s, rain priests were said to have stopped displaying the outward signs of their expertise as a result of government persecution, while at the same time the chiefs were increasingly wearing the uniforms and badges of their government knowledge.[130] This was symbolic of their different spheres of knowledge and the increasing secrecy of what Pels calls the 'substrate' realm of indigenous politics. In Western Mongalla the relations between this realm and the creolised intermediate realm of local government were more harmonious however, with the gate-keeping chiefs also playing an important part in maintaining the secrecy of the former. The government repression of mantic activity may have also heightened its status and helped to place certain mantic experts at the centre of the local moral community, while chiefs were situated more on the thin line between community and government. This depended on mantic practitioners being seen to use their knowledge primarily for the good of the community however, as the discussion of witchcraft and the morality of knowledge will show. They were also challenged by the newer claims of mission-educated people, some of whom used similar methods to demonstrate their knowledge.

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[129] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[130] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.

## 4. Christianity, Education and Modernity

Mantic experts and community elders provided either rival or complementary avenues to judicial resolution and moral definitions, alongside the chiefs and courts. But those who were dissatisfied with both courts and community authorities might also look in other directions, for new sources of knowledge and power. Both the government and missions offered this, but that of the latter was more widely accessible. This was particularly apparent in the Moru Revival, which will be examined initially, as an experiment in new claims to knowledge. But aspects of both government and mission knowledge were also appropriated and utilised in more lasting ways, as people used writing and ideologies of Christianity and modernity to assert new definitions of morality. And yet such people could only make those claims by remaining within their local communities: their new kinds of knowledge were thus mixed with existing ones to form creolised, rather than contradictory, discourses.

### *4.1 The Revival*

The Christian Revival in Moru district detailed above involved a dramatic assault on the existing authorities, including government officials, chiefs, community elders and 'witchdoctors', and even missionaries, suggesting that the latter were viewed as little different from the government. It was primarily a youth movement, and it incorporated resistance to labour demands, alternative claims to healing power, and rejection of community rituals and recreations. But perhaps most strikingly, it sought to overturn the authority of the courts: Matteo preached that the judgements of chiefs and officials "came from hell", and the elect should instead "judge themselves with judgements inspired by Heaven". Marital issues were a particular focus for challenges to conventional authority: one twelve-year old boy arranged ten marriages, having greatly reduced the bride-price.[131] The Revival thus fits into the context of general unrest and resentment at the demands by government and chiefs

[131] Morrison, 'Report on Religious Revival in Chief Jumbo's country, Moru district', 28 Sept. 1938, NRO EP 1/5/26.

in the late 1930s, together with the debates over bride-wealth and the moral economy already discussed.

The movement was termed a 'Christian' revival and welcomed by some missionaries. But its adherents were largely non-Christian, and its ideology represented a creolised mixture of Christian imagery and local culture. Jesus and the Archangel Gabriel featured regularly in the visions, but in other respects the elect were claiming to communicate directly with divine power in much the same way as other mantic figures. The movement adopted a mission version of morality, in terms of condemning beer-drinking and dances, thus attacking patronage and power structures within communities.[132] One missionary compared the methods of the elect with those of 'witchcraft', and indeed the emphasis on fear as a tool reflects the location of the Revival within the power struggles of the time.[133] It demonstrated the way that the ideas and practices of the missionaries could be appropriated and reshaped, and manipulated by different actors, whereas knowledge of the government remained monopolised by chiefs, clerks and other employees. The Revival also exposed the difficult position of the chiefs, forcing them to choose whether to side with the popular revivalism at the risk of government disapproval.[134] Jambo's plaintive dislike of the 'new god' reflects the innovative nature of the movement; the fact that it was not sustained for long suggests that it was essentially a short-lived experiment with new kinds of knowledge and forms of expression.

### *4.2 Christianity and Education*

Christianity and mission education did play a longer-term role in community dynamics however. They were most obviously tools for younger people to use to claim knowledge and power and to challenge authorities and norms. But as Christian ideas became more diffused, so the issues became more complex than this, partly because these new forms of knowledge were formulated into creolised practices, and

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[132] Shadle also shows the way in which chiefs, missionaries and adepts of Mumboism competed as patrons, all functioning as "an amalgam of a supernatural and potent being and patron-client networks": Shadle, 'Patronage', pp. 43-4.
[133] Carey, Juba, 23 July 1938, CMS G3 AL . For connections between revivalism and witchcraft eradication, see Fields, *Revival*.
[134] See also Fields, *Revival*, esp. pp. 163-92, 254, 270.

also because different sections of society might draw on aspects of them at different times, according to their usefulness.

In general, early Christianity in colonial Africa has been seen as a tool used by the 'marginalized', such as ex-slaves, women and youth.[135] In Western Mongalla, chiefs and elders reportedly complained that education made young men behave arrogantly and disregard the established community authorities, rituals and labour obligations; education was blamed for spoiling "the customs of the country".[136] But this was partly because it was linked to socio-economic changes, contributing to labour migration. Attitudes were therefore complicated: education came to be seen partly as an investment, with communities and families keen to have one or two of their sons in government or mission employment. But people were also reported by one schoolboy to think that "education is merely for finding jobs, it does not bring any goodness in the country at all, it brings ruin to the country".[137] In the 1940s, Yei chiefs and elders were complaining of the general decline in "parental discipline and boys manners", and the fact that "desire for clothes makes boys leave home to work for enough cash to buy a shirt and shorts".[138] Clothing was one example of the deeper conflicts over morality, according to one interviewee from Lyria:

> When you go naked it means you are a virgin, you do not have evil thoughts - they have high morals... So when the people came back from the school with the clothes they were despised, they said what is that, you are hiding your ugliness?[139]

Government trainees in 1941 reported an even more negative public attitude towards the education of girls:

> 'They say that if women are educated they will be proud and they will not like to do any work ... they would constitute a class of their own and do not keep touch with other women of the villages but would only think of

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[135] Shadle, 'Patronage', p. 41. For a critique of the simplistic idea of converts as 'the marginal', see Justin Willis, 'The Nature of a Mission Community: The Universities Mission to Central Africa in Bonde', *Past and Present* 140 (1993), pp. 127-54.
[136] Juba Mission Report 1942, CMS G3 Sg2; Governor Parr to Hickson, Inspector Education, 20 March 1939, NRO EP 1/4/17.
[137] Janson-Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941', NRO DK3 1/6/29.
[138] YDMD March 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87
[139] Interview with Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.

> themselves better than anyone... and the constitution of such a class often leads to unfaithfulness to husbands and divorces'. When a marriage has been fixed the father is unwilling to let the girl go to school 'otherwise she may be deceived by the other educated young men and may refuse the one who had already paid for her'.[140]

There was clearly fear of women gaining knowledge of a new kind, and resisting male control. There are interesting parallels here with the view of the Kajo Kaji court in the 1920s towards women who had been married to foreigners; the idea that women who had gained different kinds of knowledge and experience formed a separate and potentially corrupting 'class'.[141] One interviewee also suggested that people were afraid that educated girls would not marry "for cows", but instead would "go out from civilisation".[142] This is additionally striking in linking bridewealth marriage to 'civilisation', i.e. the core of community ways. If women would not conform with this basis of the political economy, they would be seen to be outside the community entirely.

Another trainee revealed an additional perspective on female education:

> They say that women are unfit to work on paper and that even if a girl is well educated she will never be employed by the government and will never receive money as a result of the education she received.[143]

So there was also a fear on the other hand that this kind of knowledge was of no use to women; this may have been partly a consequence of the gender prejudices of the British administrators, with whom 'work on paper' was associated. Yet by the late 1940s, girls themselves were asserting – to the disappointment of the missionaries – their desire for education simply as a tool with which to "get a job", suggesting that they were overturning any assumptions that they could not profit from such knowledge.[144]

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[140] Janson-Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941', NRO DK3 1/6/29. See also Read, Lui, 3 April 1946, CMS AF AL .
[141] Whalley, A/D.C. Opari and Kajo Kaji, to Governor, 'Resolutions from Kuku chiefs of Kajo Kaji Lukiko', 19 Nov. 1929 and 22 Nov. 1929, NRO CS 1/39/104.
[142] Interiew with Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[143] Janson-Smith, 'Report on Juba training school Final Examination, 1941', NRO DK3 1/6/29.
[144] Guillebaud, Yei, 1948, CMS AF AL.

Divisions between educated and non-educated people were exacerbated by the missionary control of education and their Christian evangelism; they sought to create new communities of Christians. They pressured their pupils and employees to resist any customs related to rituals, alcohol and dancing, and this brought them into conflict with community authorities:

> The chief, at first, was friendly and helpful, so much so that he repeatedly invited Adama, the young teacher, to join him round the beer-bowl. Adama met this temptation with a stout and determined refusal, saying that he had come there solely to teach the Words of God, and that Christians had left this kind of thing altogether. The chief's attitude immediately changed, and since then he has been the reverse of helpful.[145]

As Bravman shows, such actions by Christians involved their withdrawal from "lineage mutualities", as embodied in social beer-drinking and rituals.[146] The missionaries sought to make baptism a symbolic ritual of such withdrawal; candidates passed across streams from the bank of the 'heathen' to that of the converted.[147] They also created new burial-grounds for Christians; a direct attack on family burial sites, which could arouse intense opposition from relatives.[148] The Italian Catholic Mission at Rejaf East also tried to prevent marriages between Christians and non-Christians, and welcomed women who ran away from husbands or fathers.[149]

To an extent, new Christian communities were forming as a result. Employees of the missions tended to live in the mission compound and socialise and intermarry with other Christians; the mission could also be a refuge for women abandoned by their husbands.[150] Some Christians were reported to be refusing to accept the jurisdiction of the chiefs and courts in matters of marriage and divorce.[151] The development of 'Church Councils' since the 1930s further contributed to the creation of alternative

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[145] Riley, Yei, 17 Aug. 33, CMS G3 AL.
[146] Bravman, *Making*, p. 100.
[147] Baring-Gould, Journal, 11 Feb 1933/34, Lui, CMS Acc. 21, F7B.
[148] Mrs Fraser, Lui, 22 April 1932, CMS Acc. 168, F2; Kajo Kaji Mission Report, 1942, CMS G3 Sg3.
[149] Wilson, D.C. Latuka, to Governor Mongalla, 16 Sept. 1929, NRO CS 1/13/43; Governor to 'Reverend Sir', 6 March 1933, and Governor to Secretary Education, 20 Nov 1933, NRO EP 1/10/51.
[150] Hilary Paul Logali, 'Autobiography', SAD 890/1/1-80; Bertram, Lui, Sept. 1948, CMS AF AL.
[151] Parr, 'Note for Mr Skeet', 20-30 Aug. 1942, NRO DK 57/1/1.

communities with their own moral authorities, debating such matters as alcohol, hashish and dancing.[152] In the 1944 diocesan council meeting, one of the first ordained Sudanese, Pastor Andarea Apaya, "raised the question as to whether Christians partaking in beer-drinking and dancing should be allowed to attend Holy Communion."[153] In 1943, one administrator criticised the Church Council in Moru district for exercising "such a dictatorship over the consciences of its own community, so that no Christian dare drink a cup of beer or be seen near a dance, for fear of being cast out utterly by the Church."[154]

Yet these accounts reflect one extreme; the power of the Church Council in Moru district was partly the legacy of the fear generated during the 1938 revival. In general, the numbers of actual converts to Christianity were limited, and even more so their continuing adherence to the missionary version of morality. As is well-established, the missionary idea of 'conversion' was rarely applicable anywhere; instead 'Christianity' was appropriated and added to other cultural practice and knowledge systems.[155] Meyer shows that most converts rediscovered their reliance on family ties, access to land through lineage heads, and previous kinds of healing.[156] The Moru Revival was similarly followed by disillusionment in the early 1940s, with missionaries constantly reporting the decline in attendance at church and the 'secret' return to 'superstition' and to 'immoral' habits like "smoking, dancing, drinking, adultery, lying, deceit".[157] They also complained at the 'glib' capacity of boys "to feign an interest in spiritual things while young in order to gain their own ends".[158]

The complexities of creolised Christian knowledge were apparent in 1947, when the missionaries at Lui asked church members to create a Moru hymn for a service of agricultural blessing:

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[152] Selwyn, Loka, 1930, CMS G3 AL; Mrs Fraser, Lui, 27 Sept. 1936, CMS G3 AL.
[153] '1944 Diocesan Council Meeting, Yei', CMS G3 S1/10-13.
[154] Keen to Governor, 9 Dec. 1943, NRO EP 1/5/26.
[155] E.g. Pier M. Larson, "'Capacities and Modes of Thinking': Intellectual Engagements and Subaltern Hegemony in the Early History of Malagasy Christianity.', *American Historical Review* 102, no. 4 (1997), pp. 969-1002; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, Vol.'s 1 and 2.
[156] Meyer, *Translating*, p. 104; see also Willis, 'The Nyamang', p. 52; Bravman, *Making*, pp. 135-6.
[157] Lui Mission Report 1945-6, CMS G3 Sg6; Riley, Maridi and Yei, 30 Aug. 1934, CMS G3 AL.
[158] Nugent School, Loka Report 1945, CMS G3 Se3; Elliott, Loka, 1935, CMS G3 AL.

> They got hold of one of their song-makers and produced a tune and with a bit of help the words... It seemed too good to be true. It was! The evening before the service, two Church Council members came and said that this was a drinking song with bad connections and we could not use it.[159]

The Council members were thus claiming to be the interlocutors with the missionaries, and to know the 'real' meaning of the song, while the rest of the community was combining its own song-making with Christian language and ritual.

'Sunday' became a particular source of conflict between missions and communities, and highlighted the ambiguities of the position of 'Christians'. In Yei district, many of the young men were baptised while working in Uganda, and returned with clothes, but the increased attendance at Sunday services or school did not have the effect desired by the missionaries:

> On the return of these young men to their homes, the young women, attracted by their smart appearance, try in their turn to attract them with beer and dancing, usually on Sundays, when it has now become the fashion to wear best clothes... In this way many have been drawn away, and have not only given up church attendance but apparently all desire for baptism... Many of the young women too, who a few years ago were being enrolled as catechumens in rapidly increasing numbers, have been drawn back by these Sunday dances, and seem to have lost all desire for spiritual things.[160]

Thus aspects of missionary cultural practice were appropriated, such as holding community events and wearing best clothes on a Sunday, but amalgamated with existing cultures, leaving the missionaries to complain bitterly, that "Sunday evenings are a babel of dance drums and drunken yellings by the villagers".[161] The role of young women in pulling the converted migrant workers back into the local community is significant here, and undermines the idea that young women would automatically view Christianity as a tool and sanctuary. Women were also most likely to uphold the fertility and healing rituals attacked by mission Christianity, for the sake of their households and children.[162]

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[159] Read, Lui, 3 Dec. 1947, CMS AF AL.
[160] Riley, Yei, Aug. 1938, CMS G3 AL .
[161] De Saram, Loka, 30 Nov. 1941, CMS AF AL.
[162] Meyer, *Translating*, p. 105.

The selective appropriation of Christianity was thus the outcome of contesting ideas and understandings. A good illustration of this comes from Lainya, where the technical department of Nugent school was situated from 1946: "[t]his junction was the meeting place for African travellers, and beer, gambling and such like could usually be found here". The impact of these outsider visitors on the moral community may help to explain the efforts by the headman of the village to enforce 'Christian' morality by 1948, preventing dances and the brewing of strong beer. However, he "had to sustain severe criticism from some of his people, and when a child of his was born with a hare-lip shortly afterwards the women-folk joined in the barrage, saying that it was because he had been converted". A local pupil revealed continuing social practices in the village at odds with the missionary ideals:

> When I go home, my parents try to make me drink too much beer. Then they send me to a local dance, where there is a lot of beer, and hashish smoking. They often try to make me go with a girl after the dance – one who has drunk too much – so that I shall have a child which she will have through me.

This missionary also reported that 'witchcraft' was not reduced, but had simply gone 'underground'. While the Lainya villages had supposedly been 'cleaned up' by 'evangelistic campaigns', he had to admit that, "the African can easily conceal from us that which he does not want us to see".[163] The area was clearly the site of considerable contests over moral and social behaviour, intensified by the presence of the mission school.

The headman at Lainya drew on Christian ideas to try to redefine the moral community, but this may have reflected a desire for reform emerging very much from within that community, not from wholly external influences. There were issues on which church leaders and community elders and chiefs could generally agree. For example, in the 1940s, the wartime labour, trade and troop movements led amongst other things to increased gambling, which chiefs, elders and Christians all condemned.[164] Around the same time, a new kind of dance, called 'Bambulia' was said to have spread from Uganda, and to be leading to an increase in adultery; it was

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[163] Williams, Lainya, 15 Oct. 1949, CMS AF AL.
[164] Yei Mission Report 1942, CMS G3 Sg11; '1944 Diocesan Council Meeting Yei', CMS G3 S1/10-13.

'frowned on' by the Church Council and 'banned' by a number of chiefs.[165] Christianity was not simply or automatically a tool for the young to use in opposition to oligarchic power – many Christians were older anyway[166] - nor for educated chiefs to use to reshape the moral community, nor for women to use against male dominance. Instead it was a source of cultural practice and moral knowledge, which was selectively appropriated and informed debates within communities. It would later become much more significant as a resource for a Southern identity, in reaction to the perceived threat of the Islamicising Khartoum Government; a more powerful revivalism would also return in the form of 'Balokole' in the 1950s and 1960s.[167] But Christianity was also always inextricably connected to education, literacy and European ideas of modernity.[168]

### *4.3 Paper and Development*

The power of writing was illustrated repeatedly in the detailed account of the 1939 case of poison in Kajo Kaji. The 'Khalifa' seems have had Nubi origins, and he had studied with a Fiki in Kodok, and now used his Koran as "a doctor's appliance". His reading from it, together with his written Arabic charms, had a mystery for the people of Kajo Kaji which enhanced his power, but also earned mistrust. Similarly Karibbe's use of an ink bottle from the police station to draw on Gune's body immediately aroused fear and suspicion. Symbolically, the missionaries also drew marks in chalk on the "black bodies" of their pupils.[169] The "mystery of writing" conveyed power, but it was also linked to foreigners and government and their power over the colonised body, and was thus morally ambiguous. In the 1937 poison case, Christians in general supported the ordeal trials; it was the Christian *clerks*

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[165] YDMD April, Sept. 1945, NRO EP 2/24/87

[166] Yei Mission Report 1942, CMS G3 Sg11.

[167] Balokole, or the East African Revival, originated in Rwanda and Uganda in the 1930s and probably contributed to the Moru Revival (it was mentioned in this context in Gelsthorpe to Skeet, 13 Dec. 1943, NRO EP 1/5/26): see Kevin Ward, "Tukutendereza Yesu': The Balokole Revival in Uganda', in Z Nthamburi (ed.), *A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa*, (Nairobi, 1991), pp. 113-44; Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 596-601. Balokole evangelists from Uganda appeared in Kajo Kaji by 1950: EPMD Nov. 1950, NRO DK 57/9/24; Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

[168] See also Lonsdale, 'Contests of Time': the first educated Christian Kikuyu were known as *athomi*, or 'readers', "a name that put their new communicative power before their new belief".

[169] Baring-Gould, Journal, 8 Feb 1933/34, Lui, CMS Acc. 21, F7B.

who were threatened by the chiefs, because their writing could reveal the case to the government.[170]

The first generation of mission pupils were mostly employed locally as clerks, teachers or dressers; they remained rooted in the local communities. By the later 1940s and 1950s, however, a second generation of pupils had gone on to secondary education in Uganda or Rumbek, and a small number had received administrative training in other parts of Sudan. Their emergence as a self-defined group of 'Southern Intellectuals' by the 1950s marked the first real creation of a new educated community, which saw itself as standing outside the 'traditional' rural moral communities of Western Mongalla. They drew on their Christianity and their education, together with knowledge of wider political and nationalist ideologies, to create a new kind of discourse about the 'backwardness' of the South, the failure of the colonial state to develop it, and the power of collective action.[171] They were thus valuing knowledge of the wider world above local knowledge, and envisaging communities that did not yet exist for the majority of their members. There are parallels here with the developments among the Nuer in the 1980s chronicled by Hutchinson, whereby an increasing divide opened up between rural, illiterate communities, and the urbanised, educated elite whose knowledge and relationship with government was embodied in the mysteries of 'paper' and writing. Their refusal to undergo the male initiation of scarification resulted in their appellation 'bull-boys' to describe their ambivalent position outside the moral community.[172]

Yet the evidence of interviewees – a number of whom belonged to this group of 'Southern Politicians' after Independence – suggests that even they embodied a creolised discourse, somewhere between tradition and modernity: the result of competing definitions of morality and knowledge. They use a language of ethnicity, which had been encouraged by the missionary use of certain 'group languages' for teaching and translation.[173] They also use English terminology and Christian

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[170] Finch, Kajo Kaji, 8 Nov. 1938, CMS G3 AL.
[171] Hilary Paul Logali, 'Autobiography', SAD 890/1/1-80.
[172] Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, pp. 270-98.
[173] Interview with Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Khartoum. See Allen 'Ethnicity', p. 135, for the importance of Acholi grammar books to the development of Acholi identity. The

ideology, to assert, for example, that their forefathers already had the 'Ten Commandments' before the missionaries arrived, and that their communities had systems of government and 'constitutions'.[174] This is less important as an 'invention of tradition' than as evidence of the way in which people adopted the idioms of the colonial state in order to defend local autonomy and moral values. At the same time, it shows the success of elders in retaining respect and prominence in defining community ways: they are said to have provided "the wisdom of the village and how people should live".[175] And the informants' support for chiefship reflects the absence of the kind of division between an educated political elite and the chiefs that opened up elsewhere; these categories overlapped anyway thanks to the chiefs' involvement with the missions.[176]

The interviewees displayed an apparently contradictory, but clearly not incompatible, mixture of scepticism with belief, Christianity with local spirituality, and pride in their Western education with respect for traditional expertise and the authority of elders. This is illustrated, for example, by the story told by a few of them about the Bari rain-maker Pitya Lugor. During the Second World War, the government built a new bridge across the Nile. Pitya became angry that he had not been consulted, because, as he told D.C. Cooke, he and the rain shrines of Sindiru owned the water in the Nile. Pitya then caused a seven-day flood which washed the bridge away; an incident reported by the government as a 'calamity'.[177] One interviewee, trained as an engineer, explained in detail that the foundations of the bridge had been faulty. But he also emphasised that the power of the flood was caused by the rain-maker: "Pitya Lugor really had supernatural powers and the British were made aware of this".[178]

Yet the same interviewee had exposed what he saw as the fraud of a local doctor, as detailed in Chapter Five. Another interviewee recounted the story of "a man who

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hegemony of 'Juba' Bari may also have contributed to a stronger ethnic identity than among the other Bari dialect groups: Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

[174] Interview with Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.

[175] Interview with Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.

[176] See Crowder and Ikime, 'Introduction', for such divisions elsewhere.

[177] Interviews with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Major-General Peter Cirillo, 27 Oct. 2002, Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum; EPMD June 1943, NRO CS 57/19/74.

[178] Interview with Serefino Wani Swaka, 23 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.

pretended to be a rain-chief", who "would run in the night and enter one of the caves and pretend to talk like a god". He demanded gifts of beer and goats, but when the rain still failed he was eventually identified and caught.[179] The same interviewee spoke with respect for genuine mantic figures in this area, demonstrating again that scepticism and belief were not incompatible, but rather that claims to knowledge were subject to rigorous evaluation of their authenticity.

Unlike in Greene's reading of Ghanaian history then, the informants' use of a language of modernity does not reveal "the failures of certain local understandings about the African landscape to survive the onslaught of European epistemologies"; rather it reflects the way that idioms and knowledge could be adopted (especially for presentation to outsiders) without eradicating other beliefs, at least during the colonial period itself.[180] And this mixture of scepticism and belief was apparent in general in Western Mongalla, as people rigorously evaluated claims to knowledge and power, and sought to uncover the truth. The discourses around practices termed by administrators as 'witchcraft' are particularly revealing of this evaluation and categorisation of knowledge by communities.

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[179] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[180] Greene, *Sacred Sites*, p. 13.

## 5. Witchcraft and Poison

Claiming or appearing to mediate with the unknown, in accordance with the needs and moral bounds of the community, generated authority which could in turn be used to define those bounds, thus perpetuating a moral order in which mantic experts were dominant. However, claiming or appearing to mediate with the unknown, in opposition to or outside those moral bounds, could bring power, but also a socially and morally ambiguous and mistrusted position. Discussions of 'witchcraft' thus involved defining the morality of such esoteric or secret knowledge and its practice. Colonial administrators in Western Mongalla were frequently undiscerning in their use of terms like 'magic', 'sorcery', 'poison' and 'witchcraft' to cover a range of different kinds of knowledge and power. Yet even if taken as a misunderstood category of experience, the reports of such cases and beliefs can be used to explore understandings of knowledge and its use, and the developing discourses of morality. In addition they often reflected the ways in which European knowledge was not only limited, but also reshaped - even if not consciously - by local knowledge. In trying to reform 'native law' and 'superstition', administrators and missionaries often became drawn into "the witchcraft logic".[181]

The 1939 case of poison in Kajo Kaji reflected the power of rumour; the persistence of an undercurrent of popular suspicion undermined the efforts of the chiefs to treat the case as a straightforward marital dispute.[182] Witchcraft accusations were an alarming idiom through which people could gain the attention of the authorities and raise issues in court. They also brought people into the court; administrators reported that any case of 'magic' always attracted a crowd to listen to the debates.[183] Witchcraft and poison accusation became increasingly prominent in the courts from the late 1930s,[184] reflecting both the way in which the latter had become arenas of public debate, and the economic changes and social tensions of the time. Above all,

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[181] See Fields, *Revival*, pp. 75-8.
[182] See White, *Speaking* on power of rumour. See also Pels, 'Creolisation', p. 18 on anonymity of rumour as political discourse.
[183] YDMD Sept. 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87.
[184] In 1920s lists of cases, witchcraft and magic do not appear (NRO MP 1/1/2), but in 1945 there were 39 recorded witchcraft cases in Yei district B courts: Yei District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98.

witchcraft accusation was a popular discourse about the use, or absence, of knowledge.

### *5.1 Professional Knowledge*

Both Johnson and Pels draw attention to the monopoly claimed by leaders over legitimate secrecy, and Pels makes the important point that it was the perceived *necessity* of this secrecy to the well-being of the community, which legitimated it.[185] However, in Western Mongalla, there appear to have been more complex categorisations of secret knowledge. These categories included a differentiation between esoteric expertise that was nevertheless publicly exercised; secret professional knowledge which could be purchased; and secret, inherited and often gender-specific abilities to curse and poison. The former has already been discussed in relation to mantic activity; such practitioners also relied on secret knowledge, but they were known and identifiable, and their rituals were practised relatively publicly. Their knowledge and practices were also considered *necessary* to the moral, physical and social well-being of the community, and hence their more negative aspects were tolerated. And they were located *inside* the realm of the known and familiar, even if their knowledge was secret.

Something of the difference between the first and second categories of expertise is illustrated by the descriptions of various 'magic' practitioners in Moru district. Both a colonial official and an informant emphasised that the *bori* fell into the first category:

> The real difference between them is that the odraba is merely a hired magician who will put a spell on anyone for payment without regard to social consequences, whereas the 'bori has a far more spiritual influence and is not concerned primarily with spells laid on individuals: such as they do perform are merely an incidental result of their being supernaturally possessed in order to make rain.[186]

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[185] Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy', and also *Nuer Prophets,* pp. 328-9; Pels, 'Creolisation', p. 16.
[186] Mynors, 'Notes on Evans-Pritchard's Draft Account of the Moru tribe', NRO DK 112/14/95. See also Fraser, 'Witchcraft and Healing'; Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.

According to the interviewee:

> The powers of the odraba: these are acquired, you are not born with it... This [bori] is different from the odraba or the other ones. Bori is power given to you for doing the right thing, not for hurting. But also for hurting someone who has wronged you, then he would have the punishment, the nemesis.[187]

Another British D.C. further emphasised the professional and profitable nature of the practices of the second category of experts:

> [T]he principal 'black' magicians, the Odraba and Mboriju... both appear to work by putting on their victims spells involving sickness or death, usually for reward and usually they can be bought off. One old Odraba near Amadi, named Peke, is reputed to have amassed enormous wealth, as he is the leading practitioner and people even come to buy the power from him.[188]

Yet the official's label of 'black' magic does not convey the complexities of the local moral categorisation of expertise. The secret knowledge of professional 'magicians' was seen to be amoral rather than immoral, because they did not intentionally cause harm through their own personal hostility to the victim. Their practices were thus always a symptom of other people's feuds and tensions: a sign that the community needed to examine itself. The chiefs found them hard to deal with, partly because they could be very popular, and partly because of fear and respect for their powers: "even if they were brought before him in the court he would try to send them away to settle it themselves".[189] Another interviewee suggested that the chiefs would only interfere if they were selling their medicine to use for harm; this may reflect developments over the colonial period, however, as chiefs came under greater pressure from both government and people to deal with 'bad magic'.[190] Their ability to do so was a test of their own moral knowledge, and thus of their membership of the local community.[191]

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[187] Interview with Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[188] Mynors, 'Notes on the Moru Tribe', 1935, SAD 777/3/1-40.
[189] Interviews with Paulino Wadn Lado, 11 Feb. 2003, Philip Yona Jambi, 19 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[190] Interview with Venansio Loro Lado, 11 Nov. 2002, Khartoum.
[191] See Geschiere, 'Chiefs and the Problem', esp. pp. 322-4.

As a result, the courts became an arena for the discussion of the morality of knowledge. One example of such debate occurred during a court case in 1942 in Yei, following the death of a woman who had allegedly been forced out of fear to take medicine from an old woman claiming healing powers. According to the D.C., this generated debate about the use of 'good magic': "[t]he chiefs felt strongly that a practitioner of 'good' magic should not force his attentions on the unwilling, if he does so it is for no good purpose."[192] While chiefs and people continued to need mantic experts, doctors and protectors, and to fear and respect those with the capacity to cause harm, they were also redefining the meaning of 'bad magic', or 'witchcraft'.

### *5.2 Secrecy and Morality*

An obvious criterion for defining 'witchcraft' or 'poisoning' was the extent of its secrecy. While mantics and professionals needed to display their knowledge and practice to demonstrate their status, witches and poisoners operated at night and in anonymity, outside all bounds of public knowledge.[193] According to a Yei D.C., it was the unknown identity of poisoners that intensified the fear of them:

> This dread of poison is a greater social menace than magic ever is. Every woman is a potential poisoner; [whereas] magic lies within the powers of a few.[194]

Witchcraft was thus partly a way to label the most anonymous and secretive activities, and was often equated with theft or adultery.[195]

Johnson argues that in the Nilotic moral community, all secret and private use of 'magic' was 'evil'; Chanock also suggests that the banning of the ordeal removed a crucial means of eradicating 'evil' from the community.[196] But secrecy was more differentiated than this, as we have seen, and the concept of 'evil' is too evocative of

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[192] YDMD June 1942, NRO EP 2/24/87
[193] Yunis, 'Notes on the Kuku', pp. 30-35; Interview with Barnaba Dumo Wani, 17 Feb. 2003, Khartoum.
[194] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 14.
[195] Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 133; Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy', p. 183.
[196] Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy', pp. 187, 192; *Nuer Prophets*, pp. 328-9; Chanock, *Law, Custom*, p. 86. Also Fields, *Revival*, p. 121.

a Euro-centric or Christian view of good and bad. Allen discusses the Madi word *onzi*, which is translated into English as 'bad' or 'evil', but is actually evocative of more complex ideas of spiritual and mystical forces, and that which is morally 'outside'; it is thus more ambiguous than 'evil'.[197] 'Witchcraft' has perhaps become the name for this kind of power – outside, unknown and therefore morally ambiguous – when it enters the 'inside' community of close relations, thus bringing the unknown into the realm of the known. The real need is therefore to discover and identify the source, in order to regain knowledge and a resulting sense of control and protection. This process involved changing definitions of the outside and inside, or in other words the evolving moral norms of the community.

Scholars also sometimes assume a static notion of witchcraft and of 'customary' ways to deal with it in the pre-colonial past;[198] but 'witchcraft' was far from being a consistent category and its nature should not be assumed from projections back into the past.[199] In many areas, witchcraft had been treated as a potential power carried by most people and expressed involuntarily as well as deliberately, as with the poisoners in Kajo Kaji.[200] So it seems that a growing intolerance and ostracisation or eradication of 'witches' as a distinct category of individuals has often occurred during and since the colonial period. The particular idea of 'evil' brought by the Christian missionaries and vernacularised by Africans has been shown to have 'diabolised' all aspects of previous indigenous religion.[201] At the same time, Christianity became seen as a source of protection from witchcraft, which in turn led to revivalist and Watchtower movements using baptism to define who was inside and outside, and to label and condemn the latter as witches.[202] It is not surprising

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[197] Allen, 'Ethnicity', p. 131; see also Geschiere, 'Chiefs and the Problem', p. 312.
[198] Fields, *Revival*, e.g. pp. 72-3, 248.
[199] Peter Delius shows that while witchcraft beliefs were reported from 1860s Transvaal, there were very few actual accusations or attacks on witches; he therefore warns against assumptions based on 'golden-age' accounts of witchcraft control in the past: 'Witches and Missionaries in Nineteenth Century Transvaal', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001), pp. 429-43, at pp. 430, 440-41.
[200] Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, pp. 112-4; Gray, 'Witches, Oracles', p. 361. See also Buxton, *Chiefs*, p. 134: witches were "a recognised part of social life".
[201] Meyer, *Translating*; and 'If You Are a Devil, You Are a Witch and, If You Are a Witch, You Are a Devil.' The Integration of 'Pagan' Ideas into the Conceptual Universe of Ewe Christians in Southeastern Ghana', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, no. 2 (1992), pp. 98-132; Behrend, 'Power to Heal', p. 22.
[202] Fields, *Revival*.

therefore that the poisoning trials in Kajo Kaji occurred around the same time as the Moru Revival, or that they would be followed from the late 1940s by Balokole Christian revivalism: all represented ways to define moral bounds and to deal with the unknown.

Christianity was only one source of definitions of evil however. In 1944, a court in Moru district banned three kinds of 'black magic', which it claimed had increased due to lack of action against them.[203] Yet in making such practices illegal, the authorities were contributing to their role as a form of resistance or subversion. Lambek defines 'sorcery' as "the secret, deliberate, illegitimate exertion of control over the lives of others". In Mayotte, he argues that sorcery was an internal critique of, and an expression of resistance to, the power relations that the prevailing political economy of knowledge engendered.[204] Thus the actual practice of witchcraft can be seen as kind of counter-discourse: a subversion of the moral order. In Western Mongalla, there were repeated reports of witchcraft being practised against chiefs.[205] Witchcraft was also reported to have spread in areas where the chiefs courts were less popular or effective.[206] A self-perpetuating cycle may thus have operated, whereby witchcraft subverted the moral community and the claims of its leaders to knowledge; they in turn sought to identify and know the source or conduit of the witchcraft.

Witchcraft may have been particularly exploited by women as a source of subversive power. The Yei D.C. believed that poisoning had been deliberately adopted by the Kuku women: "[t]he women first intuitively perceived its latent possibilities of power and seized upon it as a weapon in the age old feud of the sexes". This may also have partly been a reaction to the refusal of the colonial courts to allow them to divorce. He also suggests that it had become a common threat made

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[203] Moru District AR 1944, NRO EP 2/27/97. An increasing number of witchcraft cases were also reported in Yei: Yei District AR 1945, NRO EP 2/27/98.
[204] Lambek, *Knowledge*, pp. 238, 244.
[205] EPMD March 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53; EPMD April 1944, NRO CS 57/20/78; EPMD Oct. 1946, NRO DK 57/2/5.
[206] EPMD Dec. 1948, NRO DK 57/5/13.

half-seriously by women.[207] Women were reported to proudly claim the power and right to poison.[208]

In the Kajo Kaji area, poisoning was passed from mother to daughter; a daughter who refused to practise would become sterile, suggesting a link to ideas of female sexuality and fertility. So the association of women with witchcraft may have also reflected male fears of women, or a community fear of incoming strangers. Guyer and Belinga show that women were a source of new kinds of knowledge incorporated into patrilineal societies through marriage.[209] This is backed up by one Fajelu informant:

> Our rainmakers actually came from Bari, through intermarriages. The story is that one of our grand-grandfathers married a daughter of a rainmaker… it became just like wealth, somebody came with wealth to the husband.[210]

But the negative side of this, as Allen shows, is that women, especially the newly married or those whose bridewealth was not yet fully paid, were potentially *onzi*, or dangerous outsiders, with continuing access to forces outside the "ideal, patrilineally regulated moral world". They might therefore be consulted for their knowledge as diviners or healers, but they were also most likely to be accused of sorcery or poisoning.[211] The targeting of old women in particular was a symptom of their vulnerability, because they were less bound or protected by kinship relations.

### *5.3 Witchcraft and Social Relations*

Suspicion of women was also part of the fear of *close* relations secretly intending harm; the paternal aunt was often first in line for accusations.[212] Witchcraft has often been described as "an idiom of intimacy", revealing social tensions and conflicts between close neighbours and relations.[213] During the Kajo Kaji poison scare, for example, a missionary reported that, "[t]he slanders and back biting of African

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[207] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 14.
[208] EPAR 1937, NRO CS 57/24/99. Also YDMD Sept. 1944, NRO EP 2/24/87
[209] Guyer and Belinga, 'Wealth in People', pp. 115-6.
[210] Interview with Simon Wani Ramba, 10 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[211] Allen, 'Ethnicity', pp. 131-2; and 'Violence', p. 63.
[212] Meyer, *Translating*, p. 91.
[213] White, *Speaking*, p. 20; Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, p. 73; Kate Crehan, *The Fractured Community: Landscapes of Power and Gender in Rural Zambia* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 36.

village life now came out into the open, and many accused their neighbours of being witches and poisoners".[214] This in turn was a reflection of the hardship, social competition and growing pressure on the land at this time. In Kajo Kaji, as elsewhere, resettlement would have led to unprecedented intimacy with neighbours, which increased the likelihood of anti-witchcraft movements.[215]

Such socio-economic changes generated a consequent need to invoke moral obligations, especially against those seen to be unduly profiting or behaving too proudly.[216] In Western Mongalla, wealth brought status if it was earned through the accepted moral economy, but this economy was changing, as chapter Four showed. As people sought to maintain reciprocity in the face of individualising migrant labour and the beginnings of greater differentiation, those who achieved or craved success beyond their ability, or beyond their investment in social relations, were accused of witchcraft.[217] Geschiere shows that in Cameroon witchcraft could be practised as a weapon of the weak, jealous of the rich, or at the same time used to accuse the latter, so that they were careful to redistribute as well as display their wealth.[218]

By the end of the colonial period, a discourse of witchcraft seems to have emerged in Western Mongalla that was tied to ideas of community obligations and proper behaviour. Beliefs about witchcraft will have continued to evolve since Independence, and this is no doubt reflected in the statements by interviewees. But they suggest that in the 1940s and '50s, witchcraft accusation was a way to label those who were somehow different, and to justify their marginalisation or ostracisation, thus forming a powerful social sanction enforcing conformity with the moral community. People seen as 'strange', 'proud', 'trouble-makers', or even adulterous, were suspected of witchcraft and night activity, and such people were

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[214] Finch, Kajo Kaji, 8 Nov. 1938, CMS G3 AL.
[215] Isak Niehaus, with Eliazaar Mohlala and Kally Shokane, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics: Exploring the Occult in the South African Lowveld* (London, 2001), p. 8; Green, *Priests, Witches*, p. 137.
[216] Chanock, *Law, Custom*, e.g. p. 102.
[217] See Meyer, *Translating*, pp. 90-93, 106-7; also Shaw, *Memories*, p. 24; Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, p. 80.
[218] Geschiere, 'Chiefs and the Problem', p. 313; Meyer, 'If you are', p. 118.

avoided in marriage.[219] The description of those with the 'evil eye' by Evans-Pritchard also supports such views:

> The Moro say that one can tell who they are because when they are sitting with other people who are joking and chatting together they alone remain silent and morose.[220]

The idiom of 'witchcraft', though crudely represented in the colonial records, thus seems to have increasingly been used to describe anti-social or immoral behaviour.

The British administrators tended to approach witchcraft and magic cases with the assumption that all such practice was fraudulent, exploitative and ill-intentioned. Yet for local people, the evaluation of this practice was far more complex. The fact that someone might profit financially from their specialist knowledge was not a problem; it actually provided a less dangerous motive for harmful practices than personal hatred. What seems to have mattered most in the evaluation of the morality of knowledge and practice was whether the practitioner was seen to be *in relationship* with the community; it was those whose character or personal situation isolated them from the normal bonds of kinship and neighbourhood who were always most vulnerable to accusations of immoral witchcraft. As Englund argues, secrecy in politics is not viewed as negative as long as it is part of, not outside, social relations.[221] Thus the idiom of 'witchcraft' – in this narrower sense – was a powerful discourse about community membership.

The European officials and missionaries were also drawn into local discourses through witchcraft cases. Missionaries were particularly receptive to the power of magic and witchcraft, labelling much of indigenous belief as such, and deliberately engaging in battle with it.[222] But even administrators were concerned by the public panic that could result from suspicion of witchcraft, and fully believed that some individuals had the intention of causing harm by magic, even if they could not quite

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[219] Interiews with Margaret Keji Loro, 18 Feb. 2003, Francis Bassan, 18 Nov. 2002, and Severino Mati, 27 Jan. 2003, Khartoum.
[220] Evans-Pritchard, 'Preliminary Draft of An account of the Moro', NRO DK 112/14/95.
[221] Harri Englund, 'Perils of Transparency: Accountability and the Occult in Malawi', paper presented at the conference on 'Traditional Accountability and Modern Governance in Africa', University of Durham, July 2004.
[222] See also Delius, 'Witches', pp. 432-3.

admit its credibility. Their reports therefore frequently adopted an idiom of credulity, as reflected in the Yei D.C.'s conviction of the accused in the Kajo Kaji poison case for "tampering with the powers of darkness".[223] Another report on 'magic' emphasised "how necessary it is to support native institutions in their attempts to put down anti-social practices which have such a paralysing influence on social life."[224] This illustrates the power that a popular discourse held over both Native Authorities and the colonial administration. Both the practice and the accusation of witchcraft had the effect of directing the definition of 'anti-social practices', because the impact of rumour and suspicion was 'paralysing' and forced the authorities to attempt to deal with it. In the process, the use of knowledge was debated in a way that affected the behaviour of all members of the community, including mantic experts. Thus those who claimed knowledge and power also found themselves subject to community evaluation as to how they used it; the boundaries of the moral community were shaped by popular rumour and accusation as well as by the discourses of 'intellectuals'.

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[223] (Anon., prob. Tracey), 'A Case of Poison', Yei, 31 Dec. 1939, RHL MSS Perham, p. 31.
[224] EPMD June 1941, NRO CS 57/14/53. See also Gray, 'Witches, Oracles', for British quandaries over witchcraft.

## Conclusion

This chapter has used the accounts of poison trials in Kajo Kaji and Christian revivalism in Moru district to explore the ways in which communities were dealing with different forms of knowledge, and experimenting with new ones. It demonstrates that there was no hegemonic colonial power imposing a new epistemology, and nor were chiefs necessarily in control of defining 'custom'. During the colonial period, individuals in Western Mongalla claimed or demonstrated specialist knowledge, which derived from multiple sources, but which generally offered the explanations for events and the solutions to, or means of protection from, threats and problems. Mantic experts claimed to know causes and cures through rituals and divine understandings; chiefs and elders in court asserted their authority to know how and what to do, based on their version of the customs and laws of their community; and education and Christianity provided new sources of moral knowledge and explanatory powers. But while knowledge brought power and status, it also subjected the holder to the rigorous evaluation of the community, and endowed them with a greater degree of moral responsibility and liability. Over the colonial period, a common discourse continued or developed, regarding the duty of those with knowledge to use it for the good of the community; i.e. to remain *in relationship*.

# Conclusion

## From the Knowledge of the Foreigner to the Knowledge of the Community

This has been a small-scale study in terms of geographical scope, yet there has still been little space (or continuity in the sources) for telling the detailed stories of individual chiefs; such stories would further illuminate the contingency and complexity of 'chiefship'. Instead the thesis has focussed upon the structure of their individual agency[1]: the patterns underlying the institutionalisation of chiefship across this region. That structure cannot be found in a static 'tradition' of authority; it was after all the dynamism of chiefship that enabled it to evolve from varied local forms of external mediation and protection, through a stage when these forms were invested with colonial force and strained by colonial demands, to the domestication of the 'chief' as a figurehead of the community. The structure of this dynamic agency lies rather in the relationship of knowledge to authority, and in the double gate-keeping functions of chiefship.

A salutary warning as to the difficulties and risks of taking on these functions - as well as an indication of the nature of traditionality - could have been observed in the neighbouring Zande kingdoms. Here the kings or chiefs had far more obviously institutionalised pre-colonial roots, and yet, according to Johnson and Reining, they lost legitimacy over the colonial period and came to play a 'one-sided role', enforcing the punitive and restrictive colonial policies, offering little in return, and eventually being attacked for their apparent complicity with the northern government.[2] This highlights the need to measure traditionality in terms of its *local* roots and the extent to which it draws upon the deep popular understandings of history and legitimate authority.

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[1] Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, p. 34.
[2] Johnson, 'Criminal Secrecy'; Reining, *The Zande*, esp. p. 27.

'Recognition' is a more useful concept than 'consent' in understanding the nature of this local authority. In order for the chiefs of Western Mongalla to become 'traditional authorities', they had to firstly demonstrate the value of their knowledge to the communities in which they lived and operated. Their origins lay in their knowledge of the *turuk*; this knowledge went through a number of incarnations, from trade and Nubi military culture to bureaucratic administrative practices and national politics. They also had to know their communities, as expressed variously through rain control, the local politics of patronage, and increasingly the definition of community traditions and history. They had to display both of these kinds of knowledge to the foreigners and governments in order to be seen as useful 'native authorities'. But crucially, their dual knowledge also had to be recognised by the people; the chiefs thus had to be doubly knowing and doubly known. Chiefship developed as a product of the interaction between foreign and local, state and community, and of the reciprocal, interpersonal cognition and recognition within the latter: a process by which individual specialist knowledge was absorbed into the community bank of knowledge and reflected back in the collective recognition of legitimate authority.

Knowledge/power was accessed from external sources by experts and then both revealed and concealed, in order to maintain their monopoly and at the same time be assimilated into the community and drawn upon to define it. Knowledge thus formed the currents of power and identity that circuited through social and ritual networks, sparking off each other but also generating and regenerating the moral community. Moral and political authority lay in the ability to convert outside knowledge into recognisable rituals, objects and language which in turn contributed to the production and reproduction of a body of knowledge that was synonymous with the community itself.

This might appear to be a discussion of hegemony. But the thesis has argued that this body of knowledge – and the sense of self-hood of the community – was formed not out of the dominance of one set of elites and intellectuals, but out of moral debates, political competitions and rival claims to a changing variety of external sources of knowledge/power. And because those claims had to resonate in the local

community, they had to demonstrate 'the power of speech', by using local idioms and ideologies that drew on deeper historical roots and popular discourses. The latter were powerfully revealed in gossip, songs and the resistance - passive or vocal - to any authority that overstepped the bounds of the tacit moral compact formed between people and those with the access to knowledge/power. This compact restricted authority to a particular sphere according to the nature of its knowledge, ensuring that multiple forms of authority were maintained. The chiefs might dominate the sphere relating to the *hakuma*, but because this remained a distinct external entity, it existed in horizontal rather than vertical relation to other sources of knowledge/power. The latter might all generate wealth and authority, but they could also invite suspicion – as illustrated most vividly in 'witchcraft' accusations - if used for individual gain rather than invested in social relations. For knowledge/power to become reproductive, it therefore had to be converted into political and social relations, tying elites into mutual obligations and subjecting them to popular evaluations. The moral ambiguity of knowledge also tended to reflect antagonisms, for example between rich and poor, old and young, 'Christians' and non-Christians. The success of the chiefs and other leaders lay in their ability to insert themselves into the in-between liminal spaces of society and mediate antagonistic oppositions. This kind of 'peace-making' connects with much wider and deeper spiritual, moral and political traditions of thought and need across Southern Sudan and beyond.[3]

As von Trotha argues, the intermediary role of chiefs also reflected the strong antagonisms between rulers and ruled, centre and hinterland, in colonial and post-colonial Africa, and thus the limits of state power.[4] This antagonism has been particularly apparent in Sudan. As the thesis has demonstrated, the people of Western Mongalla conceptualised the government or *hakuma* as a vague and yet clearly separate and distant entity, experienced historically as a series of violent extractions and impositions, from which they needed protection. The violence of the colonial state became normalised and diffused over time, so that increasingly it was experienced more as an epistemic violence. The resulting struggles over authority, bodies and landscape led people not only to appropriate and creolise aspects of this

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[3] See Johnson, *Nuer Prophets*, esp. pp. 55-70, 329.
[4] Von Trotha, 'From Administrative', pp. 82-3.

state epistemology, but also to emphasise their own knowledge of the historical social and moral meanings and networks that interwove the physical geography and its inhabitants. The epistemic violence of the colonial state led then not to a new hegemony – this would have required harnessing the eclectic local forms of intellectual and mantic activity, which instead remained largely secret and substrate – but to the strengthening of a local sense of self-hood and community. The nature of the colonial state in Africa, particularly its attempt to centralise and monopolise knowledge, was a major cause of assertive local (in some cases, ethnic) communal identities. Those identities might involve powerful normative constructions of the community, but they were built from 'below' as well as manipulated by elites. They were the result of the general need for a sense of belonging and for security and protection through mutual obligations, and also of the need to know the unknown and to control the effects of the new kinds of knowledge and experience that were constantly entering, or being imposed upon, the local neighbourhood.

In this context, the nationalist politics of Khartoum threatened the capacity of local communities to maintain a sense of control and knowledge in relation to the *hakuma*. The influx of northern officials and the later policies of Islamicisation were understood and experienced as the ultimate epistemic violence by the state, reflecting both the long historical patterns of extraction by the *turuk* and the more recent centralising and homogenising forces of the colonial state. The fear of this centralising momentum was expressed in the popular sense that even Southern politicians were being sucked into the centre in Khartoum. Only those representatives and authorities who could demonstrate their rootedness in the local community - as embodied in social relations and displayed through socially-productive wealth and historical and interpersonal knowledge - could be fully trusted to defend local autonomy, rights and interests.

Since Independence, the sense of a wider Southern identity has become stronger and at the same time the regional and ethnic divisions within the South have been exacerbated. Pels argues that in Tanzania, the nation emerged as an 'anti-structure',

in opposition to the state structures of local government.[5] But Southern Sudan, as a nation, emerged out of the local communities and their strategies for defending themselves against the *hakuma*; the 'colonial' structures of local government here evolved into this 'anti-structure'. And this in turn was possible because they were never simply part of the hierarchical apparatus of the colonial state; their structure was formed instead by the local strategies for protecting local knowledge from state centralisation.

In recognition of the central role of these local or 'traditional' authorities and in awareness of the dangers of fragmentation and division within Southern Sudan, those involved in the creation of the 'Government of Southern Sudan' are now seeking to incorporate them into new state structures and co-opt their 'traditional legitimacy'. But they will need to be mindful of historical experience and of the wider lessons of chiefship discussed in the introduction. As the example of Western Mongalla demonstrates, there is no automatic traditional legitimacy attached to the chiefs. There are dangers if they become appropriated into the state as "subaltern civil servants"; there are already complaints about chiefs appointed by the SPLM/A.[6] And there are also dangers if they become the focus for narrowly communal interests and means of access to resources. This is most likely if the state attempts to centralise knowledge/power and wealth and restrict local autonomy. It should also be recognised that the historical authority of the chiefs lay not in preserving a static version of tradition and customary law, but in mediating and converting external resources of knowledge/power into the deep local language of social and political relations.

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[5] Pels, 'Creolisation', p. 23.
[6] Von Trotha, 'From Administrative', pp. 87-8.

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