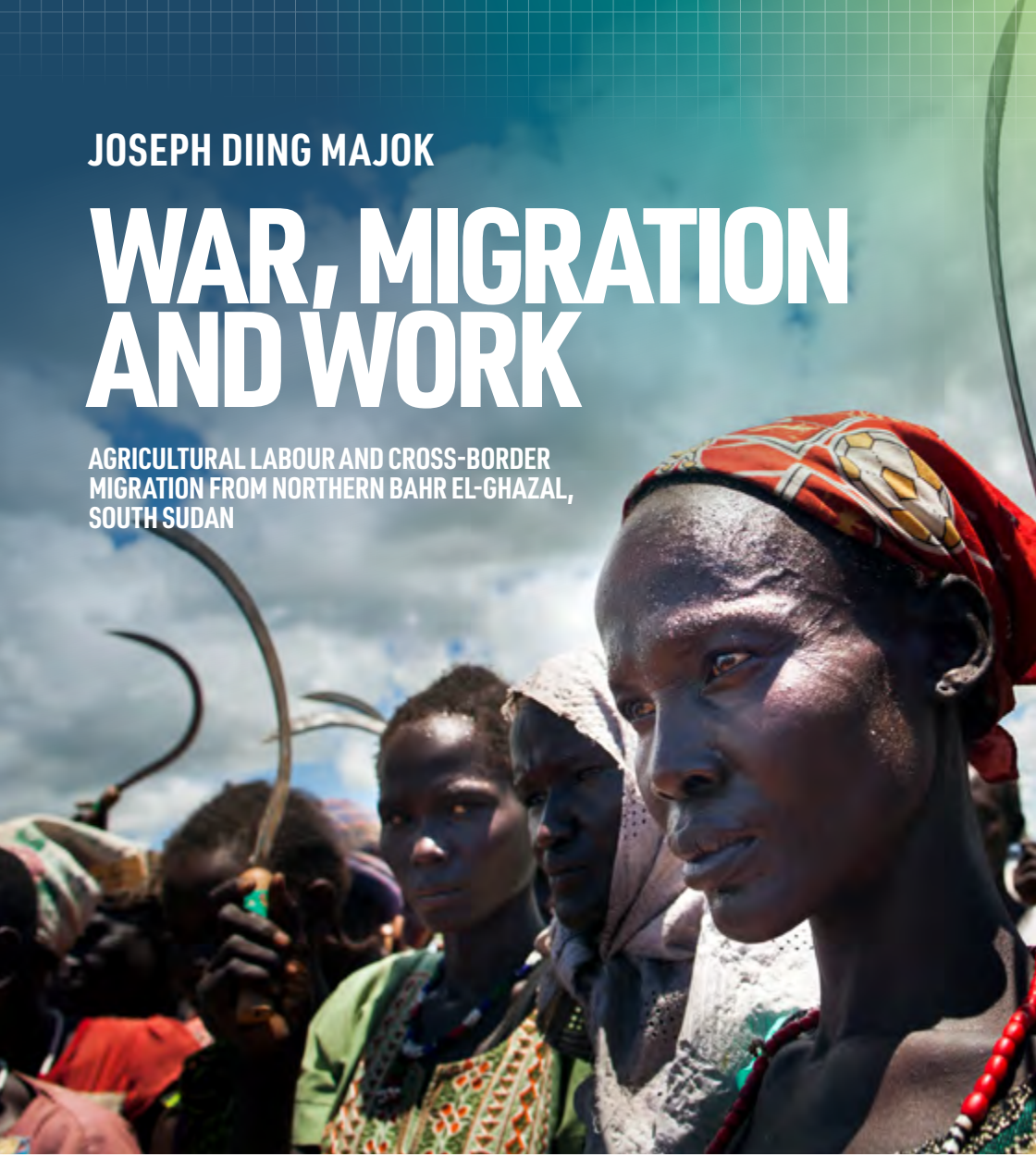
JOSEPH DIING MAJOK

# WAR, MIGRATION AND WORK

## AGRICULTURAL LABOUR AND CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION FROM NORTHERN BAHR EL-GHAZAL, SOUTH SUDAN



Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT
CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
EVIDENCE / POLICY / TRENDS

JOSEPH DIING MAJOK

# WAR, MIGRATION AND WORK

Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT
CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
EVIDENCE / POLICY / TRENDS

UKaid
from the British people

**War, Migration and Work – Agricultural labour and cross-border migration from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan**

**Joseph Diing Majok**
**Rift Valley Institute**

Cover photo: Women stand with their sickles ready to start the harvest, Aweil, South Sudan. Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran. © FAO.

Joseph Diing Majok is a researcher with the Rift Valley Institute in South Sudan. He holds a BA in Anthropology from the University of Juba and is currently studying for an MSc in Africa and International Development at the University of Edinburgh. Diing has authored or co-authored several reports for RVI as part of the X-Border Local Research Network.

This report is a product of the FCDO's Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) programme, funded by UK aid from the UK government. XCEPT brings together leading experts to examine conflict-affected borderlands, how conflicts connect across borders, and the factors that shape violent and peaceful behaviour. The programme carries out research to better understand the causes and impacts of conflict in border areas and their international dimensions. It supports more effective policymaking and development programming and builds the skills of local partners. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

The Rift Valley Institute works in Eastern and Central Africa to bring local knowledge to bear on social, political and economic development. 

# CONTENTS

# SUMMARY

This study examines the history of labour migration and labour relations in present-day South Sudan's Bahr el-Ghazal borderlands with Darfur and Kordofan (regions of present-day Sudan). It begins with the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. During this period, slave raids turned many people from voluntary workers in the kinship-ordered production systems of Bahr el-Ghazal, oriented towards self-reliance rather than profit, into enslaved workers on farms in Darfur and Kordofan, oriented towards surplus generation and profit. The slave trade and its aftermath also shaped attitudes towards labour in Dinka culture for much of the twentieth century.

When slave labour was replaced by wage labour in Darfur and Kordofan in the 1920s and 1930s, many Dinka communities regarded wage labour as another form of unfree labour. Negative attitudes to wage labour, along with colonial-era restrictions on migration, slowed down the process of labour commodification in Bahr el-Ghazal. This meant that kinship-ordered production systems survived there, and participation in profit-oriented production required migration. In the 1950s, when restrictions on migration eased, some young Dinka men began migrating to find wage labour. Dinka society was based around the exchange of cattle at marriage, and those cattle usually circulate through family and social networks. In cattle-poor families – usually those without daughters – there was a need to find alternative sources of cattle. Wage labour allowed these families to accumulate money and purchase cattle at auctions, which the colonial government sponsored as a means of accelerating monetization of old production systems.

The second timeframe of the study focuses on the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, a small number of young men migrated north for waged work, often motivated by the need to raise money for cattle bridewealth. Several factors complicated labour migration from Bahr el-Ghazal to Darfur, however. First, low wages for labour migrants in Darfur impeded migration. Second, the First Sudanese Civil War (1955—1972), which began displacing people from Bahr el-Ghazal in the 1960s, also impacted labour migration. Because the roads were controlled by army soldiers, many displaced people (including those migrating for wage labour) sought to avoid them and instead moved into the bush, forcing them to walk hundreds of kilometres on foot. In the decade of peace from 1972 to 1982, the scope of money and migration widened, reshaping Dinka society and its gender order. Migration for wages allowed young men to buy cattle and circumvent the social networks that hitherto

organized bridewealth. In contrast, women's migration was discouraged by the patriarchal Dinka order. Thus, migration shifted the balance of power between men and women.

The next period examines the early 1980s until 2005, when Bahr el-Ghazal became the centre of a devastating war that deliberately targeted its systems of production and forced its huge population into displacement and famine, pushing many Dinka people towards wage labour. The war created new militias that established themselves in the borderlands by exploiting and policing labour migrants – winning political and economic power in the process. Famine and displacement changed the geographical distribution of Dinka people and their social settings in the 1980s, again upturning the gender order. War separated families. It ended traditional patriarchal control over women. It also gave women new responsibilities and freedoms, and changed marriage customs. Displacement rather than aspiration became the major cause of labour migration. Dispossessed Dinka workers were forced into exploitative wage and debt labour systems in Darfur and Kordofan. Dinka ethnic militias linked to the Khartoum government used their control over the borderlands to conduct raids for material gain. They also extracted unpaid labour from displaced communities and instituted a tax regime targeting cross-border migrants.

The fourth and final timeframe of the study looks at the period after 2005, when people displaced from Bahr el-Ghazal returned home and contributed to the development of a new kind of exploitative commercial agriculture in the region. Beginning in 2005, the repatriation process over the next few years saw large numbers of formerly displaced people return to Bahr el-Ghazal, which changed relationships with land and fostered the development of commercial agriculture in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. This also resulted in the exploitation of the labour of poor returnees by the elites in the region. Labour exploitation followed the patterns of those in Darfur and Kordofan, which is still the case in 2021. That is, formerly displaced communities continue to be trapped in a cycle of exploitation, debt and poverty since South Sudan gained independence in 2011.

From 2010s onwards, the demand for agricultural labour grew and cultivated areas expanded in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, particularly in the period before the South Sudanese economy collapsed after 2013. New systems of production using paid agricultural labour contributed to this growth. The return of war in 2013 has changed this. Many young Dinka men who are potential agricultural workers are shifting their interests away from agriculture and joining the military or migrating across the border into Sudan, finding work with their former Sudanese bosses. Others are moving to Juba to look for jobs and money. New patterns of migration are once again changing the gender order. In particular, the South Sudanese border security forces have imposed new restrictions on the mobility of Dinka women, which are linked to the demand for women's labour.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for the support they provided during the writing of this paper. Firstly, to Anna Rowett and all the Rift Valley Institute's staff in Juba, who gave me the opportunity to do this work, and to staff in the Nairobi and London offices, who have always been very supportive during my time with the Institute. Second, to Dr Nicki Kindersley for our many years of partnership. I have benefitted a lot from her mentoring, training and guidance during our various RVI research projects. Third, to Dr Eddie Thomas, who guided me through the writing of this paper, and to Ms Loes Lijnders, my undergraduate university lecturer, who also supervised and coached me through the writing process. Fourth, to the peer reviewers of this paper, whose excellent comments helped improve the text significantly. And finally, to my fellow RVI researchers in South Sudan for the support you have rendered me and continue to render.

# INTRODUCTION

The borderland spaces linking Northern Bahr el-Ghazal state in South Sudan with the states of East Darfur, South Darfur and South Kordofan in Sudan are traversed by myriad economic and social relationships (including regular migrations) between the different peoples that live there.[1] Since the 1960s and the development of commercial agriculture, for-profit farming in the border region has shaped relationships between people. Over time, these new exploitative systems of wage labour, which have spread all over Sudan, have affected migration patterns and labour relations between the farmers in the north and their workers from the south.

Darfur and Kordofan rely heavily on South Sudanese agricultural workers. Both regions have been affected by several decades of climate change, war and mass displacement – factors that have brought multidimensional and under-studied changes to agrarian and pastoralist production systems, markets and food security. The population has become more concentrated around cities, with people and their livestock consequently more dependent on food from markets and international food aid. Production is oriented to marketable surplus and requires a steady supply of labour. New kinds of commercial farms that are reliant on landless workers have emerged. Workers displaced or migrating from South Sudan have become a structural part of this workforce.

Some parts of Kordofan have seen the emergence of vast farms owned by absentee capitalists. These farms depend on the exploitation of migrant labour. This is similar to farms in eastern and central Sudan. In Darfur, however, the move towards market-based agricultural production is happening at a different scale and pace. Agricultural producers have shifted from growing traditional grains to planting more profitable crops such as oilseeds in response to market signals. In pursuit of profit, they are more likely to use

1. South Sudan became an independent country in 2011. Before that, several names were used to describe its territory, such as Southern Sudan (2005—2011), the Southern States (1992—2011), the Southern Regions (1983—1992), the Southern Region (1972—1983) and the Southern Provinces (1898—1972). This report uses the terms ‘South Sudan’ and ‘South Sudanese’.

workers hired at exploitative rates to grow these cash crops. Consequently, the system has become more dependent on landless workers, who are usually victims of wars.[2]

These enduring systems of exploitation and patterns of migration in the borderland regions are deeply rooted in the historical slave trade in Sudan. The legacy of slavery in western Sudan and South Sudan continues to influence and reshape contemporary cross-border migrations, relations and labour systems. This legacy also continues to influence other forms of contact between the Dinka people from Bahr el-Ghazal and Baggara (Misseriya and Rizeigat Arab) in Kordofan and Darfur.

This study aims to answer two main questions: 1) What are the cross-border employment systems in East Darfur, South Darfur and Kordofan, where many young Dinka men migrate each year to find work, and how are they exploitative? How has the cross-border labour system affected the development of agriculture in Bahr el-Ghazal?

## The landscape and peoples of the borderland

The river Kiir (in Dinka), also called the Bahr el-Arab (in Arabic), has its source in the hills of the Nile-Congo watershed. The river once marked the southern frontiers of the precolonial sultanate of Darfur. At present, it approximately runs along the disputed borders between South Sudan and Sudan, west of the White Nile. It marks an ecological border, too. The Kiir River demarcates where the rains start earlier and are more abundant, and where the sandy soils of Darfur and Kordofan are replaced by the red ironstone soils of Western Bahr el-Ghazal and the dark clays and swampy floodplain soils of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. In present-day Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, a fertile plain called the Gok extends south of the river Kiir as far as the river Lol. The two rivers meet about 300 km to the east and flow towards the White Nile. Aweil, the capital of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, lies just south of the river Lol, where ironstone meets clay.

The largest population group living in this area are the Malual Dinka people of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. Traditionally, these people lived as cultivators and mobile pastoralists in the Gok forests and the Lol flood plain. The Malual Dinka are based in permanent farming villages and cattle herding circuits, which are organized around kinship and lineage. There are also several groups speaking Luo languages – a language group spread out across Eastern

2. Margie Buchanan-Smith, Abdul Jabar Abdulla Fadul, Abdul Rahman Tahir, Musa Adam Ismail, Nadia Ibrahim Ahmed, Mohamed Zakaria, Zakaria Yagoub Kaja, El Hadi Abdulrahman Aldou, Mohamed Ibrahim Hussein Abdulmawla, Abdalla Ali Hassan, Yahia Mohamed Awad Elkareem, Laura James, Susanne Jaspars, 'Against the Grain: The Cereal Trade in Darfur', Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2014, 41—43, 48.

Africa – the largest of whom are the Jur-Luo. The Jur-Luo traditionally lived as cultivators, fishers and gatherers. They sometimes gave their cattle to Dinka people to tend. To the west, diverse groups collectively known as the Fertit live on the ironstone plateau. Fertit people speak two dozen languages from all over Africa.[3] Immediately to the north of the river Kiir (or Bahr el-Arab) live groups of mobile pastoralists, collectively known as the Baggara (the Arabic word for 'cattle herders').[4] Arab-speaking people, Baggara groups live along the savannah belt between Lake Chad and the White Nile. Their cattle herding circuits reach deep into Bahr el-Ghazal during the dry season. Baggara people also organize around kinship.

The borderlands between Kordofan, Darfur and Bahr el-Ghazal tend to be densely populated. This borderland area has some of largest livestock herds in Africa and the fertile soils produce large quantities of grain. The way that agricultural wealth is produced is changing, however. In the past, agricultural production in Dinka areas was aimed at satisfying local needs and accumulating wealth in cattle. Cattle were not traded in markets but instead were exchanged through social networks. Young men needed to build a herd of cattle in order to marry, which the herd distributed among the family of the bride. In contrast to the past, during the twentieth century, many Dinka people began to trade their produce and sell their labour. In 2021, many Dinka people in Bahr el-Ghazal now work for wages. In short, labour and agricultural production are being commodified.

## Research methods and limitations

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with in-person interviews conducted after the most severe lockdown measures had eased enough to allow in-country travel. In total, 11 key informant interviews took place with 3 elders, 6 male youth seasonal labour migrants and 2 women, who were former or current labour migrants or displaced to what was then the north of Sudan. In April 2020, four face-to-face interviews were conducted in the counties of Aweil North and Aweil West in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal state. These interviews took place in strict observation of WHO guidelines to protect against the spread of COVID-19. In August 2020, seven telephone interviews were conducted with elders and women from Aweil town, Aweil North and Aweil West. These respondents either migrated in the 1960s and 1970s or were displaced in the 1980s. Some lived in Darfur,

3. Damazo Dut Majak Kocjok, 'The Northern Bahr al-Ghazal: People, alien encroachment and rule, 1856—1956', PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1990: 19—93.

4. In particular, two Baggara groups are referenced in this study: the Rizeigat, mostly based in present-day East Darfur state, and the Misseriya, mostly based in South Kordofan state. Also see: Martin Adams, 'The Baggara Problem: Attempts at Modern Change in South Darfur and Southern Kordofan (Sudan)', *Development and Change* 13 (1982): 259 – 289.

Khartoum or Gedaref; others remained in Southern Sudan (South Sudan) but migrated northwards as wage labourers in the 1990s, in the midst of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983—2005).

The research for this study is also based on songs, which are the traditional archive of the Dinka people. Songs are an important source of information for understanding the emotions and experiences of Dinka people at a particular time. They are a primary means through which Dinka people express and store their emotions, whether happy or sad. Songs are also a way of expressing experiences and common problems that Dinka people face. The songs used for this study have been recorded by both the author and other scholars, and are still remembered in 2021.

### Limitations

Part of the timeframe covered by the study – the 1980s to 2000 – was marked by civil war, with massive displacement, exploitation and other human rights abuses in Sudan. It was also a period of severe repression by both successive Sudanese governments and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the rebel movement in Southern Sudan). Because they feared for their lives during this period, scholars were largely unable to conduct research in Sudan, with some areas of the country significantly under researched. There is therefore a lack of detailed secondary evidence regarding life in these places. This analysis instead relies on the accounts and views of former labour migrants and former displaced Dinka people (internally displaced people, IDPs), who fled to what was then northern Sudan. The study also excludes the views of the Rizeigat and Misseriya Arab tribes of Darfur and Kordofan, who hosted displaced Dinka people on their farms and in their villages for more than a decade. While insightful, inclusion of these views is beyond the scope of the current research.

# THE EMERGENCE OF WORK AND MONEY IN THE BORDERLAND

*'Hon rieek piny'* ('The time when the world was spoiled' or 'When the earth broke up').[5]

For centuries, the Western Dinka of Bahr el-Ghazal and the Arabic-speaking Misseriya and Rizeigat Baggara groups in southern Kordofan and Darfur shared a common and contested border. These agro-pastoralist communities were and continue to be divided by a shallow narrow river – the river Kiir (in Dinka), or the Bahr el-Arab (in Arabic).[6] Historically, the Dinka and Baggara peoples have had a complicated and complex relationship, which includes slavery and other methods of coercively recruited and controlled labour. These factors are crucial to the development of the contemporary systems of cross-border labour migration evident in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, Kordofan and Darfur.

## From slave raiding to money and markets

The earliest contact between the peoples of Bahr el-Ghazal and Darfur dates back to the era of slave raids beginning in the seventeenth century. These were conducted by raiding parties sponsored by the Darfur sultanate, with Baggara equestrians playing a key role in the raids, which mostly targeted Fertit communities in Bahr el-Ghazal.[7] There is also evidence that similar raiding targeted and was conducted in Dinka territory.[8] Among the Fertit communities in Bahr el-Ghazal, slaves were both raided and given as tribute to the state by local community leaders.[9] Many local sultans who were taught to use weapons such

5. Dinka reference to the period of violence and destruction wrought by Baggara slave raider, with translations by Luka Biong and Godfrey Lienhart, respectively. See: Martina M. Santschi, 'Encountering and Capturing Hakuma: Negotiating Statehood and Authority in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan', PhD thesis, University of Bern, 2016, 39.
6. Adams, 'The Baggara Problem', 147.
7. Luka Biong Deng, 'Famine in the Sudan: Causes, Preparedness and Response, A political, social and economic analysis of the 1998 Famine in Bahr el Ghazal', Discussion paper 369, Institute of Development Studies 1999, 36.
8. Luka Biong Deng, Famine in the Sudan', 32.
9. R.S. O'Fahey, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Dār Fūr', *Journal of African History* 14/1 (1973): 36; Santschi, 'Countering and Capturing Hakuma'.

machetes and rifles cooperated with the Baggara slave raiders, selling off members of their own communities who were considered to be bad people (mostly men). The captured slaves were used as soldiers and cultivators in Darfur, many of whom worked on farms belonging to nobles who needed to mobilize labour for their estates.[10] Enslaved women were used for domestic work and kept as concubines for the sultans and raiders.

A Turkish-Egyptian army conquered the Nile valley in 1820 and organized slave raids in the mountainous areas of Kordofan and the Blue Nile.[11] The colonial government, headquartered at Khartoum, reached Bahr el-Ghazal in the 1840s and raided for ivory and slaves. Over the following decade, the slave trade was privatized – the result of international pressure to open up markets in the Ottoman empire.[12] Private slave traders penetrated Bahr el-Ghazal and set up a network of *zeribas* (armed forts walled with thorns) from which they conducted raids. Most of their attacks were aimed at Fertit areas where the sultanate of Darfur had already raided for slaves.

The old style of seasonal raiding could not compete with the all-season forts, which were also able to target the Dinka communities living further away from the borderlands.[13] The raids caused mass destruction and displaced many people deep into the interior to avoid enslavement.[14] The new *zeriba*-based system of slave raiding was so disruptive to local peoples that it caused a crisis in agriculture and, subsequently, famine.[15] As well as abducting people, raiders stole their food, thus further contributing to the food shortages experienced by local populations.

The abduction and destruction of property in Bahr el-Ghazal by slave raiders had two key interrelated motives. First, force was used as means to get food. At the markets, Dinka and Fertit traders would not sell their food to outsiders because they were unfamiliar with money or wanted nothing to do with it. Instead, the Dinka and Fertit used a barter system as their medium of trade or exchange. Second, destruction of property was a mechanism slave raiders used to extract cheap or free labour from Dinka and Fertit communities. Depriving

10. O'Fahey, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade', 37.
11. Based in their capital in Sennar, precolonial sultanates had also raided for slaves from these same areas.
12. Peter F. M. McLoughlin, 'Economic Development and the Heritage of Slavery in the Sudan Republic', *Africa* 32/4 (1989): 8
13. Santschi, 'Countering and Capturing Hakuma', 36; Ahmad A. Sikainga, 'The Legacy of Slavery and Slave Trade in Western Bahr el Ghazal', *Northeast African Studies*, 11 (1989): 79.
14. Luka Biong Deng, 'Famine in the Sudan, Causes, Preparedness and Response: A Political, Economic and Social Analysis of the 1998 Famine in Bahr el Ghazal', IDS Discussion Paper 369, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 1999: 36.
15. Deng, 'Famine in the Sudan'; Sikainga, 'The Legacy of Slavery'', 6.

these communities of food and livestock forced them to sell their labour to raise money to buy food, which is how they became integrated into the labour market.

One reason slave raiders coerced the Dinka and Fertit to work was that they could not persuade them to work for money – an incentive these peoples did not recognize. Rather, people in Bahr el-Ghazal saw the free provision of their own labour as a reciprocal part of their kinship networks, which had always produced more than enough for survival. Other forms of labour were seen as a sacrifice of freedom. This meant that private slave raiders had to forcibly create famines and disrupt the autonomous production systems of the people they wanted to work for them. These coercive mechanisms were redeployed in the late twentieth century and are still part of governance systems in 2021.

In contrast, nineteenth century Baggara society was already exposed to money and markets. It also had an urgent need for money. Outside the slave raiding zones of the south, the Sudanese subjects of the Turkish-Egyptian regime were required to pay taxes in either money or slaves. Taxation policies pushed Baggara herders living under Turkish-Egyptian rule to participate in the slave trade. Some Baggara raiders travelled as far south as the river Jur (present-day Western Bahr el-Ghazal) to participate in these raids. Initially, the colonial government intended to export slaves to Egypt but eventually imposed heavier duties on their export. This kept slaves in Kordofan and Gezira. In turn, a new system of agriculture emerged and developed, with slaves deployed to work on rainfed land that had previously been worked by local farmers.[16] Later attempts (in the 1860s) by the Turkish-Egyptian government to stop slave trading and evict slave traders from Bahr el-Ghazal did not bear fruit.[17]

In 1885, the Mahdist revolution overthrew the Turkish-Egyptian government and took control of much of Sudan. This period coincided with the time when the Baggara lost their livestock through raids and diseases, which resulted in them moving towards sedentary agriculture and rebuilding their herds. The Baggara continued to conduct raids in Bahr el-Ghazal to capture slaves to work on their farms or to sell them in order to recover their herds.[18]

16. Janet J. Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley, 1700—1885,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990: 168.

17. Sikainga, 'The Legacy of Slavery', 83.

18. Mcloughlin, 'Economic Development and Heritage of Slavery', 11; John A. Rowe and Kjell Hødnebø, 'Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888—1890: The Mystery of the Missing Panzootic', *Sudanic Africa* 5 (1994), 160.

The British overthrew the Mahdist state in 1898. This brought about the second attempt to end slave trading after the first one (in the 1860s) by the Turkish-Egyptian government failed. While the British attempt brought to an end large-scale slave raiding, the Anglo-Egyptian colonial government tolerated domestic slavery and turned a blind eye to Baggara raids into Bahr el-Ghazal.[19] Enslaved people from Bahr el-Ghazal were either kept as labourers on Baggara farms or sold in to the riverain region where agriculture was expanding and cheap labour was needed.[20]

The first legislative attempts to abolish slavery came in the last decades of Turkish-Egyptian rule. After 1898, the new Anglo-Egyptian government enacted several anti-slavery ordinances. At the same time, the production systems of northern Sudan had been configured around slave labour. Consequently, the government quietly supported the institution of slavery, even inventing the term 'volunteer slaves' to cover up dependence on unfree labour. It was only in the 1920s that the government began taking earnest measures to end slavery, and only in 1936 that the government clearly stated slavery was illegal.[21] In this period, the government also closed off Southern Sudan provinces to trade, which reduced Baggara slave raiding in Bahr el-Ghazal.[22]

The British administrators organized tribal meetings to reconcile the Dinka and Baggara communities that had been divided by slave raiding, which improved relations between the two groups.[23] The British also mediated resource-sharing conflicts. During the dry season, for example, Misseriya and Rizeigat nomads move with their cattle to the Dinka territory south of the river Kiir in search of pastures and water. In later years, Dinka seasonal migrant labourers moved through *Dar* Misseriya and *Dar* Rizeigat (homelands of the Misseriya and Rizeigat peoples) to the farms and urban centres in the north.[24]

Baggara raiders had used slave raiding to participate in the money-based economy. Dinka and Fertit slaves from Bar el-Ghazal transformed agricultural production in Kordofan and Darfur. As slavery disappeared from agriculture in the mid-twentieth century, a new kind

19. Sikainga, 'The Legacy of Slavery', 85.
20. Mark Duffield, 'Sudan: The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Assistance – Field Evaluation Study', Report to the European Community Humanitarian Office, University of Dublin, Trinity College, 2000, 25.
21. Taj Hargey, 'Festina Lente: Slavery policy and practice in the Anglo- Egyptian Sudan', *Slavery and Abolition* 19/2 (1988): 261.
22. Mcloughlin, 'Economic Development and Heritage of Slavery', 9.
23. Sikainga, 'The Legacy of Slavery', 12.
24. Luka Biong Deng, 'Famine in the Sudan', 9.

of demand for agricultural labour emerged. From the 1930s onwards, huge government-organized cotton plantations spread across the irrigated areas between the Blue Nile and the White Nile.

From the 1930s, the British colonial government also imposed new taxes and created new markets in Bahr el-Ghazal with a two-fold aim: encouraging the circulation of money; and pushing the Dinka to commodify their labour. As in the past, coercion was needed to get Dinka people to participate in the money economy. In 1925, the British government introduced a poll tax on adult males in South Sudan that was designed to be paid in cash. Although in-kind taxation continued in districts where money had not spread widely, under the 1925 Tribute Ordinance the new cash taxes provided an impetus towards monetization.[25] In the mid-1930s, the colonial government subsequently raised taxes and enforced restrictions on barter. This was an attempt to encourage the Dinka to produce and sell cattle and grain so as to raise money for tax, and to encourage the circulation of money in Bahr el-Ghazal.[26]

The British also encouraged local Dinka (through their chiefs) to sell their livestock, grain and other produce to government officials and foreign traders operating in Bahr el-Ghazal.[27] These policies drew the Dinka into commodity markets and later motivated them to produce surplus crops such as nuts, sesame seeds and forest goods (for example, lulu oils), which were in high demand in the north. The production of surplus, rather than of sufficiency, became necessary for area residents to meet their tax obligations. In order to attract more Dinka to the money economy, the government took further measures by distributing sesame seeds and constructing oil presses in rural areas to bring the markets closer to Dinka producers. This saw trade boom in the 1940s.[28] At this time, the government also opened supervised cattle auctions and sawmills in Bahr el-Ghazal, with local labour recruited through chiefs. In order to make the Dinka accept working in the sawmills, they were exempt from paying taxes and their labour was paid. The sawmill workers used their pay to buy cattle in the auctions.[29]

25. H. A. L. Tunley. 'Revenue from land and crops', in *Agriculture in the Sudan,* ed. J. D. Tothill, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948, 201. The 1925 Tribute Ordinance was officially imposed in the South in 1929 to replace the traditional taxation system that the colonial administration had introduced in 1903. Between 1903 and 1928 taxes in the South were collected in-kind through grain, livestock and labour. The 1925 Tribute Ordinance abolished tax in-kind and introduced hut tax collected in cash.
26. Yath Awan Yath, 'The Effect of Differential Access to Accommodation on the Dinka Migrants in Khartoum – The Example of Gereif West', *GeoJournal* 25/1 (1991): 20—21; Kocjok, 'The Northern Bahr al-Ghazal', 310.
27. Kocjok, 'The Northern Bahr el-Ghazal', 310—311.
28. Kocjok, 'The Northern Bahr el-Ghazal', 336.
29. Kocjok, 'The Northern Bahr el-Ghazal', 337; Yath, 'The Effect of Differential Access', 21.

Monetization policies began with coercion but then gradually motivated some Dinka to participate in the money economy. By the 1950s, a few Dinka had migrated to the enormous commercial cotton plantation in Gezira (in central Sudan) to sell their labour, with these Dinka migrants often coming from cattle-poor families. The Sudanese census immediately after independence in 1955 found a number of Southern Sudanese migrant labourers in the Gezira agricultural scheme, including Dinka from Bahr el-Ghazal.[30] A 1980 study of migrant workers underpins this: it recognizes that migrants from then Southern Sudan started to appear in Khartoum in 1950s.[31] In the 1960s, commercial agriculture began to expand. Investment moved towards cereal cultivation in the rainfed areas of South Kordofan, Darfur and (most of all) Gedaref, on the Ethiopian border. This shift proved key for the rapid transition to labour commodification in Bahr el-Ghazal.

Although some Dinka migrated to Gezira and Khartoum to find work during the 1950s, many maintained their traditional economic activities, which were based on transhumant animal husbandry, agriculture, wild food gathering and fishing. Their primary system of exchange remained rooted in forms of (non-monetized) barter. Not widespread, wage labour was still seen by many Dinka as a form of unfree work. Coercive tax policies and restrictions on barter changed this: They were used to force people to sell what they produced and commodify their labour.

After the 1960s, then, people began to trade for money at home and migrate far away for work, drawn in particular to the huge agricultural labour markets growing in the rainfed land along the border between north and south.[32] As money became increasingly important to Dinka life, labour migrants often used the money they earned in distant labour markets to participate in the cattle economy back home. The cattle economy was broadly oriented towards social objectives, however; for example, the payment of bridewealth. It was not oriented towards profit making. As such, many Dinka people (mostly men) were caught between two vastly different economic systems – leaving to sell their labour in distant for-profit markets in order to participate in the socially networked production system back home.

30. Yath, 'The Effect of Differential Access', 21.

31. Elwathig Mohamed Hag Elkhidir Ali Kameir, 'Migrant workers in an urban situation: A comparative study of factory workers and building sites labourers in Khartoum (Sudan)', PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1980, 43.

32. Luka Biong Deng, 'Livelihood diversification and civil war: Dinka communities in Sudan's civil war', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 4/3 (2010): 9; Nicki Kindersley and Joseph Diing Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods and Militarized Labour in South Sudan's Borderlands*, Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, 2019, 10.

## Dinka people begin to commodify their own labour

Several factors converged to encourage Dinka people to begin to commodify their own labour. In 1956, immediately after Sudanese independence, commercial agriculture and the demand for waged agricultural labour spread across the rainfed land of Darfur and South Kordofan. This happened just as Dinka communities had begun to be exposed to the wage market through the colonial government. It also coincided with the beginning of labour migration to Gezira and Khartoum. As the demand for wage labour spread in Darfur and South Kordofan, the Dinka slowly integrated migration for wages into a new seasonal repertoire of livelihoods.[33] Poor families would permit male household members to migrate and sell their labour on farms in Darfur and Kordofan in exchange for cash. The earnings would be used to buy essential goods in town before returning to their rural villages or cattle camps. They also invested their money in buying cattle to build private herds.[34]

This period of transition towards a contemporary wage economy was initially challenged by Dinka tradition. Though paid work had growing significance and was spreading throughout Dinka communities, nonetheless it was still perceived as undignified – a form of *loony* (slavery) – especially for young men. That is, sacrificing independence to work for another person (usually another man) who controlled that labour and hence independence in exchange for money was regarded as an indignity among many Dinka, given their lack of exposure to money and its usefulness. Waged work did appeal to some young Dinka men, however. These were the *abur*, young men whose families had no cattle or no daughters/sisters to be married off to get cattle as bridewealth. *Abur* sought undignified wage labour in order to build herds of cattle for their own marriages. To do so, they migrated out of Dinka areas to work in the far away areas of Darfur and Kordofan (which were closer than Gezira), where they could avoid the stigma attached to wage labour.[35] These young men acquired cattle herds to reclaim status in their communities. In Dinka society, social status or standing for men is determined by the number of cattle he owns.

The early generation of Dinka migrants chose to go to the north for work but they continued to see little difference between wage labour and slavery. A song called *'The Cow and the Thing*

33. Kameir, 'Migrant workers in an Urban Situation', 66.

34. Lual Achuek Lual Deng, 'The Abyei Development Project: A case study of cattle herders in the Sudan Project', PhD thesis, Wisconsin: University of Madison, 1984, 62.

35. Francis M Deng, 'The Cow and the Thing Called "What": Dinka Cultural Perspectives on Wealth and Poverty', *Journal of International Affairs* 52/1 (1998): 106. The song referenced in the title of this article was recorded by Francis M Deng.

*Called "What"'* describes how early Dinka wage migrants understood themselves on the farms or cities in the north:

*I have become a slave,*
*I am labouring in a foreign land,*
*Cracking my backbone like the trap of a captured bird.*
*I worked in a cotton field until my hair turned grey,*
*It was not the grey of age;*
*It was the bitter pain of the words in our heads,*
*As we wasted away in a foreign land.*
*O Marial, what I have found, I will not tell.*[36]

Migrant aspirations to build independent wealth through what society perceived to be undignified means was encouraged by Dinka sayings such as: *'Adhëng wuonde akuc adhëng wundet* [A noble man of one tribe does not know the noble man of another tribe]'; or *'Raan ace dhëng wuot karou* [A man cannot hold his dignity in two different places]'.[37] These two phrases mean that the dignity and nobility a young man is only present and recognized within his own community. In other words, these phrases express the sentiment that no matter how inferior a young man felt tilling land on a farm far away, he would continue to have dignity and be accorded respect when he returned home.

Seasonality helped these early migrant Dinka workers negotiate the problem of indignity. It also played a role in the process of labour commodification among Dinka communities. In Darfur and Kordofan, farms were cleared of bushes and trees in May and June; wells were dug in the dry season for people and livestock to use; cultivation started in July; weeding took place in August; and crops were harvested in October.[38] In Bahr el-Ghazal, farms were cleared in April and cultivation happened in May and June (earlier than in Darfur and Kordofan).[39] The different climate and agricultural calendars between Bahr el-Ghazal, and Darfur and Kordofan encouraged labour migration from the former to the latter. Once Dinka labour migrants had cultivated their own farms in Bahr el-Ghazal, they then left for Darfur and Kordofan, walking north for several hundred kilometres in July. They worked

36. Deng, 'The Cow and the Thing Called "What"', 117.
37. Deng, 'The Cow and the Thing Called "What"', 117.
38. Elke Grawert, 'Impacts of Male Outmigration on Women: Case Study of Kutum/Northern Darfur/Sudan', Discussion Paper No. 18, Sudan Economy Research Group, University of Bremen, 1990, 11.
39. Interview with Garang Akol and Bol, elder and former labour migrant displaced in the 1980s to Khartoum, Marol market, 28 July 2020.

as migrants for a short time to acquire money before returning to their families and cattle camps in Southern Sudan at the end of the harvest season.[40]

Migrant workers who travelled to Darfur and Kordofan in July did piece work – completing a day of work for a day of pay. Other payment contracts, such as sharecropping, emerged later. Wol, a seasonal labour migrant, explains how, 'Sharecroppers have to go in early May, when farm clearing starts.'[41] The emergence of sharecropping affected household farming in Bahr el-Ghazal. That is, under the sharecropping system, Dinka migrant workers had to leave for the north before they could cultivate their own household farms. This served to shift their lives away from farms in Bahr el-Ghazal to the farms in the north, where they were seasonal migrant labour. In the 1960s, as the First Sudanese Civil War spread across Bahr el-Ghazal, some migrant farm labourers began to settle in Darfur and Kordofan.[42]

The First Sudanese Civil War saw a decline in cattle populations across Southern Sudan. This was the result of a combination of factors, including: a decline in veterinary services; the resurgence of cattle raiding due to Southern Sudanese communities being at odds with one another because of the war; and severe flooding.[43] Baggara groups also raided for cattle in Bahr el-Ghazal. The main protagonists of the civil war – the government army and the rebel forces known as the *Anyanya* – may also have been implicated in these raids.[44] A song from Warawar provides some evidence of *Anyanya* involvement in raiding Dinka cattle: 'Those who rebelled are finishing cattle in Alel. They are people called "*Anyanya*". … They have tasted the deliciousness of beef. … *Anyanya* has become the second anthrax disease to our cattle.'[45] Regardless of who was responsible, cattle raiding changed the fortunes of families. Young men from households that lost their herds had to find new ways to get cattle in order to amass the necessary bridewealth to get married. Families who were unable to recover their raided herds allowed their sons to migrate north to find paid work so they could return to buy cattle (and eventually marry).

40. Deng, 'Livelihood diversification and civil war', 9.
41. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.
42. Ushari Ahmed Mahmoud, and Suleiman Ali Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre: Slavery in the Sudan', Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, 1987.
43. Douglas H Johnson, 'Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: The Twentieth Century Expansion of the Pastoral "Common Economy"', *Journal of African History* 30/3 (1989): 482; Douglas H Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* Oxford: Clarendon, 1994: 308—310.
44. David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine, A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in South-western Sudan 1983—89,* Oxford: James Currey, 2008, 41.
45. A song recorded from a women's traditional dance group in Warawar, Aweil East county, July 2021.

The slave raids of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries destroyed communities in Bahr el-Ghazal and deprived them of their wealth. They also set the pattern for twentieth century labour migration. People moved from areas where agriculture was not oriented towards surplus and profit, to areas where agricultural surplus and profit were growing in importance. In the twentieth century, attempts by the colonial government to monetize Dinka and Fertit societies and to commodify the labour of Dinka and Fertit people added further momentum to migration. Changes to cattle systems during the First Sudanese Civil War pushed even more young men towards migration for paid labour. Once again, migrant journeys departed from less developed zones, upended by conflict, and arrived in developing zones, where the demand for paid workers who were landless was spreading.

# THE INVENTION OF LABOUR MIGRATION AMONGST THE DINKA

The 1960s and1970s were when the Dinka transitioned towards the commodification of their labour. During this period, seasonal wage labour migration to the agricultural plantations in Darfur and Kordofan became a well-established pattern in Bahr el-Ghazal. Initially, many people challenged the practice, or considered it to be something only young men without cattle would do. Towards the end of the 1960s, however, labour migration had become an accepted part of the livelihood strategies of young Dinka men. From the beginning, labour migration also reflected the given gender order in Dinka society. As indicated, most migrants were young men from families without enough cattle. Subsequent labour migration patterns also reflect changing gender orders in Dinka areas.

## Seasonal labour migration

In the 1960s, wages were the main factor that pushed labour migrants from Bahr el-Ghazal to Darfur and Kordofan. War also later played a role. The First Sudanese Civil War dates back to a 1955 garrison mutiny in Torit. For the next 15 years, the rebellion spread across the country, spearheaded by the *Anyanya* (an armed group that unified disparate rebel factions), finally reaching Bahr el-Ghazal in 1963.[46] The First Sudanese Civil War led to cattle raiding and famine, which pushed some Dinka people to sell their grain or migrate north to sell their labour.[47]

At the time, the counterinsurgency strategies of the Khartoum government were partly based on the use of local militias. This approach was similar to how slave raiders colluded with local sultans to assist them in slave abductions during the nineteenth century. The government armed local traditional leaders, such as chief Reec Diing of Atokthou, chief Riiny Lual of Ayat and chief Deng Majok of Abyei, among others, to fight against the *Anyanya*

46. Scopas S. Poggo. *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs and Israelis in the South Sudan, 1955—1972,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009, 64, 123.

47. Keen, *The Benefits of Famine,* 41, 50.

and protect their own villages from occupation by the rebels. These legally recognized local armed civilian militias were collectively referred to as *aras watani* (Arabic, *ḥaras waṭanī*, or national guard).[48]

This counterinsurgency strategy created deep political divisions among Dinka people in Bahr el-Ghazal, with supporters on both sides of the conflict – *Anyanya* and government. Traditional Dinka leaders were targeted and killed by both parties to the conflict. Fighting between the government army (national guard) and the rebels displaced people from some parts of Bahr el-Ghazal, with Dinka people fleeing their villages in various directions. Some Dinka villages were targeted by government forces for their alleged support of the *Anyanya*, which displaced people to *Anyanya*-controlled areas inside Bahr el-Ghazal. A small number of Dinka *aras watani* were also displaced to South Darfur when they were accused of collusion and targeted by *Anyanya* fighters.[49]

One example of a Dinka leader in the *aras watani* is Abdel Bagi Ayii, originally from Madhol village in Aweil East County. He is among the Dinka traditional leaders who fled the *Anyanya* attacks and moved to Meiram in Kordofan – one of the southernmost settlements in Kordofan. Meiram is located about 20 km north of the river Kiir (Bahr el-Arab), on the border between the present-day states of West Kordofan and East Darfur. With the help of the Sudanese government, Abdel Bagi Ayii formed his own ethnic militia in Aweil, the capital of Bahr el-Ghazal, to fight the *Anyanya*. Throughout the civil war, Abdel Bagi Ayii displaced the *Anyanya* sympathizers, and controlled and protected his home village, along with part of Aweil East from an *Anyanya* invasion.[50] Gradually, he used his power in the borderlands to reshape agricultural labour, accumulate wealth and win state power.

Dinka people had undergone many decades of forced displacement as a result of nineteenth century slave raids. They usually fled southwards to the forests and pastures of the bush – away from the northern areas from where many slave raiders came and to which slaves were taken. In the second half of the twentieth century, people from Southern Sudan still fled to the bush in response to violence. Some of them, however, began fleeing towards the towns and markets to the north, too, settling there as internally displaced persons (IDPs).[51] This displacement followed the routes of the well-established seasonal labour migration to Darfur

48. Nicki Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship in Famine and War: A Study of the Former Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, South Sudan,* London: Rift Valley Institute, 2018, 15—16.
49. Interview with Paul Diing, an elder and former labour migrant before the second war, Majok, 26 July 2020.
50. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship,* 16.
51. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship,* 16.

and Kordofan. The First Sudanese Civil War thus pushed displaced Dinka people northwards for the first time and these displaced people were the first Dinka to settle permanently in South Darfur and Kordofan – and to supply year-round agricultural labour needed on the farms.[52] Seasonal labour migration also continued, despite the risks posed by civil war. As more and more Dinka were displaced, they found themselves increasingly exposed to wage labour, which sped up the commodification of their labour.[53]

Although wages and access to money were the main motivations for labour migrants in the 1960s and 1970s, in general they quickly became discontented with the wages they were offered by farmers in Darfur and Kordofan. Their dissatisfaction fits into the wider view of exploitative agricultural development in Sudan and its dependency on cheap labour from its peripheries. Paul, an 80-year-old man who first started labour migration to Darfur in 1961, expresses his dissatisfaction with wages in Darfur during the 1960s, an opinion shared by other migrants at the time:

> The work we did was farming. We cultivated a *makhamas* for five *qirsh* [or *piasters*; unit of currency]. A *makhamas* was measured at a length of 30 metres and a width of 20 metres. That larger area was cultivated for only five *piastres* but they gave us food in abundance.[54]

These poor wages served to impede a quick transition to labour commodification in Bahr el-Ghazal after the slave trade era. The problem of low wages was compounded by cases of wage theft by farmers, which were also common. Migrants understood this as a continued Baggara attempt to indirectly maintain slavery in Bahr el-Ghazal. Paul continues:

> Some farmers were not honest. For example, a farmer put us on his farm to work it in 1963. We cultivated more than 10 *makhamas* and when he saw that we needed more money, he escaped without our knowledge. His agent later informed us that the boss had travelled to Khartoum and was going to proceed to Saudi Arabia. So there was nothing we could do but leave. This is not far from slavery under the Arabs.[55]

Though migrants had access to local justice in both Darfur and Kordofan, the Arabic language was a barrier. This hindered many employees whose wages were stolen to sue their

52. Mahmoud and Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre', 11; interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant, Majok, 26 July 2020.
53. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant, Majok, 26 July 2020.
54. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant, Majok, 26 July 2020.
55. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant, Majok, 26 July 2020.

employers. This language barrier kept early wage migrants vulnerable, despite the existence of a functioning justice system in Darfur.

In the 1970s, as labour migration from Bahr el-Ghazal to Darfur and Kordofan significantly increased, two factors contributed to a change in the attitudes of Dinka communities towards paid work. First, the First Sudanese Civil War came to an end in 1972, when the new government of Gaafar Nimeiri signed the Addis Ababa peace agreement with the rebels in Southern Sudan. The new peace agreement changed the political environment in the south and allowed for a resumption of transport links with the north. Bahr el-Ghazal was connected to the north by rivers, roads and a railway that had already reached Wau in 1961. During the First Sudanese Civil War, however, road and river transportation services deteriorated, and the railway was mostly used for military purposes.[56] After 1972, migrants travelling from Bahr el-Ghazal first took a train from Wau to Babanusa in Kordofan, and then found work on the farms and towns around there, continued to Khartoum or changed trains to travel to Nyala in South Darfur.[57] In addition to spurring an increase in the number of Dinka labour migrants to the farms and cities in the north, the Addis Ababa peace accord expanded the access northern traders had to Southern Sudan.

Second, the new government adopted a series of five-year plans aimed at expanding agriculture. The demand for labour rose and wages increased, making seasonal farm labour more lucrative for migrants.[58] For example, wages per *makhamas* of cultivated land area increased from SDP 5 *piastres* in the 1960s to SDP 25 *piastres* in the 1970s.[59] These increased

56. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development [IBRD], 'Report of a Special Mission on the Economic Development of South Sudan', Washington DC: IBRD, 1973: 31—33.

57. IBRD, 'Report of a Special Mission'; Interview with Bol, former wage labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in the 1980s, Marol market, 28 July 2020.

58. Interview with two elders, Paul, former labour migrant, Majok, 26 July 2020 and Bol, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, 28 July 2020.

59. This paper uses five currencies that were used initially in Sudan – later in Sudan and South Sudan during the time covered by the study. They include: the SDP (Sudanese Pound), the official currency of Sudan that was adopted and replaced the Egyptian Pound after independence in 1956; the SDD (Sudanese Dinar) which replaced the SDP in 1992 as the new official currency. Though the reason is unclear, the name suggests that it was linked to the Islamization policy of the Sudan; the Sudanese Pound (SDP), the new currency imposed by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to replace Sudanese Dinar in 2005. Dinar was the least popular currency and it was never accepted in certain parts of the South, such as Rumbek and Yei, which served as the SPLA's (Sudan People's Liberation Movement) strongholds; the South Sudan Pound (SSP), the official currency of South Sudan introduced after independence in 2011; and lastly, the Sudanese Pound (SDP), the official currency of the Sudan introduced after the South seceded in 2011. Which SDP the writer means is dependent and identified by the time series used. Interview with two elders, Paul, former wage labour migrant before second war, Majok, 26 July 2020 and Bol, former wage labour migrant and war displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, 28 July 2020.

wage increments were a contributing factor for increased migration to Darfur, Kordofan and other areas in the north. Even young Dinka men whose parents had cattle and who did not need to travel to look for paid work in the early 1960s were encouraged by the expansion of agriculture and rising wages to travel to work for cash.

Dinka communities consequently began to review their traditional attitudes towards the dignity of paid work, with the generation of migrants during the 1970s intensifying the commodification of their labour.[60] When asked whether it was still thought to be indignity to work for money in the north in the 1970s, Bol, a seventy-year-old man who started labour migration in 1974, replies:

> How? You work with your energy and you are paid money, nothing as such. That belief [the indignity of paid labour] is very old and it is from a time when people did not know money and had nothing to do with money. This was not in our time. We were like buses. Do you not pay to get the bus to take you where you want to go? So that was it. We worked. We did what farmers wanted us to do and then [they] paid the money we wanted, and we went back home.[61]

The availability of money, which the Dinka found useful for buying cattle and other essential items in towns, resulted in a re-assessment of traditional attitudes and encouraged people to integrate seasonal labour migration in their livelihoods. Though cattle and agriculture continued to remain the main source of livelihoods, wage labour in neighbouring Darfur and Kordofan became part of the economic activity of people in Dinka communities. Migration for work in the north became a viable means for young men to earn a livelihood, through which they acquired their own money to spend on their needs and to buy cattle to expand their family herds.

Most Dinka men who migrated north to South Darfur and Kordofan during the agricultural season took up casual agricultural work, which included cultivation, weeding and harvesting of millet, groundnuts and other crops.[62] In the post-harvest dry season, Dinka labour migrants threshed grains, worked in bean factories (removing bean pods), engaged in

60. Joseph Diing Majok, *War, Migration and Work: Changing Social Relations in the South Sudan Borderlands,* Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, 2019: 7.

61. Interview with Bol, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, Marol market, 28 July 2020.

62. Mark Duffield, 'Aid and Complicity, the Case of Displaced Southerners in Northern Sudan', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40/1 (2002): 15.

brickmaking and took temporary menial jobs in towns such as fetching grass for building, extracting water melon seeds, digging latrines, clearing farms and other similar work.[63]

## Labour migration and the family

Every growing season, after members of a household cultivated their own farms, adult men from each household in Bahr el-Ghazal villages would divide up their various household responsibilities among themselves. The oldest son tended to stay home to tend to the crops, including harvesting and storing them at the end of the growing season. This son also looked after the elders in the family.

Among the younger brothers, one stayed behind in the cattle camp to look after the cattle, which moved in a designated circuit to reach pastures that were collectively owned by the clan. The cattle were also collectively owned and kept by the clan. Even young men whose parents had no cattle were expected to stay in cattle camps, alongside the sons of rich clan members, to look after the wealth of the clan. Among the other younger brothers (from each extended family) who did not look after cattle, some remained in the village to engage in collective farming, a process locally referred to as *nafir* (in Arabic) or *kut* (in Dinka). Other brothers migrated to work in Darfur and Kordofan to accumulate money and return to invest their wage incomes in cattle. They rotated these two roles. Paul explains this rotation in relation to cattle keeping:

> Brothers divided responsibilities among themselves. The oldest brother stayed at home and supervised both the household and cattle in the camp, and the rest divided into two. One stayed in the cattle camp to look after cattle and the rest migrated to work in Darfur. The following year, the one who migrated last year would stay in the camp and the others went.[64]

Similar patterns of seasonal migration, where a household sends some of its members to find work elsewhere and return later, are observed in other studies.[65]

63. Mahmoud and Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre', 11.
64. Mahmoud and Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre', 11.
65. For Example, a 1980 study of Al-Kutum, North Darfur underpins how the rural poor integrated labour migration into their subsistence agricultural production and animal husbandry; see: Grawert, 'The Impacts of Male Outmigration', 13.

## Migrant labour to acquire cattle

The primary aim of the labour migrants of the 1960s and 1970s was to acquire money in order to buy cattle to enlarge family herds or buy cattle to start herds, in case a family had no cattle.[66] Migrants also brought back essential items as gifts such as salt, sugar and clothes to family members who remained at home. These items were rare or expensive in local markets in Southern Sudan. Migrants stayed for a short time working on farms in South Darfur or Kordofan, and returned to their villages and cattle camps after harvest. Other young men migrated after harvest time in Bahr el-Ghazal to work in towns in the north during the dry season months. As Paul, an elder who migrated as a seasonal wage labourer in Darfur throughout the 1960s, explains: 'The purpose we migrated for work was to make money to buy cattle and clothes for our families. The first time I went to Darfur for work, when I came back, I bought my grandmother an item of clothing, and I bought two cows and a goat.'[67]

The investment of cash acquired through wage labour in the north in cattle had salutary inter-generational consequences. That is, purchasing cattle through wage labour was both the sole interest and primary expectation of clan elders at this time. As such, meeting this expectation by buying cattle served to prevent conflict between clan elders and the younger generation of labour migrants in the 1960s and 1970s. This system of migration was disrupted, however, when the Second Sudanese Civil War broke out in 1983, tearing apart Dinka social structures and aspirations.

## The journey to Darfur

In the period preceding 1970, most areas in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal were inaccessible. Not only were roads poorly maintained but they were heavily used in the conflict between the government and the *Anyanya* rebels. Migration happened mostly in July, during the rainy season. By this time, the roads were often flooded, making it harder for vehicles to travel through potholes and avoid other obstacles rendered invisible in the flood water. This made

66. This study describes a process in Dinka areas that is similar to one documented by Hutchinson, who describes how migrant labour also transformed Nuer society in the 1970s. Before the migrant labour system arrived in Nuer areas, young men needing cattle for marriage had to acquire them through kinship networks – mainly their uncles but also other kin members. This dependence on their uncles and other kin members to acquire bridewealth deepened the kinship networks to which young Nuer men belonged. In contrast, being able to buy cattle with wages reduced this dependence, thus weakening social bonds. In other words, this oriented the Nuer economy outwards, dissolved (or at least weakened) social ties and made Nuer people more dependent on the wider world. See: Sharon Hutchinson, 'The cattle of money and the cattle of girls among the Nuer, 1930-83', *American Ethnologist,* 19/2 (1992), 294-316.

67. Interview with James, former labour migrant, Marol Market, 4 August 2020.

the journey risky for those travelling with transport but especially for those travelling by foot, such as labour migrants.

Labour migrants from Bahr el-Ghazal walked on foot in small groups (about six people) mostly made up of cousins leaving the same village at the same time. Among these migrant groups, they would select one or two people who could speak Arabic to act as translators for the rest while in the north, where the business language was always Arabic. Most migrants did not speak Arabic but instead relied on translators to negotiate wages and other (legal or official) matters, as necessary.[68]

The groups of migrants walked across the river Kiir for a period of one week, and through open country towards Abu Muthariq, a settlement located about 100 km north of the border.[69] They carried their food with them, on their backs, and often also had wood for cooking with them.[70] Fire was an important tool – for cooking and for nighttime protection against wild animals. Migrants lit a fire around the entire group, enclosing themselves and scaring off wild animals while they slept.[71] Some migrants are believed to have been eaten by wild animals in the forest – particularly those who travelled in small numbers. Migrants also faced the risks of snake and mosquito bites, as they did not have mosquito nets.

## Women and migration

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the customs and traditions of the collective survival and animal keeping of the Dinka people remained strong. Dinka pastoralism was oriented not towards individual profit but towards social goals – maintaining kinship ties through the bridewealth system, which also helped maintain the traditional or customary gender order. According to Dinka elders, this is the most peaceful period of time they can presently recall. It was, however, also a period of strong social control of women by men (especially clan and community elders) in Bahr el-Ghazal.

68. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant to Darfur, Majok, 26 July 2020; Interview with Bol, elder and former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, Marol Market, 28 July 2020.
69. Abu Muthariq is located on the road which runs through the sparsely populated Bahr al-Arab locality (now part of East Darfur state), between Aweil, the capital of present-day Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Ed-Da'ein, the capital of present-day East Darfur state and Nyala, the capital of present-day South Darfur state.
70. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant to Darfur, Majok, 26 July 2020; Interview with Bol, elder and former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, Marol Market, 28 July 2020.
71. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant to Darfur, Majok, 26 July 2020; Interview with Bol, elder and former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, Marol Market, 28 July 2020.

One overview of agricultural labour migration in Africa argues that much rural-to-rural migration was female: 'Studies focusing at the rural end, or utilizing survey and census data, conclude that rural-to-rural migration, much of it female, is in fact the dominant form of migration in Africa.'[72] It may also be the case that rural-to-rural migration is also the primary form of migration from Bahr el-Ghazal in the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, most migrants went to agricultural plantations in rural areas in Darfur and Kordofan. Contrary to the conclusion above, however, it seems unlikely that women dominated rural-to-rural migration from Bahr el-Ghazal. During the 1960s and 1970s in Bahr el-Ghazal, women were not allowed to migrate for work as men could. Instead, they were expected to stay at home in the villages to care for children, look after the small livestock kept in the *luak* (Dinka; cattle byre) and cultivate household farms, including taking care of the crops that were planted.[73]

While the majority remained at home, in fact a few women were permitted by clan elders to travel and migrate during the 1960s and 1970s. They could only do so under specific conditions and after the issue was discussed by members of the extended family. Women who were most likely to get the permission of elders to travel were those with health issues seeking treatment in Nyala, South Darfur, which was the closest urban centre with essential medical services. Women travelling for health reasons were always accompanied by their husbands or a close male kin member. Men who migrated to the north, stayed for many years and never returned to their wives in the villages were allowed to have their wives join them for a specified amount of time. This, too, required discussion and agreement on the part of clan elders, as well as a close cousin to accompany the wife in question. Women who travelled for medical reasons were expected to return to their homes as soon as they received treatment. Those who travelled to husbands who were unable to return to their home villages were expected to return after they became pregnant (their reason for travelling in the first place). To ensure that a woman returned, children were not permitted to travel with their mothers and were instead looked after at home by a close aunt and uncle in her absence.[74]

Not every woman who migrated sought permission from men. According to Dinka customs, women who fell out with their husbands and divorced were consequently isolated by members of their extended families and regarded as prostitutes. To avoid the anxiety

72. Aderanti Adepoju, An Overview of Rural Migration and Agricultural Labour Force Structure in Africa', *African Population Studies* (1988): 8.

73. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant to Darfur, Majok, 26 July 2020.

74. Interviews and discussion with three elders, Paul, Akec and Bol – interviewed separately in July 2020. They gave a similar account of the conditions under which women were allowed to migrate in the period preceding the second Sudan civil war.

and hardship of being social outcasts, such women escaped or eloped with young labour migrants, moving with them to Darfur or Kordofan, where they could live the rest of their lives.

This customary system of control over women dramatically changed as a result of the displacement brought about by wars and famines of the 1980s and 1990s. Paul describes the Dinka male perspective on these changes:

> There were no more women that migrated in our time [1960s and 1970s]. The few women that migrated were those who broke up with their husbands and eloped with another migrant. So it was those regarded as prostitutes by the community who migrated to the north. But later, poverty and war changed the traditional pattern of migration to Darfur. More women began to migrate to the north alone or with their husbands. In some cases, it could be a husband asking his wife to move with him to the north. This is a result of hunger. When we had more cattle and food, women seldom decided to dissolve marriages or even migrate but when war took all cattle and brought poverty, women began to force their husbands who are poor to migrate or even abandoned them when they refused. In the north, women developed a bad culture. A woman could leave her husband if he had no money and go look for another man who had money. Even currently, the same culture is here now in the villages. The wives of the poor young men look at the wives of those in the USA [living and working in United States] as women enjoying better lives. So, such thinking makes them susceptible to any evil acts.[75]

In the decade of peace before the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983—2005) money began slowly transforming the lives of Dinka people in Bahr el-Ghazal. Young men sold their labour and used their wages to buy cattle for marriage. The gender order was changing. Men had the privilege of controlling wealth in the households – migrating to acquire money. They used control over resources to control women, along with decision-making around migration. When the Second Sudanese Civil War began, displacement devastated Dinka communities. But displacement proved to offer a limited form of liberation to women. The wars and famines of the 1980s displaced women and forced them to take independent decisions and choices – exposing them to the wage labour market as workers on farms or in homes, restaurants or markets workers. Some brewed alcohol to sell to migrant workers – alcohol became an important coping strategy for migrants. Women's new autonomy meant that they could even take decisions to divorce husbands and marry men of their choice.[76]

75. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant to Darfur, Majok, 26 July 2020.
76. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

# HOW WAR TRANSFORMED THE BORDERLAND ECONOMY AND GOVERNANCE

The start of the Second Sudanese Civil War is often dated to the Bor mutiny in 1983, which was linked to the collapse of the 1972 peace agreement that had created the first Southern-led government in Southern Sudan. The peace agreement fell apart in 1983 when Nimeiri abolished the unified Southern Regional Government and divided the south into three regions. This decision was linked to a wider political, economic and ecological crisis that was implicated in a new kind of Baggara raiding in the south.

## Cross-border raiding and the creation of the *murahleen*

Although the 1983 Bor mutiny is often taken as the start of the civil war, it was preceded by smaller local rebellions. One such rebellion against the Sudanese government started in Bahr el-Ghazal in 1982. Ill-equipped fighters from *Anyanya II* (rebels linked to an emerging groups of mutineers based in Ethiopia) tried to resist the better armed Baggara raiders who were pushing into Dinka areas at a time when famine was looming over their own communities in Darfur.[77] In response, the Sudan government mobilized young men from the Misseriya and Rizeigat Baggara groups into the *murahleen* (Arabic; mobile people) tribal militia, using them as a counterinsurgency force to suppress the rebellion in Bahr el-Ghazal.[78] The government further armed the *murahleen* to conduct raids on Dinka villages suspected of supporting *Anyanya II* and, later, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). These *murahleen* militias were licensed to loot Dinka livestock and food as their rewards. This was one part of a policy to uproot the Dinka and erode what the Khartoum government perceived as the SPLA Dinka support base.[79]

The license to raid Dinka systems of production was the main motivation for Baggara attacks on Bahr el-Ghazal. Baggara communities were partly motivated by the immense

77. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 17.
78. Kindersley and Majok, 'Monetized Livelihoods', 10.
79. Duffield, 'Sudan: The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Assistance', 25.

pressures on their own systems of production. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, they lost much of their pasturelands to expanding commercial agriculture. They also lost most of their livestock to diseases and desertification. The climate catastrophe of the 1970s in North Darfur caused population migration into South Darfur, which raised the level of vulnerability in South Darfur and contributed to the 1984 famine.[80] This famine left many Baggara destitute. In the years before the Second Sudanese Civil War, some Baggara people also sold their cattle to Dinka communities. Later on, these factors pressured Baggara (who were equally poor) to exploit the labour of Dinka who were internally displaced persons (IDPs), and in some cases, even to extract forced or slave labour from them.

When the civil war began in 1983, Baggara militias started raiding in Southern Sudan, with the help of Baggara traders. These itinerant traders had in-depth knowledge gained in the years before the war, when many of them had supplied Dinka villages (which had very few markets) with basic goods. They knew these villages, and the pastures where cattle were kept, very well. When the civil war began, these traders joined the Baggara militias to lead raiders to the villages in the Dinka hinterlands to steal cattle and food.[81]

The war consequently affected existing contacts and relationships, cutting off communication between the Dinka communities of Bahr el-Ghazal and the Baggara communities of western and other parts of Sudan because these communities were pitted against each other in their support for different warring parties. This also affected existing seasonal labour migration patterns in the first years of the war, which reduced the Dinka labour supply to the north. Young Dinka men migrating for paid work were afraid to travel to Darfur or Kordofan as they were targeted, harassed or even killed on their way to the farms.[82]

The Baggara also felt the disruption caused by the civil war. Their attacks on Dinka villages meant a stop to trading their goods in Southern Sudan. This also created labour shortages on their farms and affected markets. The shortage of labour in Darfur and Kordofan farms in the early years of the Second Sudanese Civil War is believed to be the reason for the intensification of violent Baggara attacks on Dinka communities and their forced displacement to the north in the mid-1980s.83 That is, Dinka people were intentionally

80. Susanne Jaspars and Margie Buchanan-Smith, 'Darfuri migration from Sudan to Europe: From displacement to despair', Joint study between Research Evidence Facility (REF) and Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2018, 29.

81. John Ryle and Kwaja Yai Kuol, 'Displaced South Sudanese in Northern Sudan with special reference to South Darfur and Kordofan', *Save the Children Fund,* 1989, 10.

82. Deng, 'Livelihood diversification', 9.

83. Deng, 'Livelihood diversification', 9.

displaced to supply Baggara traders and farmers in Darfur and Kordofan with a cheap labour force.

Between 1985 and 1987, violence increased across Bahr el-Ghazal. During this two-year period, many Dinka families lost their cattle wealth to war and saw their houses set ablaze. Women and children were abducted, and men were targeted and killed.[84] Having lost everything they owned, including the cattle wealth upon which they depended for their livelihoods and social status, these households made the permanent involuntary migration to IDP camps in the north in search of protection and food.[85]

Many families, particularly men and women, separated. Women, children and the elderly (including older men) went north to the IDP camps, while many men and male youth headed east to Ethiopia to join the SPLA.[86] The raids for cattle, the enslavement of people and the displacement of Dinka communities to Darfur, Kordofan or elsewhere in the north were all part of the wider government policy to make Bahr el-Ghazal uninhabitable. This was done in order to deny the SPLA a recruitment base and cut off their food supply but also to benefit Baggara communities, which could loot and extract cheap or free (slave) labour from the displaced Dinka.

In 1985, the Nimeiri government collapsed and was replaced by a Transitional Military Council (TMC), which coincided with the spread of the civil war across Southern Sudan. The TMC decided to expand the use of the *murahleen* groups for the war effort. Up until this point, they were groups of cattle-raiding militia used as a counterinsurgency force in response to the 1982 Bahr el-Ghazal rebellion. Fadlallah Burma, a TMC member who was from the Misseriya people of Kordofan, played a key role in the formation of the *murahleen* into the Popular Defence Forces (PDF).

Burma had strong connections with merchants and other influential people such as *omdas* (chiefs) in western Sudan and became the Sudanese minister of defence in 1986.[87] He used his position and influence to further arm the Baggara militias so they could continue to attack and loot Dinka cattle and food, and gain access and control over more pasturelands. In the early years of their attacks and cattle raids (1982—1984), the *murahleen* faced less resistance from unarmed Dinka civilians. Between 1983 and 1984, however, the loss of cattle to Baggara raiders caused a mass exodus of young men from Bahr el-Ghazal towards

84. Deng, 'Livelihood diversification', 39.
85. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship,* 30; Deng, 'Livelihood diversification', 9—10.
86. Ryle and Kuol 'Displaced South Sudanese', 14.
87. Deng, 'Famine in the Sudan', 41.

the Ethiopian borders, where the SPLA was based. As young men migrated away to join and train with the SPLA, the *murahleen* abducted the women and children who remained. In a cruel reminder of the nineteenth century slave trade, these women and children were kept as slaves in *murahleen* houses or sold and moved to other parts of Darfur and Kordofan.[88]

## Emergence of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

The SPLA is an armed political movement that was formed after a group of Southerners in the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) staged a mutiny at the military garrison in Bor in 1983. The mutiny was an expression of Southern resistance to the political and economic crisis that had re-divided the south and precipitated the mutiny that had already begun in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal the year before. As soon as SPLA was founded, *Anyanya II* leaders in Bahr el-Ghazal mobilized young men who had lost cattle and seen their villages destroyed by Baggara raids to go to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, guns were being distributed to fight the Arabs, as the Arabic-speaking Baggara raiders who rode horses and wore white turbans and *jallabia* (flowing robes) were usually called.

The original aim of the young Dinka men was to acquire firearms and fighting skills, and return to protect their land, people and cattle, and to steal cattle from the Baggara.89 They were instead trained to become the SPLA fighting forces. Towards the end of 1984, the SPLA had arrived in the eastern areas of Bahr el-Ghazal.90 In 1986, the SPLA had reached Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. The SPLA fought to expel the *murahleen* who had settled in smaller towns and villages in the area south of the river Kiir, such as Malek Alel, Nyamlel and Marial Bai, which they used as bases for cattle raids against the Dinka people.91

In the late 1980s, after it had established its presence in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, the SPLA absorbed the local traditional authorities into its military administration. The SPLA also introduced *muun* (a tax on humans and cattle). This tax required local traditional leaders to contribute bulls and men of fighting age to the SPLA. After the SPLA had entrenched itself in the area, it introduced a household tax, which was paid in grain to the SPLA civil administration after its establishment in 1994. The SPLA also set up checkpoints on the

88. James Akec, who participated in this study, had his cousin abducted and taken from his mother between Kiir Adem and Abu Muthariq when fleeing from war in 1986. Akuc's half-sister and cousin brother were also abducted in a *murahleen* raid in Aweil East between 1993—1994, they were later redeemed from slavery in Darfur by the Khartoum government's Commission for the Elimination of the Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWAC).

89. Deng, 'Famine in the Sudan', 40.

90. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 19.

91. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 19.

main routes leading to Sudanese army barracks to control the movement of people. In addition, they collected a foot tax from the people moving in and out of the markets that developed around the army barracks. Traders travelling across the borders were also liable to pay foot tax.

By the mid-1990s, many households with young men had sent at least one male family member to the SPLA. The traditional authorities organized the conscription of young men. In some cases, this escalated tensions between the families and the chiefs, making it hard for chiefs to contribute enough men to the SPLA. The inability of local chiefs to conscript more young men eventually caused the SPLA to forcefully conscript young men into its military. The fear of abduction, forced conscription and the lengthy forced separations from family imposed by conscription pushed some young Dinka men to flee to the IDP camps to the north. As Atong, who fled with her husband to Darfur in the mid-1990s, says: 'The reason we moved permanently was that the south became worse – not only from *murahleen* attacks but because of the [forceful] SPLA recruitment of men into the military."[92]

Although the SPLA was perceived to be a movement for the people, it nonetheless created significant hardships and life-altering circumstances for the very people it intended to represent. The SPLA not only took part in the mass abduction of men and was responsible for the large-scale displacement of other men (seeking to avoid forced conscription). They also created material and financial burdens for Southerners in the form of various obligatory taxes, property theft and the exploitation of their labour.

In 1991, the SPLA was expelled from its rear base in Ethiopia. The group also split into two factions led by John Garang and Riek Machar, which weakened the movement. This forced many soldiers in Bahr el-Ghazal to abandon their SPLA units and rejoin the ethnic militias funded by the Khartoum government. These ethnic militias recruited fleeing SPLA soldiers to both help reinforce their own units and allow them to operate as independent militia organizations, which resulted in the emergence of a number of opportunistic armed ethnic groups in and around Southern Sudan. These new militias conducted raids, controlled border security and dominated cross-border trade. As was the case with the SPLA, their actions worsened living conditions for the war-affected and displaced Dinka. [93]

92. Interview with Atong, Ajak, July 2020.

93. According to Kindersley, government militias conducted multiple attacks on Aweil North and west in 1997—1998 and including occupation of Nyamlel, Marial Baai and villages for seven days which the residents felt like seven years; an attack locally named '*Mapada*' (Dinka; wholly covered). See Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 25.

In contrast to the burdens and hardships they created for the majority of Dinka people, the leaders of the militia organizations of the 1990s (including Dinka militia leaders) benefitted from the cattle, people and properties they looted from Dinka villages.[94] These military commanders also set themselves up as traditional leaders, agricultural investors and traders. In these various roles, they benefitted considerably from controlling cross-border access, trade and taxation. They further benefitted from the exploitation of labour of the displaced Dinka population that arrived in Darfur or Kordofan. In sum, one thing all these different militias and the SPLA had in common was their realization that labour migration was a commodity, and that control over this commodity was key to their security and economic viability.

## Rise of the borderland militias

Two main borderland militias are pivotal for the emergence of a militarized production system: the Abdel Bagi Ayii family militia and the Akec Ja'ali family militia. Abdel Bagi Ayii, a Dinka originally from Madhol village in Aweil East County, lived in Meiram in South Kordofan.[95] His forces controlled entry into Kordofan from Southern Sudan and secured the strategic Babanusa-Wau railway from SPLA rebels. They also participated in raiding the Dinka in Bahr el-Ghazal.[96] Over time, Abdel Bagi Ayii was able to use his military power to build political authority and commodify the labour of displaced Dinka people to his own advantage, all the while entrenching his power base.

Living in South Darfur, the Akec Ja'ali family is a powerful Rizeigat clan with a Dinka name and origin.[97] Although they trace their origins to a former Dinka slave, they were part of the *murahleen* raids on Dinka villages the 1980s and 1990s. They also controlled the entry point to Darfur from South Sudan.

### Sultan Abdel Bagi Ayii

After the First Sudanese Civil War (1955—1972) ended, Abdel Bagi Ayii was the Madhol court president and worked in this role from 1972 to 1983. At the start of the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1983, he again escaped to Meiram in South Kordofan. He had lived in Meiram during the First Sudanese Civil War, when as part of the *aras watani* he fought against the *Anyanya* in Bahr el-Ghazal. Upon his return to Meiram in 1983, and with the

94. Santschi, *'Countering and Capturing Hakuma'*, 81.
95. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 81.
96. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 32.
97. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 31

help of intelligence from the Sudanese army, Abdel Bagi began recruiting young migrant Dinka men to form his own militia organization to fight the SPLA in support of the Sudanese government.

In the mid-1980s, when Abdel Bagi started his militia, his primary concern was to recruit men to build his military forces.[98] From 1985 to 1987, he (sometimes forcefully) recruited militia members from the first wave of Dinka displacement from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. The 1988 famine provided yet more hungry recruits among those who fled to Meiram. His agents also recruited in IDP camps in Khartoum. During the 1980s and 1990s, recruits were trained and armed in El Obeid before being stationed elsewhere. By 1990, Abdel Bagi had a small standing army of one thousand soldiers who were mostly Dinka men from Bahr el-Ghazal. They were based in two locations: most were in Meiram, where Abdel Bagi continued to reside; others were in Rumaker, a garrison town on the Babanusa-Wau railway line. Initially, his militia worked as scouts for *murahleen* raiders, taking them to attack Dinka villages they knew in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal for economic gain.[99] Their role would, however, develop into something else over time.

In addition to building his militia, Abdel Bagi Ayii positioned himself as the chief of the displaced Aweil Dinka people in Meiram town. In this capacity, he came to play a significant role in the local food economy. This worked in two distinct (but eventually related) ways. First, he used his social position as chief to manage food aid for displaced Dinka communities. He gained direct access and control of both the food aid and the Dinka people in Meiram who consumed that food aid. Second, Abdel Bagi developed commercial agriculture in the borderlands by using the labour of displaced Dinka. He acquired large farms in the vicinity of Meiram and planted hibiscus, millet, groundnut and other crops. He recruited farmworkers and soldiers to provide labour on the farms. In addition to his other farmlands, Abdel Bagi and other Dinka chiefs who had converted to Islam were given a large piece of land as a reward for their faith in Islam and for defending the country against SPLA. The land was given to them by a Muslim group from Kordofan – *Da'wa Islamiya*, a relief and missionary organization – with close ties to the Khartoum government.

During the 1988 famine in Bahr el-Ghazal, food aid was channelled through Meiram in Kordofan and Abu Muthariq, near al-Da'ein in South Darfur (now capital of East Darfur state), which are the most southerly towns in the north. The availability of this food aid was a factor affecting which routes displaced people chose to flee the continuing civil war,

98. Some of this detailed information was provided in a 2017 interview with one of the chiefs who had lived in Meiram during war and worked with Abdel Bagi throughout the war period.

99. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 28.

with masses of Dinka people arriving in Meiram – many more than in Abu Muthariq.[100] The decision to station the food aid intervention in these northern towns was part of a long-term policy adopted by the central government in Khartoum to weaponize food and use it as a means to uproot the Dinka from Bahr el-Ghazal, which they perceived to be the key support and recruitment base for the SPLA in Southern Sudan.

Abdel Bagi, who relied on his faith in Islam, his position as a chief of the displaced Dinka in Meiram and his Dinka ethnicity to control and manipulate food aid, used the 1988 famine-relief food aid to pay his own hungry farmworkers – destitute Dinka from Bahr el-Ghazal who had resettled in Meiram. He also used his militia forces to assert control over and force these displaced Dinka to work on his farms. Those who refused to do so were likewise refused access to food aid or had their share confiscated after distribution. As a result of his social standing and his militia might, Abdel Bagi was able to make substantial profits during the 1988 famine and simultaneously gain control over a large labour force of desperate displaced people.[101] This allowed him to tighten his grip on the system of agricultural production and the commodification of labour upon which it relied.

By 1994, the violent factional conflict within the SPLA as a result of the 1991 split had come to Bahr el-Ghazal. Armed opposition to the mainstream SPLA, which was under the leadership of John Garang, was led in Bahr el-Ghazal by a commander from Gogrial named Kerubino Kuanyin Bol. Many Dinka deserted the SPLA during this internal conflict, with numerous of these men voluntarily joining Abdel Bagi's militia. By the middle of the 1990s, he was no longer recruiting. This expanded militia was able to effectively establish control over the border, including cross-border trade and the movement of people, using this to their advantage.[102] This helped Abdel Bagi assert his power from the mid-1990s onward.

100. Past events, especially violent ones, influenced the choices of those fleeing the 1988 famine, particularly the routes they took. For example, many displaced Dinka people did not go to South Darfur because the war in the borderlands had led to a crisis in relations between Dinka migrant workers and the local population the previous year. In 1987, SPLA forces led by the late SPLA commander George Kuaac attacked and defeated Rizeigat militias in al-Safaha (now called Adem and situated inside the demilitarized 14-mile disputed border zone), a settlement on the river Kiir that lies on the main route from Aweil, the Malual Dinka base in Bahr el-Ghazal, to El-Da'ein, the Rizeigat base in South Darfur (now East Darfur). In al-Safaha, the SPLA reportedly recaptured large numbers of cattle that had been looted from Bahr el-Ghazal. A few days later, groups of Rizeigat and others massacred hundreds of Dinka, who were IDPs and/or migrant workers in al-Da'ein. The incident at al-Safaha and the massacre in al-Da'ein affected which route displaced Dinka people chose during their 1988 flight. See: Mahmud and Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre', 27.

101. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship,* 21.

102. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship,* 35.

Since the late 1980s, the demand for cash in the borderlands had been changing the nature of both the war and economic development. As with the SPLA, Abdel Bagi also instituted his own tax regime – a lucrative system that encouraged the reopening of the border between Bahr el-Ghazal with Kordofan and Darfur, and the resumption of a controlled movement of people across the border in return for cash payments. With money now the primary concern of Abdel Bagi and his militia, wage labour migration and trade became less risky and thus increased. Travellers who were both coming from and returning to Norther Bahr el-Ghazal paid cash to his militia at the multiple check points they controlled between Agok and Meiram.

Dinka people who travelled from Bahr el-Ghazal to Kordofan in 1990s and 2000s have paradoxical views and experiences of Abdel Bagi's militia. On the one hand, his Dinka-dominated cross-border militia increased tensions between family and extended family members who supported different warring factions – some supported the Khartoum government, as Abdel Bagi's militia did; others supported the SPLA. On the other, the presence of his militia in the volatile border region was seen to enhance the safety and safe passage of Dinka migrants.[103]

While migrants needed cash to ensure their safety when travelling across this militarized border, kinship networks also played a key role in guaranteeing safety. A migrant who found a cousin from the same clan in the militia members he met was safer, even when he had no money to pay the foot tax. Akec, a labour migrant in the 1990s, explains:

> They [militia] could spare your life and allow you to go safely. This was because the Abdel Bagi Ayii militia was mainly made of up Dinka from almost all the clans in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. So, if you got caught by them, they would ask you your clan. If you said I am from clan X, you would find your cousin among them. He would not allow you to get killed.[104]

Revealing another dimension to the greater sense of security offered by Abdel Bagi's Dinka-dominated militia, Akec goes on to recount a story from an experience in 2001:

> The SPLA looted all the food we had and tied our hands and detained us for hours accusing us of working for the government intelligence. Later they freed our hands, removed our clothes except our underwear and allowed us to go. It was the [Abdel Bagi] Ayii militia men that took us in when we arrived in Agok, giving us a place to sleep and

103. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 35.

104. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.

> food to eat. In the morning, they put us on their truck and took us to Meiram. In Meiram, Ayii's soldiers there received us well. They even clothed us because we were only wearing underwear.[105]

Another story from James helps explain the contradictory views many Dinka migrants had of Abdel Bagi's militia – despite the overwhelming number of Dinka members. In sharp contrast to the sense of safety militia members could offer in some instances, in others they continued to detain and physically abuse Dinka migrants. For the most part, this was aimed at extracting money (largely from people who were already impoverished), rather than achieving other security objectives.[106] Travelling to Meiram with friends to find work in 1999, James shares an experience of rough treatment at the hands of Abdel Bagi's militia:

> We were arrested in Agok [a barrack just south of Meiram] before we reached Meiram, by the government militias. … They asked us to pay the foot tax, 600 Sudanese dinar [SDD 600; about USD 2.50] per person for the three of us. Then Luka, who was arrested with us, took SDD 600 from his pocket and says, 'This all we have. We are fleeing from hunger and we do not have money.' … When Luka extended his hand to give the officer at the table the SDD 600, another officer sitting next to him got up and slapped Luka hard on his cheek and then drove us to the mud-walled prison. He tied each of our hands firmly together and then tied them up [in such a way that] forced us to remain standing for the next hours.[107]

It was also common practice for government militias to extort valuable items from people crossing the border. James, also a labour migrant during the war who likewise crossed through the same militia base in Agok in 1999, tells a story that adds another layer of complexity to Dinka perceptions of Abdel Bagi's militia:

> The militia man said to me, 'Sir, you are a very good man. Can you give me this pen?' And I gave him the pen. Then he said, 'Thank you. And can you give me the rope on your bag so I can use it to carry my gun? The rope for my gun has worn out.' I pulled the rope free and gave it to him. Then he asked again, 'Can I buy your shoes for SDD 200 [about USD 00.80]?' I told him, 'No, I don't want to sell my shoes.' But he insisted and said, 'I must buy them.' When I saw that we were heading towards a fight and I would be the loser, I gave my shoes to him. He said, 'Thank you. I am happy.' And then he asked, 'Would you

105. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.
106. Nonetheless, travellers were still sometimes arrested for allegedly being SPLA spies.
107. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.

> like a cup of tea?' I said yes. After I finished the tea, he asked me to join the rest of my friends and go. He did not give me the money for my shoes.[108]

Extortion was a means for government militia soldiers to generate income. These soldiers themselves were exploited by their commanders and never financially benefitted from the various taxes they collected. Instead, their role as militia members was rewarded meagrely – with a bit of food and irregular financial incentives that were very small.

Reflecting the mixed views and experiences Dinka people had of his militia, Abdel Bagi's own behaviour was also considered somewhat paradoxical. He was a type of double agent – sometimes working for the Sudanese government and sometimes working on behalf of the civilian population in Bahr el-Ghazal. Although his militias continued to conduct frequent raids in Dinka villages, for example, on occasion Abdel Bagi would send his agents to Bahr el-Ghazal prior to a *murahleen* attack to inform the people that they should organize themselves against the coming raids.[109]

From the late 1980s onward, the demand for cash in the borderlands changed the nature of both the war and economic development. The warring parties instituted tax regimes – a lucrative system that encouraged the reopening of the border between Bahr el-Ghazal with Darfur and Kordofan, and the resumption of wage labour migration and trade across the border. Initially focused on fighting and controlling population movements, both sides instead shifted to allow a controlled movement of people (labour migrants and traders) between the south and the north in return for cash tax payments.[110] As money became the prime concern of the Abdel Bagi militia and the SPLA, labour migration became less risky and thus increased. While both sides continued to detain and physically abuse migrants, this was now aimed at extracting money (largely from people who were already impoverished), rather than achieving other security objectives.

Young men travelling to Kordofan or Darfur to find work or returning to Bahr el-Ghazal with goods and earnings had to pay tax to both the SPLA and the government militias, which was called the foot tax. The SPLA issued road permits to travellers after they paid this tax, granting them safe passage through all SPLA barracks and checkpoints on the roads leading north. People returning to Southern Sudan from Kordofan or Darfur were also liable for

108. Interview with James, former labour migrant, Marol Market, 4 August 2020.

109. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 32.

110. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020; interview with James, labour migrant, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

the foot tax. These same travellers paid foot tax to Abdel Bagi's militia at the multiple check points they controlled between Agok and Meiram.

### The *abu fik* caravan

In the early 1990s, attacks by Abdel Bagi Ayii militias (locally known as *'jur Ayii'*) contributed to the near annihilation of the SPLA in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. In response, the SPLA mobilized civilians in its areas of control to destroy the railway line.[111] In doing so, the SPLA aimed to disrupt military supplies of ammunition and food brought by rail, cut military communications between Southern Sudan and the north, limit the movement of the Popular Defense Forces and accompanying militias, and weaken the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) stationed in the south. As with his military counterparts, Abdel Bagi and his militia forces also used railway freight wagons to supply his small garrisons between Aweil and Agok (also known as Gok), located on the banks of the river Kiir.

By the late 1990s, SPLA attacks on sections of the railway line successfully stopped trains moving freely to Wau in the south. To ensure the continued supply of goods, food and ammunition between southern and northern garrison towns, Abdel Bagi used his militia to recruit Dinka men to manually push a railway freight wagon because it had no engine. The freight wagon was also filled with goods and supplies that belonged to SAF military commanders and other militia leaders and became one part of more extensive militarized market system that was emerging in the border areas.[112] Referred to as *'abu fik'* (we shall push) caravan,[113] Dinka men used this name to evoke the brutal force used against them – refusal to push the railway freight wagon carried serious consequences, sometimes even death.[114]

Paul, an elder who took part in an SPLA attack on the railway, explains where Abdel Bagi got his old and abandoned freight wagon:

> There was a small freight wagon standing on the railway in Muglad [in Kordofan]. After the railway was destroyed, train movement to the south stopped. He [Abdel Bagi] and

111. The Khartoum-backed militias, including Abdel Bagi's militia, had implemented a scorched earth policy in the areas around the railway, destroying civilian settlements and crops.

112. Sudanese military officers, who often doubled as merchants, used the *abu fik* as an alternative to maintaining their links with army bases in Southern Sudan, enabling them to continue to transport their goods for sale in the small towns that were developing around those SAF garrisons.

113. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship,* 34.

114. Interview with James, a former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

> other Arab officers filled it [the freight wagon] with goods, ammunition and food for the army barracks that were disconnected from the north by the destruction of the railway.[115]

The Dinka men Abdel Bagi's militia recruited to move the freight wagon were from the IDP camps in Muglad, Meiram and Agok. These recruits were also joined by migrants returning to their homes in Southern Sudan. Pushed from behind and pulled from the front by groups of men, the *abu fik* caravan took approximately one month to arrive at its destination. Paul describes this journey:

> They started in Muglad, where they recruited Dinka men to push it [the freight wagon] to Meiram. In Meiram, they recruited Dinka men returning to their areas from farms and others living in Meiram to push it to Agok and onward. … Because of fear of an SPLA attack, Abdel Bagi's soldiers protected the train and the men pushing it. They moved in a square formation surrounding the train to protect it from the SPLA through the barracks in the south. … In the south, they recruited Dinkas living close to the government barracks and those who were migrating north for work to push the train back northward to Meiram and onward to Muglad, where it would be reloaded.[116]

The men who participated in the *abu fik* caravan were exempt from foot tax. Their participation also helped them avoid physical abuse and the extortion of money or clothes during their journey. To people trapped in poverty in Southern Sudan, the *abu fik* caravan was a means by which they could migrate north to work and return home safely during the Second Sudanese Civil War. These benefits notwithstanding, the *abu fik* caravan also became one of the many ways in which Dinka people used their labour to produce profits for other people (including other Dinka), rather than using it to produce food for themselves and their communities.

Rumaker barracks (just south of the river Kiir) became known as an assembly point for migrant men from Dinka villages to the east and west of the railway in the Malual Dinka areas. They waited there for the *abu fik* caravan, which enabled them to travel in comparative safety to Meiram for work. James, a former labour migrant, verifies this: 'There was time when three of us decided to go to farms in Kordofan before we proceeded to Khartoum. We left home here in the morning and arrived at Rumaker in the evening to catch up with the *abu fik* caravan.'[117] The same applied to migrants returning to their homes in the south, as Akec explains: 'After war erupted while I was in the north, I remained in Khartoum until

115. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant before the second war, Majok, 26 July 2020.
116. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant before the second war, Majok, 26 July 2020.
117. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

1995. When I returned to the south, I did so with the *abu fik* caravan that was organized and guarded by the government and pushed by migrants returning home.'[118]

While those pushing the *abu fik* caravan northward avoided paying the foot tax (instead helping militia elites make profits from Abdel Bagi's freight wagon), migrants returning to Southern Sudan from the north still faced heavy taxation at SPLA checkpoints. Akec goes on to explain how migrants avoided these checkpoints, which were set up a few miles away from government barracks: 'We had to stay in Mabior Angui and bribed the PDF soldiers stationed there to sneak us out of the town at night so that we could go to our houses at night and avoid the SPLA checkpoints established outside the SAF garrisons.'[119]

In 2002, Abdel Bagi moved his military base to Agok, south of Meiram on the river Kiir. He personally selected the representatives he wanted to work with two of his sons to run his military affairs on his behalf – Hussein (the current vice president of South Sudan) and Agany (head of the Abdel Bagi family militia, the South Sudan Patriotic Movement). Abdel Bagi relocated to Khartoum, where he opened a customary court at Wad Al Bashir in Umm Bedda, Omdurman.[120] He brought in other displaced Dinka chiefs as members of his court and presided over the customary cases of Dinka IDPs living in camps. Dinka men who were found guilty and failed to or were unable to pay their court fines were sent to Meiram during the agricultural season to work on Abdel Bagi's farms for a year or two before they were allowed to return to Khartoum.[121]

Abdel Bagi was able to build up a business empire by adapting old systems of kinship and custom, adapting new militia systems and using the Islamic religion at a time of religious

118. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.

119. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.

120. One of the chiefs who had served as member of his court in Khartoum acknowledged how Abdel Bagi's presence helped protect Southern IDPs against police brutality and the sexual harassment of women in the camps. His religion and military power gave him the strength to both exploit and protect the IDPs in Khartoum.

121. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020; interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant before the second war, Majok, 26 July 2020; and interview with Bol, elder and former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum in 1980s, Marol market, 28 July 2020.

polarization. He deployed all these factors to control and exploit the Dinka people of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal during the Second Sudanese Civil War.[122]

### The Akec Ja'ali family

In South Darfur, the borderland militia that is pivotal for the emergence of a militarized production system is the Akec Ja'ali family militia. The Akec Ja'ali family is a clan that occupies part of Abu Muthariq and the neighbouring settlement of Subdu, which are situated south of el-Da'ein, the capital of present-day East Darfur state. Similar to the Abdel Bagi family, the Ja'ali family used the Islamic religion, their Dinka origins and their location on the border between the Rizeigat people and their Dinka neighbours as key factors to control and exploit the labour of Dinka IDPs. The Akec Ja'ali family are farmers and herders who belong to the wider Rizeigat cattle pastoralists of South Dafur and East Darfur but their origins are Dinka.[123] The Ja'ali family ancestor, Akec Ja'ali, hailed from the Pariath clan of Aweil North. The Pariath clan is one of the larger Dinka clans in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and spreads through the Abiem, Paliet, Palieu-piny and Malual sections of the Malual Dinka.[124]

The story of how Akec was assimilated into the Rizeigat Arab community is contested among Malual Dinka. Some Dinka believe that Akec was abducted as a slave in his childhood but others say that he migrated as a labourer, finding employment in the cattle camp of a rich Baggara man, where he converted to Islam and assimilated into the Rizeigat community. Fascinated by Akec's hard work and commitment to taking care of his herds, the rich Baggara man adopted Akec as his son and married him to Rizeigat women. Before he died, Akec still visited his Dinka brothers south of the river Kiir but contact between the two communities ended when Akec died and his sons identified as Rizeigat, not Dinka (or a mix of Rizeigat and Dinka).

122. See Nicki Kindersley and Joseph Diing Majok, 'South Sudan: Hussein Abdel Bagi deepens his control over the borderland', Briefing paper, Rift Valley Institute, December 2020. (https://riftvalley.net/publication/south-sudan-hussein-abdel-bagi-deepens-his-control-borderland); and 'Understanding Hussein Abdel Bagi: South Sudan vice president from borderlands', Briefing paper, Rift Valley Institute, March 2020. (https://riftvalley.net/publication/understanding-hussein-abdel-bagi-south-sudans-vice-president-borderlands)

123. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant, Majok, 26 August 2020. Akec is a Dinka name given to a surviving boy child after a preceding boy child died at birth or soon after birth, or to a surviving boy child who lost either his father, grandmother or grandfather during his mother's pregnancy. Ja'ali is the nickname Akec was given while herding cattle in Darfur.

124. Although Pariath are scattered throughout the entirety of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, they have a common divinity, the Ariath Makuei. This divinity is known for having originally possessed Bol Yel, the first Malual Dinka spiritual leader to resist the British colonial government in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal.

During the Second Sudanese Civil War in the 1980s and 1990s, the Ja'ali family joined the *murahleen* raiders and were part of those responsible for wider destruction on the villages in Aweil North and Aweil West, from whence their grandfather Akec originated. Their motivation to take part in raids and the destruction of Dinka villages was not only to steal cattle and accumulate wealth. It was also important for demonstrating their commitment to their chosen Arab identity. As Paul, a former labour migrant, explains:

> The Akec Ja'ali people were under pressure in Darfur. If they did not or would not take part in a war against the Dinka, then they would have a problem with the other Rizeigat clans. So for them to be identified as Arabs, they had to do what other Arabs were doing.[125]

The Akec Ja'ali family followed other Rizeigat groups in attacking Dinka villages in the borderlands of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, emphasizing the Arab or Rizeigat aspects of their identity. When the mass displacement of Dinka people began in the 1980s and 1990s, however, they adopted a different approach.[126]

In the mid-1980s, as displacement increased, some Rizeigat clans began to kidnap children from displaced women fleeing Bahr el-Ghazal to the IDP camps of Darfur. They sold the children or kept them as slaves in other parts of Darfur.[127] The Ja'ali family decided to protect Dinka IDPs and prevent the abduction of Dinka children. Although these practices still continued, the Ja'ali family was partially successful in preventing them.[128]

The protection offered by the Akec Ja'ali family to Dinka IDPs from Bahr el-Ghazal meant that more Dinka people moved to their areas looking for protection and work. The Akec Ja'ali family accommodated these displaced people on their farms as workers – gaining access to

125. Interview with Paul, elder and former labour migrant, Majok, 26 August 2020.

126. Many former displaced Dinka who settled in the present-day state of East Darfur, including the interviewees for this study, emphasize the effort that the Akec Ja'ali family exerted to protect them – to help them survive and prevent them from being abducted and physically attacked by the other Rizeigat men among whom they settled.

127. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 July 2020; and interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Khartoum and Gedaref, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

128. More children were abducted from their mothers in villages and in forests outside Abu Muthariq. The Dinka IDP women who were grouped in Abu Muthariq were also robbed of food and food aid provided by humanitarian agencies; interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August2020. Also see: Mark Duffield, the Sudan – unintended consequences of Humanitarian Assistance, 2000.

abundant and cheap IDP labour in the process. James, a former labour migrant during the war, describes the role of the Akec Ja'ali family:

> Awlad Akec Ja'ali were helpful to the displaced people who were moving with small children, who were the major target of the kidnappers. The displaced people helped them, too, because they got more workers than other Arabs, and their land was fertile. They were in Abu Mathariq and Subdu. They owned large farms and they dug wells where their animals drank during the dry seasons. This work was done for them by the Dinka during the war, for free or cheaply. Their land was good for growing groundnut, sesame and sorghum.[129]

After the Akec Ja'ali family had mobilized enough workers for their farms and cattle camps, they expanded their role to become brokers for the labour of the other Dinka IDPs living in their area, providing Rizeigat friends who needed labourers with Dinka workers for their farms. The Ja'ali family negotiated the wages with these farmers and guaranteed the safety of the Dinka workers.[130] Most of the Dinka they helped were from the Pariath clan, to which their grandfather Akec had belonged.

The militias and armed groups that operated in these borderlands all understood the importance of the huge transformation underway in Dinka society. In earlier periods, Dinka had produced food for themselves. Their agricultural, cattle and marriage systems were all structured around social objectives – using wealth to build kinship networks, which gave Dinka people food security and political autonomy. During the Second Sudanese Civil War, Dinka workers instead laboured to produce food for sale and to build up the profits of the Dinka military entrepreneurs for whom they worked. These Dinka military entrepreneurs were able to effectively rework the Dinka kinship-based production system to create a completely new system of production. They also created a new orientation for Dinka society, which was built around exploitation and profit.

129. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

130. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020. Also see: Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 23.

# THE GROWTH OF NEW LABOUR SYSTEMS AND FORMS OF EXPLOITATION

In 1988, a famine – known locally as *'cong Makurup'* (the hunger of total collapse) – affected the Bahr el-Ghazal region. Thousands of people died as a result. Humanitarian organizations and the government of Sudan responded by channelling food aid to two government-controlled border towns in northern Sudan – Meiram in Kordofan and Abu Muthariq in Darfur – purportedly to draw starving Dinka populations out of Bahr el-Ghazal. Those who had resisted the previous wave of displacement during the initial years of the civil war in the early 1980s now permanently fled northwards.[131] They settled in and around the camps in Darfur, Kordofan and Khartoum, joining their kin who had arrived earlier. The flight from famine northwards is evidenced and remembered in a song composed in the 1990s by a man from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal who fled in 1988 through Meiram to Muglad in South Kordofan. Part of this long song about his story of flight and survival during the 1988 famine translates as:

> *When the hunger struck, this is when I ran following the railway line northward.*
> *The train line took me to* dar *Arab, so it truly took me to Arab land.*
> *I almost died on the road but when I arrived in Nuud, I found* legemat [*sweet fried dough balls*] *and sesame in abundance.*
> *When I look back, I saw it* [*hunger*] *returning to the south and it looks very tall.*
> *It is very tall. Why not tall? It is a killer of men.*
> *It takes a spear and pierces the stomach of a man* [*person*] *to death.*
> *The souls of men you* [*hunger*] *have killed will curse you.*[132]

War displaced Southerners were grouped and settled in IDP camps scattered around the outskirts of the main towns in Kordofan, Darfur, eastern Sudan and Khartoum. These newly arrived impoverished Dinka were integrated into the existing Dinka labour force already working on farms and in households, where there was a continuous demand for cheap labour.

131. Deng, 'Livelihood diversification', 33. Also see: Ryle and Kuol, 'Displaced South Sudanese', 7.

132. The author collected this song from Chan Chimir, a pharmacist in Juba who stores song lyrics.

Neglected by the state, they often lived desperate, unbearable lives.[133] The IDPs living in these camps became the primary source of cheap labour for the host communities, providing domestic services, farm labour and casual work in the towns and villages across the north.

Writing in 1989, a few years after the start of this large-scale displacement, two observers argue that the *murahleen* were following a strategy of depriving Dinka people of their livelihoods and lands, resulting in the reshaping of agricultural labour systems in Darfur and Kordofan: 'Their [the *murahleen*] raids in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal have provided them with not only an excess of capital from stolen livestock but an expanded labour force of displaced Dinka for their farms.'[134] In 2001, for example, an estimated 85 per cent of all farm labourers in South Darfur were displaced Dinka with some merchants employing up to 100—150 Dinka each.[135]

These Dinka IDP workers were sometimes forced to work without pay or were cheated of their wages. Akec tells a story about a situation he faced with his friends in 1986, when he was displaced and trying to work his way from Kordofan to Khartoum:

> It was in Ababanusa [Babanusa] in Kordofan where we met a man who pretended to be a farmer and wanted workers on his farm. He took us to Makarenka, away from Ababanusa, where he said his farm was located. We were six in number. When we arrived, he and some armed villagers forced us to work for free and guarded us with guns so we would not find a way to escape. We worked for them for a period of five months [during which we were] being rotated on the farms. After the sorghum and grass grew tall, we escaped [through the high grass] one by one until we had all escaped and could go to Khartoum. So, in 1980s, the Dinkas were exposed to slavery and even murder by Arabs throughout Darfur and Kordofan.[136]

*Murahleen* raids in the 1980s and 1990s destroyed villages across Bahr el-Ghazal and pushed many people in the direction of mistreatment and exploitation as displaced Dinka workers. There is also evidence that these raids led to children and women being abducted into slavery.[137] The central government in Khartoum was reluctant to intervene.

133. Deng, 'Livelihood diversification', 39.
134. Ryle and Kuol, 'Displaced Southerners living in South Darfur, 10.
135. Duffield, 'Aid and Complicity', 98.
136. Telephone interview with Akec, former labour migrant and war displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.
137. Duffield, 'Aid and Complicity', 2002, 85; also James and Akuc, interviewed through this study, gave detailed accounts of their relatives who were abducted during the war between 1980s-90s.

The period when the Second Sudanese Civil War broke out coincided with a turn towards Islamization in Sudan, with the political status of Sudanese citizens determined not by nationality but by their Islamic religious belief.[138] This increased religious discrimination against displaced Dinka people, many of whom are either Christian or follow traditional Dinka religious beliefs. Dinka people also faced racial discrimination because they were seen as black Africans at a time when the government privileged Arab forms of belonging. This exposed displaced Dinka communities to segregation, exploitation and even enslavement by Muslim Arab communities.[139]

Displaced Dinka were also associated with the SPLA rebels in Southern Sudan, even when living in the north.[140] They were scarcely represented in the Sudanese government. Moreover, Dinka who fled raids after their villages were attacked and destroyed by *murahleen* and other militias lost everything. Escaping from famine, they often arrived in Darfur or Kordofan in rags, with nothing – destitute and hungry from long days of walking without enough food.[141] This forced them to sell their labour at any cost to the host communities in the north in order to find food.

Exploitative payment systems lay at the heart of the systems designed to profit from the labour of Dinka people.[142] The most common systems of payment used to exploit Dinka IDPs were sharecropping, credit and casual wage labour. Sharecropping (*nuss*, Arabic for the word 'half') is a system whereby rich farmers who own land lease it out to poor landless farmers to cultivate. After the harvest, the total produce is divided in half, with the sharecropper and the landowner each getting their half. In practice, the way sharecropping worked meant farmers accumulated debts. To repay these debts, they often had to hand over large quantities of their half of the harvest to the landowners. Credit also led to indebtedness. Called *jurula* (from the Arabic word '*jurura*', a notebook for recording petty debts), this system is based on rich farmers lending out money and food to poor farmers during the lean season. After the harvest, the poor farmers were required to pay back the credit they borrowed in form of grain or groundnuts. Credit was extended at extortionately high interest rates – between 200 and 300 per cent annually. Piece work (*ijar*, from the Arabic word '*ajar*', a wage or fee), also commonly called casual farm labour, is a system whereby poor farmers work on an agreed task (for example, weeding a 10m² plot of cultivated land) and receive a payment for completing the agreed task. *Ijar* is often used to describe contracts that last a

138. Duffield, 'Sudan: The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Assistance', 30.
139. Duffield, 'Aid and Complicity', 87.
140. Duffield, 'Sudan: The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Assistance', 32.
141. Interview with Atong, formerly displaced to south Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.
142. Duffield, 'Aid and Complicity', 15.

few hours or a day. *Qawil* (contract) is an extended agreement that requires the completion of tasks over several weeks or over a period of the seasonal calendar.

## Sharecropping *(nuss)*

Sharecropping was most common through the 1980s and 1990s, and continues up until the present, in 2021. In this labour system, the landowner contracts sharecroppers, often in the form of a work group or household, to cultivate land in return for a share of the harvest. The landowner generally loans food, cash, water, tea, cooking utensils and shelter to the sharecroppers, and then deducts the value of the loan from the harvest belonging to the work group or household – a process that greatly advantages the landowner.[143] Landowners build temporary on-farm shelters for workers because farms are generally located a long distance from villages or IDP camps. Atong, a displaced woman who worked sharecropping throughout the 1990s with her husband at Gereda in South Darfur, verifies this: 'The farm was far away. It was about a three-hour walk by foot to the main village.'[144]

Atong remembers agreements from the 1990s that specify the area of cultivation in *makhamas* (about 0.5 ha) and the amount of food advanced in a sack (50 kg) or a *malwas* (3.5 kg) of grain, and a *rutul* of sugar (about 0.5 kg). Cash advances were in Sudanese dinars, with SDD 1 worth about USD 1 in 1990.[145] Atong says, 'At the beginning of cultivation, when you [sharecroppers] lease two *makhamas*, you are given a sack of grain, 150 Sudanese dinars [SDD 150] and two *rutuls* of sugar [about 1 kg].'[146]

After receiving these food items in advance, sharecroppers clear the land, plant and cultivate, weed, harvest and thresh the farm products. If sharecroppers run out of food or money, the farmer landowner does not allow them to seek additional financial or food opportunities on other farms, instead encouraging them to get what they need from him or her as a loan, with an interest rate that is due after harvest (see next section).147 Atong continues, 'If you spent that money carefully, you would still borrow but would not take all your share in the year end.'[148]

143. Duffield, 'Aid and Complicity', 15.
144. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.
145. By 1999, USD 1 was worth about SDD 250.
146. Interview with Atong, former sharecropper and war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.
147. Save the Children UK, 'Return of the Dinka displaced Person in South Darfur: The Willingness and Fear, A Return Assessment', Save the Children UK, 2004, 12.
148. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.

This system clearly put sharecropping farmworkers in debt and left them hungry after harvest.[149]

## Credit *(jurula)*

The *jurula* high-interest credit system was often part of the sharecropping system. In the period between planting and harvesting (June to September), sharecroppers borrowed additional food and money from their host sharecroppers if they needed it – at high rates of interest. Loans were repaid by deducting their value from the 50 per cent share of the harvested produce at the end of the season. As Atong, a woman who was displaced to South Darfur, explains: 'If you eat up the food and spent the money quickly, and go back to the Arab man who leased you the land, he would give you whatever you want and record it.'[150]

Sharecroppers who had families to take care of in the camps or on the farms where they worked were likely to take large food advances, thus locking them into debt and poverty. Sometimes they ended up having to take an advance of about three quarters or more of their harvest share.

> At the year end, after harvest, he [landowner] comes to the farm with his book when you are dividing the farm produce. He will first take his share [50 per cent] and he then opens his book and counts all that you have borrowed and he will take almost all your share if you are lucky. And if you are not lucky, you will go with nothing at all. If you spent wisely, you can get at least a few sacks to go home with.[151]

For a clear example, one sharecropper describes in detail his experience in 2003, which is recorded as follows:

> He [the sharecropper] agreed to cultivate groundnut and sorghum on 2.5 *makhamas* of land [about 1.5 ha] in return for an advance payment of SDD 1,300 [about USD 4 at official rates] and 13 *malwas* of grain [approximately 45.5 kg] for each *makhamas* [a total of USD 12 and 114 kg of grain]. He took out three additional loans over the summer to pay for medicine, at a value of SDD 4,000 [about USD 13]. The loans were to be repaid in 4 *guntars* of groundnuts [200 kg; 1 *guntar* is about 50 kg]. At the 2002 harvest, the market value of 4 *guntars* of groundnuts was about SDD 8,000 [USD 26]. The sharecropper

149. Save the Children UK, 'The Return of Dinka Displaced Persons', 41.

150. Save the Children UK, 'The Return of Dinka Displaced Persons', 12; Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.

151. Save the Children UK, 'The Return of Dinka Displaced Persons', 12.

> produced 9 *guntars* of groundnuts [450 kg[. He was entitled to 4 *guntars* as his share of the harvest and used it to pay off his loan. He was left with a debt of SDD 1,000 Sudanese [about USD 3], which he carried over to the next harvest.

This system of payment overwhelmingly benefitted the Baggara farmer landowners, with those in South Darfur and Kordofan employing hundreds of Dinka sharecroppers each. The *jurula* system enabled farmers to expropriate the food shares of their workers and allowed them to generate significant profits at the end of the agricultural season.[152] This labour system also had major implications for displaced and landless Dinka IDPs, simultaneously plunging landless IDPs into heavy recurrent debt and significantly decreasing their food security.

Although a common practice in the agricultural sector, such loans are forbidden in both the Islamic and Christian traditions. Shari'a forbids usury and both Christian scholastic theologians and reformers such as Martin Luther consider lending money with interest as theft.[153] An outcome of inequality borne of violence, the exploitative *jurula* high-interest credit system is a compelling example of the linkages between debt and violence, with the former legitimizing the latter, as one observer explains:

> If history shows anything, it is that there's no better way to justify relations founded on violence, to make such relations seem moral, than by reframing them in the language of debt – above all, because it immediately makes it seem that it's the victim who's doing something wrong. Mafiosi understand this. So do the commanders of conquering armies. For thousands of years, violent men have been able to tell their victims that those victims owe them something.[154]

During the Second Sudanese Civil War, the relation between displaced Dinka in Darfur and Baggara farmer landowners first began because of political violence. This relationship subsequently developed into sharecropping-related credit arrangements that kept Dinka IDPs in debt for decades and enriched Baggara landowners at the expense of those who sharecropped their farms. Establishing a self-perpetuating system that amounts to indentured servitude, many IDP sharecroppers were servants bound to their Baggara masters in a relationship that was thoroughly define by debt.

152. Save the Children UK, 'The Return of Dinka Displaced Persons', 16.
153. David Graeber, *Debt: the first 5,000 years,* New York: Melville House, 2011, 329.
154. Graeber, *Debt*, 5.

Sharecroppers who borrowed more money than their 50 per cent harvest share could pay back at harvest time remained in debt. After the harvest, those farmer landowners who feared their indebted servants would escape to other parts of the country could force them to do other waged work in order to pay back their debt. Atong, who lived in South Darfur and worked in sharecropping throughout the 1990s, describes this situation as follows:

> He [the farmer landowner] would not take you to prison but he would take you to work where there was a demand for labour. He would then take your wages to pay back what you owed him. If he had work of his own, he could make you do it free of charge to compensate for the loan. If you refuse… This is how death happens on the farms in Darfur.[155]

After harvest, the landowners cum creditors sometimes postponed debt repayments until the following harvest. These repayment holidays were often given to trusted Dinka workers.[156] An indebted Dinka servant would work again as sharecropper for the landowner in order to pay back his or her debt with the harvest from the next year and then borrow once again, putting him or her further into debt. Debt thus became central to the relationship between landowning farmers and displaced Dinka workers, trapping these landless farm labourers in a cycle of poverty.

Moreover, the violence underpinning the exploitation of Dinka workers was framed as a moral relation of debt or obligation. This guaranteed Baggara farmers a cheap and permanent farm labour force from among displaced Dinka communities. The control of labour through debt was also reinforced by constant insecurity. War and repression targeted Dinka people, and displaced Dinka lived in fear both inside and outside the camps. So, they sought protection from members of their host communities. These exploitative labour relations were simply the price of living in safety.[157]

Displaced Dinka describe those farmer landowners who gave them protection as *Jour-die* (my Arab). Akec, a former Dinka IDP farm labourer, explains:

> *Jour-die* means an Arab man who accepts to live with you and give you work and who trusts you. … During war, Dinka were exposed to high risks and these risks forced people

155. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.

156. Those people who had families were considered to be the most trusted because they could not escape and abandon their families.

157. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020; interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.

> living in Darfur to sell their labour cheaply to powerful individuals in order to protect them and their families. So, Dinka men [and women] working for powerful individuals were safe from any provocation. … In exchange for that protection, you remained a permanent worker for that boss and he gave you something for food for your family and helped you out with other smaller financial issues.[158]

Baggara farmers referred to as *Jour-die* were seen as softhearted. They would give more food on credit to their debtors even when they were already indebted. They assured their debtors protection and helped them when they were in crisis – so long as they were committed to sharecropping all year. Atong, a former sharecropper, elaborates further:

> It is not all Arab men that a Dinka person was working for that he referred to as *Jour-die*. There must be a particular type of Arab man with whom he developed a good relationship. The Arab man is always helpful to him. Like, when we came to Gereda we had an Arab friend who was called Kubur. He was a very good old man. He never cheated us after harvest. Whenever we had a problem, he would help. So, those types of people were the individuals we were working for and who we referred to as *Jour-die*. Or 'my Arab', because you were friends.[159]

Such qualities that Dinka sharecroppers would use to describe their farmer landowner hosts as *Jour-die* went beyond protection from harm. This also included assistance in times of sickness, hunger and in dowry payment.

> Kubur protected us because the Dinka people were very insecure that time and also, there was a time when I fell sick when we were on a farm. … He came to assess his farm and us, the workers on his farm. He found me sick and my husband was worried of how he would transport me to the village to go to the clinic. He told my husband that he would help and he transported me to the clinic and the afterwards to his house to rest. … And when my brother later married, he helped him, too. He paid a sack of grain. It was not a loan. He gave it free of charge, to be paid as a dowry.[160]

158. Interview with Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.
159. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.
160. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020.

## Casual wage labour *(ijar)*

*Ijar*, casual wage labour or piece work on farms, was the main system of pay for Dinka labour migrants on farms in Darfur in the 1960s and 1970s. Dinka seasonal migrants arrived in Darfur when cultivation started. They did piece work for a wage for a short time (mostly July to October) and returned to their home areas in Bahr el-Ghazal as soon as the agricultural season ended. In the 1980s, after displacement to and resettlement in Kordofan and Darfur, other systems of paid labour (namely sharecropping and the closely related credit system) emerged on the farms. These did not, however, replace the casual wage labour system, which had already existed for decades. Instead, these systems became integrated.

Casual labour continued to be common in towns, in households and on farms but during the 1990s, the rate of pay for this wage labour was much less than that in the period before 1983. Farmer landowner access to cheap abundant labour from desperate Dinka IDPs was a key factor in reducing wages.

The most common casual labour available to adult men included digging wells and latrines, working in bakeries, cutting grass to sell and harvesting watermelon. Women did post-harvest work on the farms such as winnowing grains or making grass mats, which they sold. Women also worked as household servants. Young boys and girls worked in restaurants, and boys were taken to cattle camps to look after cattle.[161]

All displaced Dinka people who worked as casual labourers suffered both emotional and physical abuse from their Baggara employers, including insults. For example, Baggara people typically referred to Dinka people as '*jangai*' (a pejorative term associated with being in rags or dirty), which carries a negative connotation, or *abid* (slave).[162] Dinka people were discriminated against in public places, such as water points, where such negative words highlighted above were commonly used and were often harassed and beaten in cases of small disputes with Rizeigat or Misseriya men or women.[163]

161. Interview with Atong, former war displaced to South Darfur, Ajak, 16 August 2020; Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.
162. Mahmud and Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre'.
163. Mahmud and Baldo, 'The Dhein Massacre', 18.

# LABOUR MIGRATION AND SURVIVAL DURING WAR

In the 1980s, the production systems of Bahr el-Ghazal were under great stress from *murahleen* raids and from the heavy food and manpower requirements of the SPLA. The voluntary labour migration and trade of the 1970s was replaced with forced displacement and looting. Initially disrupted by the war, cross border migration and trade resumed a few years after 1991. This time, the main motivation was to generate cash income to buy food in time of hunger. Households navigated hunger by sending their men and boys across the border to work on farms. Some also brought goods to trade. Traders from Darfur and Kordofan who had connections with SPLA commanders likewise crossed into the South to trade food and other items.[164]

## Cross-border peace deals

In 1993, the resumption of cross-border migration and trade motivated a successful grassroots peace initiative between Malual Dinka, and two Baggara groups, the Rizeigat and Misseriya. The peace initiative led to a resumption of livestock migration, trade between Baggara traders and Dinka people in the rural markets of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and cross-border labour migration. The local peace initiative affirmed the commitment of traditional leaders on both sides to peaceful coexistence, even at the height of the civil war. Traditional leaders also agreed to share resources such as pasture and water, and to open the borders for civilians and traders.[165] Later, in 2000, the evolution of the initiative led to the establishment of peace markets in border settlements, including Warawar (on the border between Aweil East and South Kordofan), Manyiel (on the border between Aweil North and Darfur) and Aneet (on the border between Abyei and South Kordofan). Although the Khartoum government and the SPLA did not take part in the initiative, the SPLA provided

164. Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*, 32.

165. Statement by William Kolong, a member of the Dinka-Rizeigat and Misseriya border management and peace committee, August 2020. Kolong made the statement as a response to the state government's attempt to dissolve the border peace committee made of traditional leaders and replace it with an agreement signed between the three states of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, Eastern Darfur and Western Kordofan.

protection to the markets and traders, and benefitted from taxes generated from both the markets and the migrations of Baggara pastoralists.

In the 1990s, cross-border migration was important to the Dinka who remained in the South. Dinka labour migrants used the wages they acquired in the north to buy food from Darfuri and local traders and rebuild herds for marriage, or to invest to sell in times of hunger. The resumption of cross-border labour migration in the 1990s led to changes to the main reasons for people crossing the border. The previous desire to enlarge herds was gradually overtaken by the need to find money to buy food. Money could also be used to buy cattle, which could then be sold to buy food when local stores became depleted.[166]

As militias continued to control the migration routes, and despite the agreement between the Dinka and Baggara, they still often demanded tax from migrants. Young men used their knowledge of local routes, connections and kinship ties to some militias, as well as the *abu fik* caravans, to pass through the securitized borders. Nicki Kindersley, in her 2018 study of the borderlands, quotes an interview with a former cross-border trader in the 1990s and 2000s in Gokmachar market:

> I used to cross to el Da'ein to go and buy tea and sugar and transported these goods on donkey to Gokmachar for resale. … So, it was risky but we had the Akec Ja'ali family helping us on the other side [Darfur]. People such as the Akec family managed to get rich from the war because there were no other alternatives [to get rich]. So, people tried to trade and move, no matter, even if there was war. So it is part of their lives.[167]

Migrants faced physical risks on the roads. Despite local peace initiatives, they also faced a high risk of extortion with militias, armed civilians and SPLA soldiers in the borderlands often ambushing migrants and taking their money.

## Moving to the north

James, who was a migrant in the 1990s and early 2000s, spent his money on clothes, salt, tea leaves and beads in Khartoum or other towns in the north where there were no militia. He went back to Southern Sudan and exchanged the goods he brought from the north for grain during harvest, which earned him extra profit. Modern goods were rare and expensive in Bahr el-Ghazal since the start of the war and the halting of trade in SPLA-controlled

166. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020 and Akec, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Nyamlel, 26 July 2020.

167. Nicki Kindersley, *Politics, Power and Chiefship*.

areas. James stored the grain by burying it in the ground away from homes, in order to hide it from the *murahleen* and the SPLA. He exchanged his stored grain in the lean season for cattle and goats. In particular, he needed cattle for bridewealth, so that he could get married. James sums up how he worked around the different risks that he faced:

> Awlad Sabah-al-Khair used to ambush travelers in the forest on the road toward the South. … There is a place called Dongki-Arian and Kursi [temporary settlements in the forests between Abu Muthariq and the river Kiir]. They used to ambush people in these places and robbed them of their cash money. They checked the bags and pockets of travellers and if they found money, they took it. But if it is tea or clothes, they didn't. They were thieves and they wanted just money. … For me, when returning South, with my money I bought packets of tea, clothes and beads to resell. I exchanged them for grain because there was no money here [Southern Sudan] at that time. In the lean season, I exchanged the sacks of grain for cattle and this is how I succeeded to raise enough dowry for my marriage. … You could also buy a cow or a goat and keep it to sell at a time later on when you are in a crisis.[168]

The importance of 1990s labour migrations to the maintenance of Dinka marriage customs is highlighted in the song below. The song is composed by a woman from Aweil in 1990. In it, she asks Madut Yiel, an idle man who had no cattle at the time (he lost his cattle to war) to stop flirting with girls and instead migrate to north, obviously to Darfur, to work and return to buy cattle so he could marry.

> *Madut Yiel, why do you move here and there, looking for young girls?*
> *Madut Yiel, go to north to work* nuss [*sharecropping*]
> *So that when you come back, you can buy 30 herds of cattle to marry Ajok* [*the girl he was befriending*].
> *Abur* [*a Dinka man without cattle*] *cannot get his penis up. Get it up to do what with it?*[169]

Though cross-border migration resumed between the two communities divided by war, the breakdown of the justice systems in Darfur and Kordofan, along with the incitement of Baggara against their Dinka neighbours changed their labour relations in the 1990s.

The young Dinka men who migrated to look for cash found their Baggara employers quite unwelcoming compared to the years preceding the war. James shares his experience in South

168. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.
169. The author learnt and memorized the song from his mother, Abuk, now a woman in her 70s.

Darfur, which is representative of the experience of other young men who migrated for wages in Darfur and Kordofan during war:

> Whenever we arrived to the first villages in Abu Muthariq, the inhabitants would ask us silly questions such as 'Where are you coming from and where are you going?' We would say that we are coming here and then onward to Khartoum. … And we would keep telling them that we are hungry at home and there is no work over there and so we are coming here to look for farm work in order to get food. Then some Arab men would ask, 'And now, will you be paid money or work just for food?' So for us to succeed, we had to be humble and compliant. … After two or three weeks, after you have cultivated many *makhamas*, he gives you any amount of money he has decided to give. And it is always less than the actual rate of cultivating a *makhamas*. After this, and when you have not complained, he sits with you to agree on the wage rate. This time, you become friends. And his children and wife will also start being friendly with you.[170]

The hunt for cash was undignified. Farms were unwelcoming. Movement across the border was controlled and taxed. Despite all this, however, the benefits accrued were important to a poor worker from Bahr el-Ghazal who owned nothing. The contribution of those wages is captured in a song composed by Garang in the late 1990s. He is a young man who resisted being displaced with his parents and was a seasonal labour migrant to the farms in Darfur throughout 1990s and 2000s.

*North, you make me suffer from hard labour.*
*But I will never swear not to go.*
*In the north, we [young men] shall dig out cattle and human beings.*
*We shall dig out our cattle we lost once again.*
*Am I too old or still able to migrate?*[171]

In this song, Garang boasts about his energetic youth. He believes that although the labour in the north is hard, he will continue to keep migrating as long as he can. In particular, he intends to till the land in Darfur as long as he is still young so he can return to Bahr el-Ghazal with money to buy new cattle and to recover his father's stolen cattle.

170. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

171. A song recorded from a young man, a former labour migrant to Khartoum who continues to memorize Garang's song, Juba, July 2020.

## Displacement and labour in Khartoum

In the mid-1980s, Dinka who had knowledge of Khartoum got on the train from Wau in Bahr el-Ghazal and travelled to Khartoum in search of refuge. Bol, a former migrant labourer, is one of these: 'I went to Khartoum in 1988 and stayed there. … I took a train from Mabior Angui [a train station in the south].'[172] The Southerners who arrived in Khartoum were settled in what were called 'peace camps' located on the margins of the city. Akuc, who arrived in Khartoum with her mother in 1986, explains:

> In the north, we first settled outside Khartoum city in Machar Col.[173] Southerners who arrived in Khartoum at that time were grouped in Machar Col, where women and children lived solitary lives [without their menfolk]. Tents were made with cartons and sacks. The whole camp looked black, with sacks on the roofs. That was why it was called 'Machar Col'.[174]

Southerners had been coming to Khartoum as early as the 1950s as seasonal labour migrants and worked in the city for a few months or a year before returning home.[175] As commercial agricultural plantations had not yet spread to Darfur and Kordofan, the few Dinka migrants who migrated to find work in the north in the 1950s headed to Khartoum and Gezira, where wage labour was present. After the Second Sudanese Civil War, however, as displaced Southerners settled permanently around Khartoum, the camps hosting them became the principal source of cheap labour in the city.

In Khartoum during the war period in the 1980s and 1990s, most young Dinka men from Southern Sudan worked in brickmaking (*kamin*) at the edge of the city on the banks of the Nile.[176] Others laboured on construction sites or worked in restaurants. Some found casual employment in factories. Few Southerners worked for companies owned by northern

172. Interview with Bol, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Marol market, 28 August 2020.

173. In Dinka, Machar Col means 'black with sacks', which is the name Dinka IDPs gave the camp where they were first settled.

174. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Khartoum and Gedaref, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

175. Kameir, 'Migrant Workers', 61.

176. Some types of informal work (notably brickmaking) temporarily stop in the rainy season, leaving workers from Southern Sudan unemployed. This triggers a massive wave of migration of young men travelling out of the capital towards eastern Sudan, where there is a high demand for seasonal farm labour because this is one of the main centres of commercial agriculture. Interview with Bol, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Marol market, 28 August 2020; and interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

Sudanese people.[177] Many Dinka women from Southern Sudan who were living in Khartoum brewed alcohol for sale, a business that was both precarious and illegal. Some worked in homes as cooks and cleaners, often running the risk of sexual assault, along with unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Others worked in offices as cleaners.

## Migration to the east

Large-scale commercial agriculture has drawn seasonal migrant labour to the east of the country for nearly 100 years. The most important of these centres are in Gezira, the triangle of fertile irrigated land between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, and Gedaref, further east in a fertile rain-fed region along the border with Ethiopia. These agricultural schemes were first established after the end of slavery in the 1930s. They played a key role in the twentieth century transition from enslaved to wage labour in Sudan. They were also instrumental in the development of export-oriented commercial agriculture in the country. Between the 1930s up to the 1970s, successive Sudanese governments adopted different mechanisms to mobilize cheap labour for the commercial farms.

In the 1930s, the colonial government set up cotton plantations in Gezira. In order to mobilize cheap a labour-force, the colonial government had first facilitated the immigration and resettlement of West African migrant workers to live and work there. Travel to the cotton plantations was subsidized, which was designed to encourage labour migration. These migrants from West Africa, called '*Fellata*' (Housa-Fulani people of West Africa), supplied the cotton plantations with abundant cheap labour. Secondly, the colonial government adjusted the tax collection policy so that taxes were collected in the cotton-picking months. Many people were effectively forced to sell their labour as cotton pickers to generate cash in order to pay their taxes. This policy consequently detached these migrant farm labourers from non-commercial agricultural production systems that were oriented towards their own household consumption. Until 1950s and onwards to the 1970s as agriculture expanded, the scheme used local sheikhs and notables to recruit a cheap labour force for the commercial farms.[178]

Commercial agriculture in Gedaref expanded in the 1960s, when leading figures in the commercial agricultural system moved from cotton production on irrigated lands around the Nile towards sorghum and sesame cultivation on rainland along the Ethiopian border. As with commercial cotton farming, commercial sorghum and sesame cultivation was likewise

177. Interview with Bol, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Marol market, 28 July 2020.

178. Jay O'Brien, 'The Formation of the Agricultural Labor-force in Sudan', *Review of African Political Economy,* 26, (1983): 6.

built on the same mechanism of mobilizing cheap labour through agents who recruited workers from the peripheries for farm work.[179]

A survey conducted in 1983 in Gezira indicates that the native inhabitants of Gezira, western Africa and western Sudan were the main labour suppliers for the commercial farms.[180] Most of these migrants settled permanently in the labour camps established in Gezira, which is where recruitment took place. There were an estimated 710 labour camps in Gezira, with an average of 235 migrants living in each camp.[181]

Tenants built their relationships with their labourers, who lived in the labour camps, to provide an all-year round labour force needed on their farms. Some also relied on agents who would recruit workers for them. For a tenant to build a longer relationship with his labourers, and to make sure that they were less inclined to negotiate over their wages, some tenants provided their labourers with small gifts in kind or cash to motivate them. Others would provide rent-free accommodation.[182]

The most common system of pay was *qawil*, whereby a household or a group of workers are paid after completing an agreed task. A task could take one month or more to finish. The wages were generally agreed following a serious bargaining process between the employer and workers, or their agent.[183] Disputes related to wage payment were also common between workers and tenants and occurred for two main reasons. First, the employer might not agree to pay the full amount that was originally agreed. Second, the employer might challenge the way the work was done and would require the workers to do additional work before they could be paid.[184]

These disputes were usually resolved through a compromise. If a compromise could not be reached between the conflicting parties, a third party was brought in to mediate the disagreement. The lack of written agreements between workers and employers, and the lack of agricultural legislation in Sudan at the time, or the availability of competent courts

179. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

180. Abbas Abdel Karim, 'Wage Labourers in the Fragmented Labour Market of the Gezira, Sudan', *Africa* 56/1 (1986): 54 – 70.

181. Abdel Karim, 'Wage Labourers', 62.

182. Abdel Karim, 'Wage Labourers', 61.

183. Abdel Karim, 'Wage Labourers'. 62-63.

184. Abdel Karim, 'Wage Labourers', 12.

to adjudicate such cases, left employers and their agents in a stronger position than their workers.[185]

When hundreds of thousands of displaced Southerners arrived in Khartoum in the 1980s, the labour conditions and relations between the migrants and their employers in Gezira and Gadaref were already exploitative and workers lacked proper legal protection. Southern IDPs arriving in Khartoum were quickly recognized by the agricultural merchants as a potential cheap labour force. This was in contrast with the existing workforce – mainly West Africans and western Sudanese – who were more prepared to bargain for higher wages.[186]

During the 1980s, farmers in Gedaref and Gezira sourced the cheap labour of Southerners who were settling in Khartoum.[187] Farms in Gezira and Gadaref were semi-mechanized and ploughing was generally done by tractors, but manual labour was needed for weeding in August, and for harvesting sesame and sorghum in September and October.[188] The period of highest demand for seasonal farm labour was during the rainy season, when the brickworks in Khartoum closed. This left many young men jobless and eager to work in the fields. Groups of these young men were recruited by farm agents and transported on trucks to the agricultural schemes in Gezira and Gedaref.[189]

## The growth of *jongo* (seasonal farm) work

Seasonal work on the remote commercial farms in is sometimes known as '*jongo* work'.[190] The reliance of farmers on agents to recruit and pay *jongo* workers through verbal wage agreements encouraged wage theft, which was common in the 1990s.[191] James, who did *jongo* work in Gedaref in 1999, explains:

> Some agents gave you work as a group. So long as food was available for free, you could work for months. At the end, [the agent] would dodge you for weeks and later pay you part

185. Abdel Karim, 'Wage Labourers', 13.
186. Interview with Wol, seasonal wage labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.
187. Interview with Bol, former labour migrant displaced to Khartoum, Marol market, 28 August 2020.
188. Interview with Bol, 28 August 2020.
189. Interview with Bol, 28 August 2020.
190. Interview with Bol, 28 August 2020 and also James, former labour migrant to Gadaref, Marol market, 4 August 2020.
191. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

> of your money and run off with the rest of your wages. He found reasons to create excuses to steal your wages.[192]

*Jongo* work was low paid, so living conditions were poor. Many *jongo* workers also faced physical abuse from their employers. Relations between agents and *jongo* workers tended to deteriorate over the course of a season. Frequently orchestrated by the local police or young men who were drunk, *jongo* workers also had to contend with communal tensions and fighting, which often led to the murder of IDPs and farm labourers. For example, Akuc's brother, who was *jongo* worker in Gedaref, was shot dead by local police officers patrolling at night in 1997.[193] Some farmers used guns to discipline workers, with brutal results. James explains an event he allegedly witnessed in 1999: 'Hassan Bakeit, a farmer in Gedaref, dug a large pit that stored water during rainy season for his *jongo* workers to drink from in the dry season. But one day, when he found young men [*jongo* workers] swimming in the pit, he shot all of them dead.'[194]

Wage theft and the physical abuse of workers are among the principal causes of the spread of the SPLA rebellion to eastern Sudan. In the late 1980s, frustrated *jongo* workers would enter Ethiopia from Gedaref and join the SPLA, which had rear bases and training camps there.[195] Somewhat later, in 1995, numerous *jongo* workers again entered Ethiopia, this time to join the SPLA New Sudan Brigade.[196] They were trained and graduated in 1996 as *katiba jongo* (the *jongo* battalion), and were deployed along the eastern borders of Sudan, around Kassala.[197] James, a former *jongo* worker, elaborates:

> Such things [wage theft and murder] provoked anger in young men and whenever such a thing happened, you would find bitter men deciding to join SPLA. They would start escaping in a group of five to six each, one after the other. So wage theft was the main reason you could find people joining the SPLA in Gedaref. *Katiba jongo* … were all young men who had become frustrated as a result of being cheated of their wages. [They joined the SPLA] not in the real sense of fighting for democracy.[198]

192. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.
193. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Khartoum and Gedaref, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.
194. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.
195. Nicola Dawn Kindersley, 'The fifth column? An Intellectual History of the South Sudanese Communities in Khartoum, 1969—2005', PhD thesis, Durham University, 2016: 216.
196. Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 217.
197. Interview with former bodyguard of Dr John Garang (former leader of the SPLA), Juba, July 2020.
198. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

The decision to leave for Ethiopia and join the SPLA was usually made by groups of young Dinka men who had gained a mutual trust from the shared experience of work (and the problems that came with it), combined with pre-existing kinship networks. James describes how a group of young men he knew in Gedaref made the decision to leave:

> Their point of departure was a place called Adindir or Likende, where I worked. These places were close to the Ethiopian border and it was easy for a small group of young men to go in to Ethiopian territory. Like when I was there in 1999, we were living in a group that included young men from Aguok in Warrap. I had a friend called Mam from Warrap and another Nuer man called Malual. We used to call him Malual-Nuer. [Malual is a common name shared by the Dinka and Nuer.] He was a hawker in Khartoum. Being close friends of mine, one day the two of them proposed that we go to Ethiopia to join the SPLA but I declined because I had immediate responsibilities at home in the South.[199]

While many *jongo* workers joined the rebels as a result of harsh working conditions, in the 1990s SPLA agents in Khartoum were also sending recruits from the capital through Gedaref into Ethiopia. For this reason, the government in Khartoum viewed *jongo* workers as a threat to security. From 1997 onwards, Sudanese security forces began to disperse Southern Sudanese *jongo* workers who migrated from Khartoum to Gedaref in large groups, often detaining and sometimes beating them. James, a labour migrant during this period, explains:

> If Arab soldiers found you travelling in a group of 30 or more… Because *jongo* workers used to mobilize and move to Gedaref in huge numbers, you were accused by Arab soldiers of having the intention [to join the rebellion] and would be dispersed.[200]

The security forces could not, however, stop the *jongo* system upon which commercial agriculture depended, so migration for *jongo* work continued to be permitted. Toward the end of the 1990s, *jongo* workers moved in much smaller groups – up to five individuals – rather than in larger groups that were more conspicuous.

199. Interview with James, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.
200. James Akec, former labour migrant during war, Marol market, 4 August 2020.

# THE RETURN TO THE SOUTH AFTER CONFLICT

In 2005, the Khartoum government and the SPLA signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended more than two decades of conflict and set up an autonomous Government of Southern Sudan in Juba. The Southern government was funded by revenues from the new oil industry in Sudan, which had come on stream in 1999, and gave peace an economic rationale shared by both parties. Between 2007 and 2012, millions of former displaced Southerners returned to their homes.[201] These returns were characterized by a high degree of euphoria. They were also charged with anger and resentment. Akuc, who repatriated to the South from Khartoum, explains:

> We did not have rights as citizens when we were living in Khartoum. All chances of survival for Southerners were ruined, especially for women. Women wanted to educate their children but the only way they could make money was to brew alcohol. The search for alcohol by police in the houses of Southern women was very provocative. … After the separation of the South from the north, we truly provoked the Arabs when we were leaving for the South. All that we did, how much we bullied them [shouted at and insulted them] means we deserve never to return.[202]

Alongside the euphoria of finally being able to return home, Southerners were motivated to leave by their own negative experiences of living in the north. This included racial and religious discrimination, regular harassment and physical assaults, and a denial of their rights to landownership, all of which made life in the north difficult and often unbearable.[203] At this time, a developing insurgency in Darfur meant that many of the Dinka people who travelled there for work as seasonal farm labourers and those who had permanently settled there as IDPs also returned home.` Repatriation was also encouraged by the SPLA leadership and traditional authorities.

201. Edward Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets: Cash, Commodification and Conflict in South Sudan,* London: Rift Valley Institute, 2019: 29; Kindersley and Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods*, 19.

202. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

203. Save the Children UK, 'The Return of the Displaced Dinka in South Darfur,' 11—15.

The euphoria at being able to return home was accompanied by high expectations about what life in an independent South would offer returnees. People were full of hope that they would be able to own land, receive better services and have more opportunities provided by the new government, learn English and be free of the discrimination they faced in the north.[204] The reality that greeted them was rather different than their hopes and dreams.

Upon arrival in South Sudan, returnees mostly settled in urban areas and smaller towns.[205] Services were generally lacking and it was difficult to find stable employment. Those who had repatriated once again resorted to selling the skills and labour experiences they had acquired in the north to raise cash to reconstruct their lives. The sudden arrival of a huge surplus labour force encouraged agricultural investment by elites who had access to money. The returnees may have hoped to return to a place with secure land tenure but in the small towns and cities to which they had moved they discovered that they were completely dependent on cash and markets.

The first post-war household survey in South Sudan reveals that Northern Bahr el-Ghazal was one state where the use of cash had spread most widely and livestock ownership was among the lowest.[206] The state had the lowest rate of consumption expenditure and the highest incidence of poverty in the new country. In 2009, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal residents purchased 67 per cent of the food they consumed. Ten years later, that figure was even higher.[207] Agricultural investors saw opportunities to profit from the cheap and abundant labour force of hungry returnees.[208]

## Commercial agriculture in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal

Commercial agriculture in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal was primarily started by political and military elites, NGO workers with secure incomes and well-connected Darfuri traders who had lived in the region for years and had access to money and land. These key individuals invested money in large commercial agricultural farms in the most fertile areas of the state, such as: Tonychol, in the Abiem area of Aweil East (about 25—30 km north-east of Warawar); Alel, the ancestral land of the Luo (about 10 km west of Aweil town); Udhum, an old train

204. Save the Children UK, 'The Return of the Displaced Dinka in South Darfur', 16.
205. Kindersley and Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods,* 29.
206. See: National Bureau of Statistics, 'National Baseline Household Survey 2009, Report for South Sudan', Juba: National Bureau of Statistics, 2012.
207. National Bureau of Statistics, 'National Baseline Household Survey 2009', 47, 55, 58, 61, 64.
208. Kindersley and Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods,* 11.

station north of Aweil town; and Warlang-Garam, north-west of Aweil and close to the border with West Kordofan.

Utilizing their political and economic connections, these South Sudanese elites also built up large private herds of cattle. The privatization of herds – ownership of which was previously organized around complicated collective arrangements – has provided an enormous impetus for wider processes of commodification. In the past, labour for cattle keeping was mobilized from within kinship groups, which were also responsible for helping young men build their own herds for marriage. In contrast, labour for cattle keeping of these private herds is now paid in money or cattle.[209] At present, then, both herding and farming are organized around commerce and profit, relying on the abundant cheap labour of local poor people, who are mostly returnees from the north.

The development of commercial farming in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal undermined the traditional Dinka mutual labour support system of farming. Work parties (*nafir*) are a means for mobilizing labour in places where labour is not commodified. Instead of being paid a wage, *nafir* participants are given a meal, tobacco and traditional beer (usually a fermented sorghum porridge). At present, however, labour and beer are both commodities. Returnee households – many of them headed by women who endured family breakdowns and losses of family members during the war – cannot afford to buy food and beer for *nafir* workers.[210] Impoverished and food insecure households prefer to be paid in cash for their labour because the cash can be used to buy food for the whole family. Under the previous system, only the *nafir* workers were fed.

The development of commercial agriculture in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal is built on payment systems similar to those used in Darfur in the 1980s to exploit war-displaced Dinka IDPs. This new exploitative system has seen a significant increase in the area covered by commercial farmland in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. Commercial farms are expanding and reclaiming unused land because poor returnees are available to meet their demand for cheap labour.[211]

According to Dinka and Luo customs, land is acquired through kinship and inherited by the male children of the family. The South Sudanese also constitution protects community

209. Kindersley and Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods,* 10.

210. At present, *nafir* workers usually demand large quantities of expensive modern beer. See: Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets,* 67.

211. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP), 'Crop and Food security assessment mission to South Sudan', Rome: FAO/WFP, 2018, 13.

rights over land. This means that wealthy people – mostly government officials and Darfuri or Dinka traders – acquire large areas of land through leases. To expand their investments in commercial agriculture, they lease land in fertile areas such as Alel from local traditional leaders or individual members of extended families claiming to own large ancestral lands.[212]

As a result, demand for the fertile lands around Aweil is expanding rapidly. Poor farmers who lack capital to invest in farms leased out much of their land to rich farmers on the eve of the major agricultural developments that began in the 2010s. The loss of their land, and the continued need for money, turned them into part-time workers on the farms of the rich farmers to whom they leased their own land.[213] Other landowners lease smaller areas of land out to landless returnees and migrants who have come to the region looking for fertile land to cultivate.[214] Commercial farming, where people are paid cash for tasks or time worked, has replaced the traditional *nafir* or communal work system.

The terminology and the payment systems for commercial agriculture in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal – piece work (*ijar*), contracted piece work (*qawil*), sharecropping (*nuss*) and high-interest credit (*jurula*) – have been directly imported through the Arabic language used by migrants and traders from Darfur and Kordofan.[215] Rich farmers and traders orchestrate these payment systems to maximize exploitation, lending out money and food through *jurula* loans during the lean season to poor farmers to be repaid back in grain or groundnuts after the harvest. As in Darfur, the *jurula* system deprives sharecroppers of food and traps poor farmers in poverty and debt. As in Darfur, sharecropping and *jurula* are the most dominant and exploitative payment systems. Rates and terms for these systems are decided and enforced by the state traders union, the membership of which consists of farmers who double as traders in the markets, thus enabling these systems to work to their interest.

Agricultural wage rates and terms of payment were set earlier, between 2005 and 2010, when the Sudanese pound (SDG) and later South Sudan pound (SSP) were stronger currencies. Poor farmers who owned land could balance their time between cultivating their own farms and *ijar* work on the farms of the rich commercial farmers, where they could earn cash in order to buy food and other necessities. The initial reliability of prices and the

212. Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands,* 12.

213. Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets,* 68.

214. Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets.*

215. Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets,* 67. Also see: Nicki Kindersley and Joseph Diing Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands: Understanding migrant pathways from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan*, Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, 2020, 12—13.

stability of the currencies encouraged some returnees to work as sharecroppers, enabling them to benefit from this system.

After the South Sudan civil war began in 2013, the value of the South Sudanese pound eroded and inflation began to gradually increase up to 2015.[216] Farmers and traders steadily raised food prices in markets and increased *jurula* interest rates after harvest, with prices and interest rates rising at a rate that outstripped wage increases. Farmers were reluctant to increase the daily wages of their workers, whether on the farms or in the markets.

As a result, most households, especially those headed by women, gave up the time they previously invested in cultivating their own farms and instead doubled their time at the commercial farms they worked on for money to finance their immediate needs, particularly food. Without other options available for women, their vulnerability and cash dependence increased, thus trapping them in commercial farm work as a result of having created a dependent and captive labour pool.

After 2015, South Sudan experienced a rapid and disorienting period of inflation. This was caused by the 2012 oil shut down and the 2013 outbreak of civil war, which shifted government funding to the security sector. In turn, this contributed to increasing corruption and disrupting the South Sudanese economy. The result was the loss of many informal businesses and jobs, a return to growing insecurity and a halt to free movement inside the country, all of which pushed many people toward new livelihoods. Women and young boys opted to run informal micro-businesses in local markets. Adult men who lost their jobs and businesses resumed labour migration – to the military camps, to Juba and other towns inside South Sudan, and across the border into Sudan. Once again, families endured long separations because of war.[217]

## Cross-border migration after independence

The period following the CPA in 2005, when hundreds of thousands of Southerners returned from the north, saw many changes in agricultural production and land tenure. These led to the emergence of agricultural wage workers in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, particularly returnees who worked for money and bought their food (rather than growing it). Northern Bahr el-Ghazal has become the part of South Sudan where people are most likely to purchase food, rather than grow their own. The rapid pace of agricultural change did not reduce hunger, however, and this led many people towards another important livelihood

216. World Bank, 'South Sudan Economic Brief', Washington DC: World Bank, 2017, 2.

217. Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands*, 14—15.

opportunity that emerged at this time: military labour. After 2006, SPLA soldiers were among the highest paid in Africa. Their wages accelerated changes to consumption across South Sudan.

After 2011, when South Sudan was formally declared an independent state, tensions along the border with Sudan – particularly in the contested 14-mile area south of the river Kiir (or the Bahr el-Arab) – led the government in Juba to create a local militia in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, known as *Mathiang Anyoor* (the brown caterpillar). This force was intended to protect the area from Baggara invasions, which political and military elites believed were inevitable. In 2012, *Mathiang Anyoor* were involved in a brief war between South Sudan and Sudan for control of the Heglig oilfields in South Kordofan. At the end of 2013, the militia was drawn into the civil war which erupted in Juba and spread to the Upper Nile region. Young men were continually recruited at military centres across Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and sent to fight in the civil war on the government side.

In the same period, young men who chose not to take the military path to employment, and who still maintained telephone contacts with former employers in Darfur and elsewhere in the north, left their wives and children and returned to the north as seasonal farm labour migrants to look for cash.[218] The 2013 civil war, the 2015 currency crisis and the period of hyperinflation that followed in 2016 all started a new pattern of seasonal wage labour migration. New patterns of military and migrant labour also deeply changed gender relations. Most new migrants were men and they were unable to easily return to their families in South Sudan or send them money; consequently, women once again had to shoulder household responsibilities.[219]

Although the 2011 independence of South Sudan officially ended the citizenship status of South Sudanese in the Sudan, labour migration from South Sudan to Darfur and Kordofan did not end. After the 2005 CPA, Darfur and Kordofan lost much of their cheap IDP labour force, when displaced Dinka workers returned to their homes in South Sudan. After 2011, borders were left open in order to attract cheap labour from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. This free movement across the border was equally supported by the cooperation agreement between South Sudan and Sudan, which affirms the commitment of the two countries to the free movement of their citizens across their borders.[220] While aware of the independence of

218. Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands,* 17.

219. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

220. Katarzyna Grabska and Peter Miller, 'The South Sudan House in Amarat: South Sudanese enclaves in Khartoum', *Égypte/Monde arabe,* 21 October 2016, 9. (https://journals.openedition.org/ema/3574)

these two countries, seasonal migrants from Bahr el-Ghazal, continue to refer to Sudan as '*shimal*' (the word 'north' in Arabic) – the same way they referred to it when Sudan was still unified.

Seasonal farm labour migration from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal to the commercial farms in Darfur and Kordofan increased significantly after the price shocks of 2016. A poor harvest from the 2015 agricultural season combined with hyperinflation, which reached an annualized rate of 549 per cent in September 2016, prevented many households from purchasing enough food for household consumption. Households headed by women were the worst affected.[221]

Hyperinflation and the wider economic crisis increased labour migration among men. Even those who had no experience of migration, and teenagers younger than eighteen years old, began travelling north for work. A consequence of the 2016 economic shock and the corresponding collapse of rural schools meant that many teachers abandoned their profession to find alternative employment. School collapse pushed many children towards migration, too. Households across the region now depend heavily on purchased food, and the looming famine that manifested itself after the food price shock also triggered the migration of women – mostly those whose husbands had migrated earlier and never returned, as well as the wives of soldiers who had lost contact with their husbands.[222]

The huge influx of South Sudanese into Darfur and Kordofan fuelled other stories of alleged exploitation of labour. It also fuelled the recruitment of migrants by South Sudanese militia organizations formed in the borders between Darfur and Kordofan with Bahr el-Ghazal between 2015 and 2019, after the South Sudanese civil war began in 2013.[223] Physical and verbal abuses by Misseriya and Rizeigat men are also alleged to be continuing and access to justice for South Sudanese migrants is uncommon, particularly in farms far away from police posts or towns.[224]

Towards the end of 2016, the Sudanese government feared a massive influx of South Sudanese and restricted the entry of undocumented migrants into Khartoum. Entry for farm labourers, however, continued to be permitted, and access to Darfur and Kordofan

221. Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets,* 34.

222. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper Market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

223. Kindersley and Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods,* 35.

224. Kindersley and Majok, *Monetized Livelihoods,* 20; Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former war displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

continued to be unrestricted. To manage the movement of migrants, the security forces used identification documents. Dinka migrants from Abyei were viewed as South Sudanese, even though they still had Sudanese citizenship and national ID numbers (*raqam watani*). Migrants from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and the rest of South Sudan had a foreign ID number (*raqam 'ajnabi*).

After 2011, particularly starting from 2016 when the number of young South Sudanese men going to Khartoum to find work increased, those migrant workers were stopped at Kosti, a town about 300 km south of Khartoum, where the railway and main road from Darfur and Kordofan reach the White Nile. They were prevented from travelling to Khartoum and returned to Darfur or Kordofan.[225] Wol, a seasonal migrant worker in Sudan, describes how:

> Kosti and Jebel Aulia police stations are the worst. They cannot allow you to enter Khartoum unless you have *rakam-al-watan* [national ID number] or *rakam-al-ajhnabi* (foreign ID number),[226] which are expensive. They cost approximately SDP 6,000 [USD 14] and take a long to get.[227]

## Gendered dimensions of migration

It was not only the Sudanese government that sought to control this flow of labour. Until mid-2017, as migration across the border from Bahr el-Ghazal continued to surge, the South Sudanese government border security forces stopped the cross-border migration of women and small children. Only women who had letters of approval from Dinka peace committees, a permanent committee of Dinka, Misseriya and Rizeigat elders that discuss and maintain cross-border movements of cattle and people, were allowed to cross the border into Sudan. The reason for this discriminatory policy was to curb the human depopulation of the region. Most women who migrated moved with their children, intending to permanently resettle and live in the north. The security forces continued to permit the migration of young men, who they assumed would be compelled to return home by the presence of their families in South Sudan.

225. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant to Darfur and Khartoum, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020; interview with Garang, seasonal wage labour migrant, Pamat, 11 May 2020.

226. A foreign ID number is not a nationality ID number but is a simple identification card that is mostly issued to South Sudanese labour migrants entering Sudanese cities like Khartoum. The agreement on cooperation signed between Sudan and South Sudan in 2012 allows the Sudanese and South Sudanese governments to leave their borders open to cross-border migration between the two countries without the use of a passport or travel document.

227. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.

The restrictions on women's migration, along with absence of men from many households and the deteriorating economic conditions, pushed single mothers who headed their own households into worsening economic conditions. Women tried to make their way through the economic crisis by running microenterprises and small businesses or working on local commercial farms to raise money. They also tried to supplement their cash income by collecting wild foods in forests and selling them at local markets.[228]

Some poor women evaded restrictions on the movement of women by taking a risk to cross the border illegally, either by bribing border security or sneaking across.[229] They settled in refugee camps such as Kario to the south of el Da'ein town, and in other parts of South Darfur and South Kordofan (or even Khartoum). Other poor migrant women settled close to their former employers, often resuming the same or similar economic activities they had done during the Second Sudanese Civil War in the 1980s and 1990s.

A number of factors encouraged post-independence cross-border migration, with some differences between men and women. For men, the main motivation to migrate is the search for cash. The prevailing view is that wages in Darfur and Khartoum are better than in South Sudan. Opportunities for manual work in the South are rare and generally short-term in nature.[230] The strength of the Sudanese pound relative to South Sudanese pound, educational opportunities and better healthcare options are other factors that pull young men to migrate across the border. Another factor that stimulates outward migration is the desire of young men to be in control of their own finances, away from family pressures and demands for money. Leaving the family orbit helps migrants save money for different purposes, including returning to school, starting a business or buying cattle for bride-wealth payments, which enable them to get married.[231]

For women, the primary reason pushing them to try to return to the north is to escape from what one interviewee, a tea lady at Maper market describes as 'the life of *malwa*'. This refers to a situation whereby a woman heading her own household works for a close to 12 hours a day just to afford a *malwa* (a 3.5 kg sack of grain) for her children. Among those women who attempt to migrate, they expect life in the north will be better. Akuc elaborates:

> This life of *malwa*, where a family depends on a *malwa* bought in the market every day, is hard to persevere for us, the women. We suffer more than men now because we work hard

228. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.
229. Diing, 'War, Migration and Work', 14.
230. Interview with Wol, 10 April 2020.
231. Interview with Wol, 10 April 2020.

> every day to buy at least a *malwa*. … The wives of those men [*Mathiang Anyoor* soldiers] killed by the Nuer [SPLA-IO rebels] are now living without support. Some women have between five and seven children, and nothing to take care of them. This makes such women think of returning to the north to go back to the houses of those Arabs they washed clothes for during the war. This is because life in Khartoum is not like here. If you go to work in Khartoum and you get SDP 500 [USD 1.15], it will buy you food. And you can save a small amount to do other things in the house. So, such expectations are what is causing more women who are running their own households to try to return to the north.[232]

## Aims and coping strategies

The aims of migrants leaving South Sudan in the early 2020s are different than those who left during other periods of mass migration to the north; namely, in the 1960s and 1970s; and in the 1980s and 1990s. Higher levels of education, the spread of markets and the significant degree of monetization of the livelihoods of Dinka people have altered the perspectives and aspirations of the younger generation. While early Dinka migrants (1950s—1960s) sought to invest the money they earned in animals, in the 2020s, young Dinka men want to accumulate enough capital to start a business, buy food for their families or go back to school.[233] Some young men do continue to buy cattle to meet obligations related to bridewealth, which is still paid in cattle.[234]

### Surviving in the city

For migrants who make it to Khartoum, the *jurula* high-interest credit system remains the most crucial coping strategy, especially for young Dinka men. Migrants once tried to support one another financially in times of need but this practice has shrunk considerably though other forms of social support continue.[235] War and famine have deeply affected, perhaps even broken, the traditional Dinka system of mutual support. The disruption of this customary

232. Interview with Akuc, tea lady and former displaced to Gedaref and Khartoum, Maper market, Aweil town, 13 August 2020.

233. Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands,* 17—20.

234. Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands,* 21.

235. Interview with Garang, seasonal wage labour migrant, Pamat, 11 May 2020; see also Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands,* 32.

practice contributed to mass deaths from starvation in the 1998 famine, which the Dinka later named *'Cong dek ruei'* (famine of the breaking relations).[236]

In Khartoum, the *jurula* system operates between Dinka migrants, as opposed to between employers and workers; for example, in Darfur and Kordofan. This form of *jurula* is largely built on friendship, kinship and networks of trust, not employment relationships. As in other contexts, *jurula* debts between migrants are also based on profit from interest, not the traditional Dinka practice of mutual support.[237] Further, *jurula* is mostly practiced during the rainy season (between July and October) when brickmaking work stops, with borrowing then becoming the primary mode of survival for the young men who have (temporarily) lost their means of making an income.[238]

The source of the funds that are lent originate with migrant Dinka women (and some men) who both brew illegal alcohol and work in factories in Khartoum. With multiple sources of (meagre) income, these women tend to be able to save small amounts of their money. Using the *jurula* system, they lend their savings to young men who are willing to borrow money at interest. The loans are then paid back between November and December, one month after brickmaking work has resumed. Interest is charged at a rate of 300 or more per cent annually. Wol, a seasonal wage labourer, verifies that this is how young Dinka men cope:

> In Khartoum, it is women who sell [illegal] alcohol. When brickmaking work stops, around July, most young men can find themselves in a financial crisis. These women lend out money in the form of *jurula* between July and October, when there is no work for young men in Khartoum. These loans are repaid in December, when brickmaking resumes.[239]

Charging interest for *jurula* debts is an illegal lending practice and has never been legally recognized in Sudan. Under the Islamic law system in Sudan, interest is strictly forbidden. This means that if a dispute arises around a *jurula* case, it cannot be resolved in the state courts. Such disputes can, however, be addressed in the traditional Dinka courts in Khartoum. Whereas charging interest on money loaned is also not recognized under South

236. Deng, 'The 1998 Famine in the Sudan'.

237. Khartoum business people who employ young men in brickmaking lend money to their workers to buy food and other necessities that help facilitate work. At the end of the working season, employers recoup the exact amount that they have advanced to the workers, without charging interest. During the rainy season, when brickmaking work pauses, employers do not lend money to their workers.

238. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.

239. Interview with Wol, 10 April 2020

Sudanese law, the traditional courts in Bahr el-Ghazal and the local trade unions recognize it and settle *jurula* cases.[240] The Dinka traditional chiefs' courts in Khartoum can nonetheless hear cases relating to their communities.[241]

### Other options for migrants

From 2016 onward, as inflation in South Sudan was peaking, rural schools were collapsing and the price of basic commodities was swiftly increasing, the number of young Dinka men migrating each day across the border to Sudan to find work rapidly grew. Given the restrictions on migration that were imposed by the Sudanese government, especially in terms of access to Khartoum, this meant these young migrants had to find other livelihoods outside the capital city. Their alternatives are limited and all are fraught with risk.

As discussed above, some join the various South Sudanese militias operating in the borderlands (see above). Recruiters, however, tend to deceive these young men with promises of high military ranks and payment in US dollars instead of the collapsed South Sudanese pound – should they succeed in overthrowing the Juba government.[242] Other young men try to find any sort of part-time job that can allow them to earn enough money to finance their own studies, with the goal of returning to school outside South Sudan. For these young men whose parents are unable to support them (for a variety of reasons outside their control) failure to earn enough money for school in Darfur, Kordofan or Khartoum can serve to encourage them to migrate onward to Egypt or the even riskier Libya route for the dangerous journey to Europe.[243]

Another recently emerging choice for young Dinka men, especially those from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, is the lucrative gold mining option in the far north of Sudan in the disputed Halaib triangle. Juac, a seasonal migrant labourers, verifies this: 'Now, young men have started going to *shimalia* [the far north] to mine gold. They go to a place called Halaib. Their number is increasing.'[244] The Sudanese gold industry rapidly expanded after Sudan lost most of its oil reserves when South Sudan became independent.

240. The chairman of Udhum – 10 km to the northwest of Aweil town – market traders association in 2020 said that *jurula* cases are the most common of all those between borrowers and traders in Udhum.
241. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.
242. Majok, *War, Migration and Work,* 7.
243. Kindersley and Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands,* 31.
244. Interview with Juac, seasonal labour migrant, Marol market, 16 April 2020.

The risks and pitfalls of this labour migration option are plentiful. Wol, who has seen many of his peers migrate north to become gold miners, explains:

> Many of my friends went and some are now stranded in the north. I heard that it's hard to find gold and food is expensive there. So, life is even difficult there – until you find gold. Among those who we lived together with, Garang, Mou and Tong have gone to look for gold in Halaib. They are now there for two years and none of them found gold.[245]

Gold mining is full of promise as a lucrative livelihoods option. Nonetheless, it separates families for long periods of time. Moreover, young men who are unable to find gold can easily fall into a poverty trap, which is compounded by the risk of family collapse due to long-term separation. This labour option keeps young men relying on hope – of finding their pot of gold and radically transforming their lives; for example, by using the gold they discover to set up a big successful business or migrate to another country for a better education and better life.

245. Interview with Wol, seasonal labour migrant, Gokmachar, 10 April 2020.

# CONCLUSION

Among Dinka communities in Bahr el-Ghazal, attitudes about and experiences of paid labour have shafted and changed over a century or more. Both slave raiders and colonial policies sought to transform Dinka herders, cultivators and gatherers in order to monetize their herds and labour. These various attempts by slave raiders and the colonial government brought Dinka people close to money, leading them to accept what they perceived as the indignity and lack of freedom associated with paid work. This acceptance even led some to voluntarily migrate to find paid work.

Cheap labour was a requirement for commercial agriculture to develop in northern Sudan. Slaves provided much of that labour in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both the commercial cotton farms set up after 1920 and the cereal farms set up after 1960 instead relied on cheap wage labour imported from the peripheries of Sudan and other West African countries. This constitutes the living history of agriculture development in Sudan and its role in shaping agricultural development in South Sudan, as well.

In the period after Sudanese independence in 1956, commercial agricultural development in Darfur played a key role in drawing Bahr el-Ghazal into the labour market. Among the Dinka, the strong mutual support system and collective attitude to survival continued to survive until the 1960s, when the First Sudanese Civil War (1955—1972) between the *Anyanya* rebels and the Sudanese government pitted Dinka against one another, and caused famine and displacement in Bahr el-Ghazal. The war spread firearms across Southern Sudan, enabling some Dinka to form their own militias to protect themselves or to loot and extract free labour for their own benefit.

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983—2005) and the resulting famines contributed to breaking customary collective survival strategies among the Dinka. Various ethnic militias permanently displaced the Dinka from their homes. In the process, militia leaders encouraged and widened the exploitation of their labour, even exposing some Dinka labourers to forms of slavery in order to meet the demand for labour in the north. The

Sudanese model of agricultural development relies on the constant expansion of farmland and the constant recruitment of hungry labour.[246]

This study reveals the linkages between the role of the ethnic militias of the 1990s and the permanent transformation of Dinka social and economic organization, including systems of agricultural production. The history of borderland militias, the multiple roles they played and the historical ties between Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Darfur provide better understanding of the evolution of the agricultural economy in this region, as well as the development of the broader post-independence economic institutions in South Sudan. The Southern militia leaders of the 1990s who were deeply embedded in the centres of power in Khartoum – and who used this power to displace, pillage and exploit countless Dinka communities and people – are now part of the current power elite in Juba.

Their access to power in Juba has expanded their capacity to continue to control and exploit land and labour in the borderlands and peripheries of South Sudan. History repeats itself in Bahr el-Ghazal: Instead of the centres of power in Khartoum, it is the centres of power in Juba that now underpin the capacity of these 1990s Southern militia leaders to replicate the exclusive and exploitative economic relations they were so instrumental to building in Sudan – for their own self-interested benefit. This control, along with their exclusion of the citizens of South Sudan from reaping any genuine economic benefits (even from their own labour), enables their continued access to money and land. This control also ensures their continued access to the cheap labour of the poor and marginalized people upon which their economic success depends and thrives. Trapped in perpetual poverty, these labourers have no choice but to do precarious and exploitative work. In the process, the history of these borderland dynamics also thoroughly transformed Dinka livelihoods and traditional collective survival strategies, turning their labour and the meagre fruits of their labour into commodities and money.

The 2018 South Sudanese peace deal to end the civil war that began in 2013, so soon after independence, led to the formation of a new transitional government in 2019. This new government brings together leading figures from both sides of the civil war. The transitional government is evidence of the continued importance of the military economy in the borderlands for generating resources to mobilize and recruit young men (and women) to fight. This government also reveals how this borderland military economy benefits the individual warlords who materially and militarily profit from it.

246. Edward Thomas and Magdi el-Gizouli, 'Sudan's Grain Divide: A revolution of bread and sorghum', London: Rift Valley Institute, 2020.

For example, Vice President Hussein Abdel Bagi is a long-time militia leader who, with his late father, has controlled the South Sudan-Sudan borders since 1980s. Now, he is one among five appointed vice presidents of South Sudan. His promotion to vice president in the transitional government indicates the importance of these peripheral borderlands power dynamics to the centre. At the same time, Hussein Abdel Bagi's appointment also indicates that the established institutions – those that encourage a predatory economy benefitting a few and excluding the masses from fair economic competition – will continue to remain firmly in place for the unforeseeable future.

Despite being part of the presidency of the country of South Sudan, the primary focus of Vice President Hussein Abdel Bagi will undoubtedly be his efforts to control security and economic life in the borderlands from where he comes and which have been key to the political success of his family for many decades. His attempts to control these borderlands, as well as a measure of his considerable influence, include two successful strategic political manoeuvres that deepen his control over the borderlands: the appointment of one of his loyalists as the state governor of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal; and the assignment of his elder brother, General Agany, as his head of security to oversee the borderlands.[247] As is the case with this vice president, other officials appointed to the transitional government of national unity will also focus on pursuing their own narrow self-interests over above more urgent concerns related to the peaceful, prosperous and equitable development of South Sudan as a country and the well-being of the citizens therein.

247. Kindersley and Majok, 'Hussein Abdel Bagi Deepens his Control over the Borderland'.

# GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS, WORDS AND PHRASES

**abu fik** (*Dinka*) we shall push (lit.); refers to a caravan of railway freight wagons that do not have engines

**abur** (*Dinka*) a man or family without cattle or without daughters/sisters to marry off in exchange for cattle (bridewealth)

**Anyanya** (*Madi*) snake venom (lit.); factional rebel group in the First Sudanese Civil War (1955—1972)

**aras watani** (*Arabic*) national guard

**Dar** (*Arabic*) land of [place name]

**guntar** (*Arabic*) 45 kg

**ijar** (*Arabic*) casual wage labour or piece work

**jongo** (*Arabic*) seasonal farm work

**Jour-die** (*Dinka*) my Arab (lit.); refers to an Arab man with whom a Dinka man has a particularly close type of relationship

**jurula** (*Arabic*) high-interest credit system; often part of the sharecropping system

**kooc** (*Dinka*) a marriage custom whereby a man marries a woman on behalf of a brother or sister who died before getting married and producing children

**kut** (*Dinka*) wage-free voluntary collective farming (also see **nafir**)

| | |
|---|---|
| **lo-hot** | (*Dinka*) a marriage custom whereby a man inherits the wife of a deceased brother or cousin to produce children on behalf the deceased |
| **makhamas** | (*Arabic*) an area of land measuring 30 m x 20 m or approximately half a hectare[248] |
| **malwa** | (*Arabic*) a tin container weighing 3.5 kg |
| **murahleen** | (*Arabic*) nomadic pastoralist tribes of Rizeigat and Misseriya of Darfur and Kordofan |
| **nafir** | (*Arabic*) wage-free voluntary collective farming (also see **kut**) |
| **nuss** | (*Arabic*) sharecropping, also known as 'half'; a system in which a landowner rents a piece of land to a landless person to cultivate, with the total produce divided in half after harvest |
| **qawil** | (*Arabic*) contract |
| **rutul** | (*Arabic*) 0.5 kg |
| **SPLA** | Sudan People's Liberation Army |
| **zeriba** | (*Arabic*) armed forts walled with thorns |

248. Weight and measurement conversions are approximate.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdel Karim, Abbas. 'Wage labourers in the fragmented labour market of the Gezira, Sudan'. *Africa* 56/1 (1986): 54 – 70.

Adams, Martin. 'The Baggara Problem: Attempts at Modern Change in South Darfur and Southern Kordofan (Sudan)'. *Development and Change* 13 (1982): 259 – 289.

Adepoju, Aderanti. 'An overview of the rural migration and agricultural labour force structure in Africa'. *African Population Studies* (1988).

Deng, Francis M. 'The Cow and the Thing Called "What": Dinka Cultural Perspectives on Wealth and Poverty'. *Journal of International Affairs* 52/1 (1998): 101 – 129.

Deng, Lual Achuek Lual. 'The Abyei Development Project: A case study of cattle herders in the Sudan Project'. PhD thesis, University of Madison, Wisconsin, 1984.

Deng, Luka Biong. 'Livelihood diversification and civil war: Dinka communities in Sudan's civil war'. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 4/3 (2010): 381 – 399.

—. 'Famine in the Sudan: Causes, Preparedness and Response, A political, social and economic analysis of the 1998 Famine in Bahr el Ghazal'. Discussion paper 369, Institute of Development Studies, 1999. (https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/4102)

Buchanan-Smith, Margie, Abdul Jabar Abdulla Fadul, Abdul Rahman Tahir, Musa Adam Ismail, Nadia Ibrahim Ahmed, Mohamed Zakaria, Zakaria Yagoub Kaja, El Hadi Abdulrahman Aldou, Mohamed Ibrahim Hussein Abdulmawla, Abdalla Ali Hassan, Yahia Mohamed Awad Elkareem, Laura James and Susanne Jaspars. 'Against the Grain: The Cereal Trade in Darfur'. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2014.

Duffield, Mark. 'Sudan: The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Assistance – Field Evaluation Study'. Report to the European Community Humanitarian Office. University of Dublin, Trinity College, 2000.

Ewald, Janet J. Soldiers, *Traders and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley,* 1700—1885. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP). 'Crop and Food security assessment mission to South Sudan'. Rome: FAO/WFP, 201.

Graeber, David. *Debt: the first 5,000 years.* New York: Melville House, 2011.

Grabska, Katarzyna and Peter Miller. 'The South Sudan House in Amarat: South Sudanese enclaves in Khartoum'. Égypte/Monde arabe, 21 October 2016. (https://journals.openedition.org/ema/3574)

Grawert, Elke. 'Impacts of Male Outmigration on Women: Case Study of Kutum/Northern Darfur/ Sudan'. Discussion Paper No. 18, Sudan Economy Research Group, University of Bremen, 1990.

Hargey, Taj. 'Festina Lente: Slavery policy and practice in the Anglo- Egyptian Sudan'. *Slavery and Abolition* 19/2 (1988): 250-272.

Hutchinson, Sharon. 'The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls Among the Nuer, 1930-83'. *American Ethnologist* 19/2 (1992): 294-316.

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development [IBRD]. 'Report of a Special Mission on the Economic Development of South Sudan'. Washington DC: IBRD, 1973.

Jaspars, Susanne and Margie Buchanan-Smith. 'Darfuri migration from Sudan to Europe: From displacement to despair'. Joint study between Research Evidence Facility (REF) and Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2018.

Johnson, Douglas H. 'Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: The Twentieth Century Expansion of the Pastoral "Common Economy"'. *Journal of African History* 30/2 (1989): 463 – 486.

—. *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.

Kameir, Elwathig Mohamed Hag Elkhidir Ali. 'Migrant workers in an Urban Situation: A comparative study of factory workers and building sites labourers in Khartoum (Sudan)'. PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1980.

Keen, David. *The Benefits of Famine, A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in South-western Sudan 1983—89*. Oxford: James Currey, 2008.

Kindersley, Nicola Dawn. 'The fifth column? An Intellectual History of the South Sudanese Communities in Khartoum, 1969—2005'. PhD thesis, Durham University, 2016.

Kindersley, Nicki. *Politics, Power and Chiefship in Famine and War, a Study of the Dormer Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, South Sudan*. London: Rift Valley Institute, 2018.

—and Joseph Diing Majok. *Monetized Livelihoods and Militarized Labour in South Sudan's Borderlands*. Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, 2019.

—. 'Understanding Hussein Abdel Bagi: South Sudan vice president from borderlands'. Briefing paper, Rift Valley Institute, March 2020. (https://riftvalley.net/publication/understanding-hussein-abdel-bagi-south-sudans-vice-president-borderlands)

—. *Breaking Out of the Borderlands: Understanding migrant pathways from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan*. Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, 2020.

—. 'South Sudan: Hussein Abdel Bagi deepens his control over the borderland. Briefing paper, Rift Valley Institute, December 2020. (https://riftvalley.net/publication/south-sudan-hussein-abdel-bagi-deepens-his-control-borderland)

Kocjok, Damazo Dut Majak. 'The Northern Bahr al-Ghazal: People, alien encroachment and rule, 1856—1956'. PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1990.

Mahmoud, Ushari Ahmed and Suleiman Ali Baldo. 'The Dhein Massacre: Slavery in the Sudan'. Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, 1987.

Majok, Joseph Diing. *War, Migration and Work: Changing Social Relationships in the South Sudan Borderlands*. Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, 2019.

Mcloughlin, Peter F. M. 'Economic Development and the Heritage of Slavery in the Sudan Republic'. *Africa* 32/4 (1989): 355 – 391.

National Bureau of Statistics. 'National Baseline Household Survey 2009, Report for South Sudan'. Juba: National Bureau of Statistics, 2012.

O'Brien, Jay. 'The Formation of the Agricultural Labor-force in Sudan'. *Review of African Political Economy,* 26 (1983): 15 – 34.

O'Fahey, R. S. 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Dār Fūr'. *Journal of African History* 14/1 (1973): 29-43.

Poggo, Scopas S. *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs and Israelis in the South Sudan, 1955—1972*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Rowe, John A. and Kjell Hødnebø. 'Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888—1890: The Mystery of the Missing Panzootic'. *Sudanic Africa* 5 (1994): 149 – 178.

Ryle, John and Kawaja Yai Kuol. 'Displaced South Sudanese in Northern Sudan with Special Reference to South Darfur and Kordofan'. *Save the Children,* 1989.

Santschi, Martina M. 'Encountering and Capturing Hakuma: Negotiating Statehood and Authority in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan'. PhD thesis, University of Bern, 2016.

Save the Children UK. 'Return of the Dinka displaced Person in South Darfur: The Willingness and Fear, A Return Assessment'. Save the Children UK, 2004.

Sikainga, Ahmad Alawad. 'The Legacy of Slavery and Slave Trade in Western Bahr el Ghazal'. *Northeast African Studies* 11 (1989): 75 – 95.

Thomas, Edward. *Moving Towards Markets: Cash Commodification and Conflict in South Sudan*. London: Rift Valley Institute, 2019.

—and Magdi el-Gizouli. 'Sudan's Grain Divide: A revolution of bread and sorghum'. Rift Valley Institute, 2020.

Tunley, H. A. L. 'Revenue from land and crops'. In *Agriculture in the Sudan,* edited by J. D. Tothill, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948.

World Bank. 'South Sudan Economic Brief'. Washington DC: World Bank, 2017.

Yath, Yath Awan. 'The Effect of Differential Access to Accommodation on the Dinka Migrants in Khartoum – The Example of Gereif West'. *GeoJournal* 25/1 (1999): 19 – 26.

War, Migration and Work examines the history of labour migration and labour relations in present-day South Sudan's Bahr el-Ghazal borderlands with Darfur and Kordofan (regions of present-day Sudan). Beginning in the nineteenth century, the report charts the evolution of labour systems from slavery to present-day forms of wage-labour, based on cash and debt. The report views these changes in the context of the region's long history of conflict, including the two Sudanese civil wars, plus South Sudan's more recent domestic conflict, which have contributed to the remaking of economic and social systems tied to the market.

This report is a product of the FCDO's Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) programme, funded by UK aid from the UK government.

Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT
CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
EVIDENCE / POLICY / TRENDS