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"in My Heart I Had A Feeling Of Doing It": A Case Study Of The Lost Boys Of Sudan And Christianity

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"IN MY HEART I HAD A FEELING OF DOING IT": A CASE STUDY OF THE

LOST BOYS OF SUDAN AND CHRISTIANITY

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ABSTRACT

While members of the southern Sudanese Dinka tribe converted to Christianity in large numbers in the early 1990s, the Lost Boys, a largely Dinka group of young men who were separated from their families during the Sudanese civil war in the late 1980s, had a distinct conversion experience in refugees camps. Using first-person interviews and participant observation with a group of Lost Boys resettled in Denver, and historical and ethnographic data, this research seeks to explain why the Lost Boys converted to Christianity and the role that it played in their identity in refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, and continues to play in their lives in Denver. Findings include the Lost Boys' need to adapt to radically changed circumstances that separated them from the central components of their lives—their families, villages, and cattle—and retention of the Dinka values of pragmatism and group autonomy, which allowed the Lost Boys to accept the once foreign practice of Christianity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction

Who are the Lost Boys?

Within in the last few years the "Lost Boys" of Sudan have gained celebrity status in the U.S. They have appeared on Oprah, the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* and have been featured on an episode of the Christian-themed sitcom "Seventh Heaven." Numerous books, both fictional and non-fictional, have been written about the Lost Boys. Even their nickname, taken from the movie *Peter Pan*[1] seemingly plays into this pop culture status. Their lives however, have been anything but glamorous.

The Lost Boys' story began in 1983, when Sudan's long-ranging civil war was reignited. The boys, who lived in what was at the time the largely animist southern part of Sudan, were forced to flee when their villages were attacked by soldiers and raiders from the mainly Muslim/Arab north of the country. During these raids, many of the boys' parents and sisters were either killed or kidnapped (and in some cases, subsequently enslaved) and their villages burned. Many of the boys credit the fact that they were away tending to cattle in far-off fields as their reason for escaping (Human Rights Watch Report/Africa 1994, 10). Others were able to run or hide. Alternately, Human Rights Watch/Africa has asserted that the Lost Boys were sent, and in some cases taken, from their families and sent to refugee camps to receive military training by the southern army, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (Human Rights Watch/Africa 1994, 8). In

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[1] Rumors persist about who exactly came up with this name, however it seems most likely that it was either journalists or aide workers in the refugee camps.

any case, this was the beginning of a trek that would take the Lost Boys hundreds of miles to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. The boys, who generally had brought no food or water with them, were forced to eat leaves, soft mud, and sometimes to drink their own urine in order to survive. Lions and hyenas attacked the boys at random, and many were killed.[2] The boys' ordeal was not over yet. After many years in the Ethiopian camps, Mengistu, the Ethiopian dictator who had been allowing the refugee camps on Ethiopian soil, was overthrown. The rebels that overthrew him were hostile to the Sudanese refugees believing (sometimes correctly) that they sided with the Marxist Mengistu, and as a result, most of the boys fled back to Sudan, under attack (Human Rights Watch Report 1994, 14). Another harrowing trek ensued for the boys, across the Gilo River that divides Ethiopia and Sudan, and eventually to Kenya, to more stable refugee camps.

Although some boys had been exposed to Christianity in their villages and already considered themselves Christians, it was in the camps that many were taught about Christianity and encouraged to choose Christian names. This happened largely through contact with Sudanese priests and church laypersons, a topic which will be discussed in more detail later on (in Chapters 6 and 7). The boys' contact with Christians continued as efforts to resettle them across the U.S. began, in particular because many of the resettlement agencies that received and helped resettle the Lost Boys were faith-based (Bixler 2005, 84).

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[2] Stories about the Lost Boys' journey often include what seem to be requisite elements such as lion attacks and the consumption of mud and urine. Because of their close similarity, they are sometimes regarded as apocryphal, although without doubt, many young men experienced these and other more horrific happenings on their way to the refugee camps.

Lost Boys in Denver

In Denver, the African Community Center (ECDC/ACC), a secular, nonprofit organization, and Ecumenical Refugee Services (ERS), a faith-based, but non-denominational agency, both assisted in resettling the Lost Boys, oftentimes working through local church congregations. Furthermore, many of the volunteers who helped the boys in their transition to American life were Christians who had heard about the boys through their churches. Church seems to be the one thing that has remained constant in these boys' lives and many cite religion as the reason the they have been able to survive their ordeal (DeLuca and Bruch 2005, 32).

The number of Lost Boys living in the Denver/Boulder metro area numbers approximately 80 young men (DeLuca and Bruch 2005, 32). Since the spring of 2006, a handful of young women, sometimes known as the "Lost Girls," but who have often traveled different paths than the Lost Boys to reach the United States, were also placed in Boulder. The community is a tightly knit one, with Lost Boys generally living together, sometimes four to five young men in an apartment, scattered throughout Denver, Aurora, Lakewood, Westminster and Boulder and various other suburbs in the Denver metropolitan area. The young men who I came to know were largely Dinka (with only one exception), and almost entirely from the Bor area of southern Sudan. Although the Lost Boy population is made up of several tribes including Nuer, Dinka, and Equatorian men from all over southern Sudan, it is often believed the Bor area was the hardest hit by the civil war, particularly because this is where a strong resistance to the northern government was formed and many SPLA members were drawn (Nikkel 1997, 87, Jok and Hutchinson 1999, 128). Because of this, the area produced a large percentage of the

3

Lost Boy population. Early resettlement of Lost Boys from Bor in Denver also contributed to this concentration.

Many of the young men work at least one full-time job and attend four and two-year colleges full-time as well, while others are working on their GEDs or saving up to pursue education. The Lost Boys of Denver are pursuing degrees in psychology, phlebotomy, business, and pharmacology among other fields and work a variety of jobs, in factories, at Wal-Mart, as maintenance workers, in college financial aid offices and computer labs. Still others work at a local specialty health shop and as city bus drivers. All of the Lost Boys send large portions of their income to family members and friends in Sudan or in refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda.

Although Lost Boys are often assumed to be orphaned and completely without family, many, to their own amazement as well, have found that they have relatives, a mother or father, or a couple of siblings, still alive in Sudan. There have been miraculous stories of Lost Boys in Denver spotting pictures of parents in news publications, online, and on TV who they thought were dead. Some of the Lost Boys of Denver have been able to return to Sudan to see parents and siblings they have not seen in fifteen or twenty years. In December of 2007, six Lost Boys from Denver traveled to southern Sudan with a local nonprofit, Project Education Sudan (PES) an organization that helps raise money to build schools in the villages of southern Sudan that the Lost Boys are from. PES also helps reunite Lost Boys with their families when these schools are built. I have been privileged to work with this organization and it is through PES that I first was introduced to the Lost Boy community of Denver. In March of 2008 I had the opportunity to travel

to southern Sudan with PES to assist with conducting a needs assessment for women in three villages as well as help teach income literacy workshops for the women of the three villages. I was also able to witness one of the Lost Boys whom I interviewed for this thesis be reunited with his father after over twenty years of separation.

The Lost Boys in Denver, as is the case with most Lost Boys resettled in Western countries, have had to make dramatic changes in their lives. The boys spent years caring for themselves in the refugee camps, attending church, school, and bible study classes and sometimes working as teachers if they possessed advanced English skills or doing odd jobs for elders. Despite this, the grueling schedules of work and school in the U.S. are a major departure from the relative freedom that they had in the camps. Much of the Lost Boy community in Denver is engaged in work or school seven days a week and often any free time these men have is filled with church activities, fundraising with groups such as PES, and the occasional soccer game. As in the refugee camps, church forms the pinnacle of social life for Denver's Lost Boy community.

Although the Lost Boys as a group retain a very cohesive identity, church constitutes one of the few places where they are able to gather as a group. One particular group of four young men that I came to know live together in an apartment only a few blocks from the apartment I lived in when I was conducting fieldwork with them. Three of the roommates are cousins and all four of the men grew up in neighboring areas of Bor. Because of this, I assumed that they saw each other often and from their behavior at church, I assumed that they were very close. I was therefore surprised when I asked one of the young men to pass along a question to his roommate/cousin, only to be told that

they rarely saw each other and they hardly ever had schedules that overlapped. Considering all that these men had been through together, it was surprising to find that church seemed to be the only time in their busy weeks that they could catch up with relatives and friend—even with those whom they shared an apartment!

With the Lost Boys' schedules being what they are, it was very hard to find time to schedule interviews with them. I often felt guilty asking for interviews when I knew I was cutting into valuable study or free time. Nevertheless, the Lost Boys were extremely welcoming to me and very generous with their time and stories. I often found that I learned the most by simply attending events with the Lost Boys—fundraisers and Dinka-language services at St. Phillip and St. James Episcopal Church (or St. P.J.'s as the Lost Boys call it) were particularly helpful.

Although the Lost Boys have received support from local American volunteers and church members, they are still very much on their own. Not only did the Lost Boys trek by themselves, for the most part free of adult supervision, for a good part of their childhoods, but they were settled in the U.S. when they were in their late teens and early twenties in small groups without any adult supervision other than what was provided by the voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) that resettled them. Consequently, the Lost Boys have become autonomous as a group, with decisions that affect the group being made in an extremely egalitarian fashion, in some ways similar to the freedom they would have been allowed in Dinka cattle camps had they not been separated from their homes and families.

Examples of this "group autonomy" as I came to call it will be explored in depth in Chapters 6 and 7, especially as I found the strong influence the boys had over each other and the respect that they possess for decisions made by the group had much to do with their conversion to Christianity in the refugee camps.

Despite the fact that a Pentecostal church in Montbello (a suburb of Denver) initially sponsored a number of the largely Episcopalian Lost Boys resettled here, several of the boys quickly gained contacts within St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Denver after their arrival.[3] Church members from St. John's who volunteered with the African Community Center had heard about the Lost Boys resettled through this agency and in a matter of months, the Lost Boys and American members of St. John's had organized a Dinka/Arabic-language service at the church complete with a Sudanese priest. Nathaniel Garang, Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), Diocese of Bor—a key figure in the conversion of southern Sudanese—was also integral in garnering a Dinka-language service for the Sudanese population of Denver and actually came to Denver from Sudan to discuss the service with the bishops at St. John's Cathedral. Two of the Lost Boys, including Joseph, a young man who came to be one of my key informants, were selected to be in charge of the newly created Sudanese ministry at St. John's. Subsequently, after rising tensions between the older Sudanese clergy and the Lost Boys, the Lost Boys worked with American volunteers to form yet another Dinka-language service of their own at a different congregation, St. P.J.'s in western Denver, near Lakewood. Here the Lost Boys conduct their own services, open to the

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[3] In fact, the Lost Boy community in Denver was largely Episcopal when they arrived in Colorado, and the religious affiliations of their initial sponsors seemed to have little sway over the Lost Boys' decisions relating to what church to join.

entire community but largely attended by Lost Boys and a handful of Sudanese women and children, where the boys take turns leading the services in pairs of two, coordinate all of their own music, and collect donations for the church.

Christianity in Sudan

Although statistics do not exist for the exact percentage of Lost Boys living in Denver who are Christian, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is very near one hundred percent. In my interviews with the Lost Boys, (all of who were Christian) the boys repeatedly stated that they did not know of any Lost Boys in the United States who were not Christian. One young man told me that not only did he not know any Lost Boys who were not Christian, but that the Lost Boys who he knew in Denver who did not come to church did so because of time constraints, not because they were not Christian. Another Lost Boy told me that he never came across any other Lost Boys in camp who didn't want to convert, but admitted that "some people were still having the feeling that they wanted to follow the traditional gods, and well, maybe they were not telling people…they were keeping it in their hearts." When asked if any Lost Boys in the U.S. were combining the traditional gods of Dinka religion with Christianity, the same informant stated that he didn't think this was happening in the U.S., but perhaps back in Sudan people were doing that.

Figures for the percentage of southern Sudanese who are Christian today, although easier to find than statistics for Lost Boys, vary wildly. Missionaries and the Lost Boys themselves invariably name figures much higher than those provided by secular organizations and the government of northern Sudan. Paul Freston, a secular

source, for example, puts the figure of Christians in southern Sudan at somewhere between four and a half and seven percent (2001, 115). On the other hand, several of the Lost Boys stated in interviews that they believed these figures were much too low and put the percentage, at least in their homeland of Bor, at closer to 90 percent   This figure is echoed in the work of Wheeler, an historian and Anglican missionary with the Church Mission Society (CMS) in Sudan, who says "by the late 1990s it could well be that 90% of the Bor Dinka identified themselves as Christians" (Wheeler 2005, 62). Marc Nikkel, a missionary and amateur anthropologist who has worked closely with the Lost Boys and in their homeland of Bor, cites a similar surge in Christianity in Bor (1997, 65).

When I asked another participant what he thought about the figures given by secular sources, which put the percentage of Christians in southern Sudan at five percent or so, he said maybe this low figure was true in the twentieth century, but not today. At the same time, several Lost Boys admitted that there were many in the South who had not converted and were combining traditional religion and cattle sacrifice with Christianity (Interviews 2-1 & 3-1).

Those affiliated with the Episcopal church often state that Sudan has the fastest growing church of any country in Africa and more specifically that it has the fastest growing population of Episcopalians in the world, though they usually refrain from citing an actual percentage of the converted (Wheeler 1997, 11). As with most other issues in Sudan, these figures are politically fraught. Wheeler himself acknowledges this, saying that accurate quantification of Christians in Sudan is imperative as the current figures are "open to manipulation in the struggle for scarce resources" (1997, 12). The North in their

quest to Arabize the South and in certain instances, to wipe out as many southerners as possible, would like to believe, and to have the outside world believe, that there are fewer Christians in the South than there are. One of the Lost Boys specifically addressed this discrepancy in an interview, stating that the reason Christianity is reported at a much lower percentage by the northern government is because Muslims are conspiring to make people believe that there are fewer Christians in Sudan in an effort aid their attempts of making Sudan a Muslim country (Interview1-1). By the same token, missionaries have much to gain by overestimating conversion, especially in terms of gaining the church's support in their missions and as a way to make conversion appear more appealing to southerners.

We are left to wonder if it is possible to gauge the number of converts in southern Sudan at all. Andrew Wheeler states that "because of the war, the destruction of church property, the displacement of many of the people and the isolation of many communities, basic information about church life (for example, figures on baptisms, confirmations and ordinations) are almost universally lacking, especially amongst the Protestant churches" (1997, 12). Both North and South have motives for misrepresenting conversion figures. It is therefore hard to side with the northern government and secular sources that present Christian conversion as very limited and equally hard to side with the southern Sudanese and the churches that look at Sudan as almost totally converted. If we believe that very few in southern Sudan are converted, how do we account for the Lost Boys being so wholly converted? How could they be that anomalous from the rest of the Sudanese population? Simply put, the Lost Boys, by and large, were not Christian before they got

to the refugee camps, but were by the time they got to the U.S. This means that something happened in the refugee camps that convinced them to convert. What were the conditions that made the Lost Boys so ripe for conversion? Are they really that different from the rest of the population and would they just have been swept up in the tide of Christianity that apparently has taken over Sudan even if they were not separated from their parents?

Because of the extreme discrepancy between these numbers, what needs to be considered is that even if both estimates for Christianity in southern Sudan are totally off base is that both reflect, in varying degrees, the fact that there has not been total conversion in Sudan. If the figure is somewhere in between the two ends of the spectrum, we can see that that percentage is significantly less than the total conversion that has happened among the Lost Boys, and it is precisely this difference that this research hopes to shed some light on.

Even if we were to accept, as missionary sources claim, that Bor is 90 percent Christian today, the number of Christians when the boys left around 1987 (Nikkel 2001, 239) was decidedly lower. In fact, what has been often cited as the major impetus for conversion among the Bor Dinka, the raid of their cattle by the neighboring Nuer tribe, happened in 1991, around the same time that the Lost Boys found themselves expelled from their refugee camp in Ethiopia (Wheeler 2005: 62). It can be said with almost absolute certainty that the Lost Boys were nowhere near their homeland of Bor when massive conversion took place there and in fact, as the Lost Boys told me in the interviews, many of them had already converted in Ethiopian camps before they left

11

Ethiopia (Wheeler 2005, 60). This does not negate the fact that the Bor Dinka as a whole, both the Lost Boys in refugee camps and those who remained behind in Bor, seemed to be particularly open to conversion. The factors behind these separate conversions will therefore be looked at as two distinct events while keeping an eye toward similarities among the Bor Dinka that might have made them more open to conversion than other tribes and groups of Dinka in southern Sudan.

Statement of the Problem/Research Questions

The Lost Boys are a distinct group even among the rampant displacement and horror that has affected even the least traumatized individual from southern Sudan. Orphaned or separated from their families, starving, in some cases forced to fight as child soldiers for the SPLA, and eventually relegated to refugee camps for years on end with little adult supervision, these young men had a unique and compelling experience, one that apparently pushed them in the direction of Christianity. This process, so far understood only through the writings of missionaries and clergy, is what this research seeks to understand.

Several key questions have guided this research, including: 1) why did so many Lost Boys decide to convert to Christianity/what social functions/needs has this conversion met for the Lost Boys, and 2) what role/functions does Christianity play today in their lives in Denver. These questions have led to a somewhat linear approach to this research, mainly because three distinct phases in the Lost Boys' lives must be understood to evaluate the significance of the Lost Boys' conversion, namely their animist childhood, journey to and time in the camps, and their lives in Denver. By considering these distinct

phases, we can begin to understand the radical differences between traditional Dinka life and the lives that Lost Boys are experiencing today as Christians living in the U.S. Additionally, by first considering Dinka life prior to the civil war, then looking at how the Lost Boys were separated from their parents and their time in refugee camps, and finally looking at their lives today, we are able to see the changes and processes that brought them to where they are, and through this process, understand their reasons for becoming a largely Christian group who accepted a religion once shunned by the Dinka.

Methods

The intent of this thesis is not to generalize the conversion process for the entire Lost Boy community; rather it seeks to elucidate the particular path that a group of Bor Dinka Lost Boys resettled in Denver took to become Christians. At the same time, the experiences that this group have endured are not unique among Dinka Lost Boys and I believe that a larger study of Lost Boys resettled in the U.S. would reveal similar processes and factors in conversion.

As this is truly a case study of a small, distinct group, the methods that I have chosen reflect this. The main instrument for data collection used was first-person, semi-structured interviews. Life histories were not taken and generally, the Lost Boys' Ethiopia/Sudan/Kenya trek was not delved into unless brought up by those being interviewed. In part this was because little conversion apparently happened on this trek, but also because this seems to be the only aspect of the Lost Boys' lives that has been researched in any depth thus far. More importantly, the Lost Boys' separation from their families and their traumatic journey to the refugee camps is a topic that they have, many

13

times capriciously, been called upon by media outlets, VOLAGs, and members of the public to recount in all of its gory details, often with little regard to feelings that these memories may conjure up in the person who has experienced them. The intention of this thesis, therefore, is not to rehash the details of the Lost Boys' separation from their homes and families and all of the horrors that surrounded these events, but to shed light on the topic of Christianity among the boys, something that many Lost Boys feel helped them survive their horrible ordeal. Because of this, interviews centered on early childhood, the Lost Boys' trek, and the refugee camps they found themselves in, only in their relation to Christianity and conversion, and not as a way to illustrate the horrors that have befallen the Lost Boys, which I think is a subject that has already been well-documented.

Interviews were organized so that each addressed a specific topic or theme but were left open-ended enough that informants could elaborate upon topics on which they had more to say. It was in this way that I often found out the most about certain delicate topics, such as the traditional religion of the Dinka, a topic that many Lost Boys professed not to know much about when asked directly, but that they often addressed in a roundabout way. The first interview with each informant gathered background information, such as where they grew up and if their family was Christian when they were young. The second interviews tended to focus more on the actual conversion process, where and how they converted, what they could remember of the traditional religion of the Dinka, and how and when they were baptized. The third interviews focused on the conversion of the Lost Boys' surviving family members, the

contemporary state of the Episcopal Church in Bor, and about their involvement with the church in the U.S. Finally, the fourth interviews centered on filling in gaps that the other interviews had left. To maintain the privacy of those I interviewed, I will use pseudonyms (Joseph, Deng, Lual, and Peter) rather than real names when referring to the Lost Boys.

Because the population of Lost Boys in the Denver metro area is fairly dispersed, and the regular crowd who attend St. P.J.'s rarely reached more than twenty young men, my sample was necessarily small. The grueling schedules that most of these young men keep, along with problems of access to this tightly-knit community, kept this number low as well.

Integral to this thesis was participant observation, undertaken at St. P.J.'s on numerous Sundays, at the Lost Boy-conducted Dinka-language service. Possibly more important than the service itself was the socializing that happened afterward outside the church, where the Lost Boys would form tight circles of young men, talking and laughing and often would let me join, graciously switching to English so I could understand. In addition to church services, participant observation was also conducted at many events and fundraisers attended by the Lost Boy community, mainly in association with PES. Gala dinners, Sudanese art auctions, refugee festivals, school fundraisers, and Dinka language classes were all attended on a regular basis and proved to be a good way to give back to the particular group of Lost Boys that I was working with. Additionally, I tutored one of the Lost Boys in several subjects in his coursework for an associate degree. Not only did this help me build trust with the community as a whole, but it also allowed me in

some small way, to give something back. In addition, two of the Lost Boys regularly taught a group of Americans, myself included, how to speak Dinka. Although these classes were short-lived, they proved a good way to learn more about Dinka culture and meet with the Lost Boys on a more informal basis.

Finally, my 2008 trip to Sudan, although not officially part of this thesis, gave the kind of context that only being immersed in a culture can. Although I didn't formally interview anyone in Sudan, the insights I gained into Bor Dinka culture on this trip were invaluable and are woven into this thesis.

In keeping with the key questions outlined above, the chapters that follow seek to do several things. First of all, the history of Sudan is discussed, particularly in regards to its colonization. The patterns of slavery and northern domination that resulted from this process are important to understanding the current conflict and the production of orphaned and severely abused children such as those who eventually became Lost Boys. The culture of southern Sudan, particularly that of the Dinka, is examined, especially in regards to the aspects of it that have been altered due to war and how this has factored into conversion to Christianity. The traditional religion of the Dinka is also discussed at length, to show what has been replaced by or integrated into new Christian beliefs. Lastly, and most importantly to this thesis, the conversion experiences of a group of Lost Boys in Denver is discussed, when they converted, what they give up to do so, what they gained, and what changes this conversion has brought to their new life in the U.S. By critically discussing the history of colonization, missions, conversion, and civil war in Sudan and using this information in conjunction with data gathered during participant

16

observation and in first-person interviews with the Lost Boys themselves, I hope to paint a picture of conversion among the Lost Boys that is situated in the historical and cultural context of the country. Finally, I have examined what the implications of this radical shift in worldview has meant for one group of men living in Denver.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the literature that has guided this research: refugee studies, globalization, identity, and the construction of the nation-state.

Chapter 2—Review of the Literature

The study of refugees is one that has only recently become the province of anthropologists. Although the discipline of anthropology has long claimed the study of non-Western cultures as its main area of research, it is only recently that the study of those displaced from both Western and non-Western cultures has gained credibility within the discipline. Intertwined with the study of refugees is the study of globalization, a process that anthropologists have long been engaged with, particularly in past studies of assimilation, acculturation, and syncretism. Theologists have further added to this body of knowledge with their studies of inculturation. The breaking down of the nation-state, a process both contributing to and resultant from globalization, has factored closely into the creation of refugees and is a good entrance point into the involvement of anthropologists with refugees. Because of this, I will begin this discussion by first situating the work of anthropologists within the discipline of refugee studies, discuss who refugees are, and some of the processes such as identity formation, inculturation, and acculturation that affect them. Then, I will discuss the literature of globalization and the nation-state in its relevance to creation of refugees, in particular, refugees in Sudan.

Refugees

Harrell-Bond and Voutira, both anthropologists working in the field of refugee studies, define refugees as "people who have undergone a violent "rite" of separation and unless or until they are "incorporated" as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in "transition," or in a state of "liminality" (1992,7). In

18

other words, refugees are forced migrants who find themselves in a transitional state, whether they have crossed international borders, national borders, or as is the case of groups such as the Palestinians, have been confined to refugee camps within their own national borders. A more standard, legalistic definition, which emerged out of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees states that refugees are:

> Any person who [,]…owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return (Malkki 1995, 501)

In this sense, the Lost Boys fall squarely into the category of refugees as they have been persecuted for both their ethnicity and religion by northern Sudanese, have been violently separated from their homes and families, and have had a well-founded fear that they would be harmed if they returned to their homelands. The Lost Boys are unique however, in that they have experienced "refugeeness" in numerous countries and situations throughout their displacement. In addition to having been displaced to surrounding East African countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Uganda, Lost Boys have also had experiences as refugees within Sudan and in the United States.

This discussion of the experiences of particular groups as refugees, however, brings up the oft debated topic within the discipline of refugee studies of whether or not a distinct "refugee" experience exists. One argument is that one should define and delineate the stages that refugees pass through, while others decry this practice as essentializing an experience that cannot be neatly defined and varies widely from group to group and country to country. Those who agree with the former position suggest that

by defining the states through which refugees pass, such as "perception of a threat; decision to flee; the period of extreme danger and flight; reaching safety; camp behavior; repatriation; settlement, or resettlement; the early and late stages of resettlement; adjustment and acculturation," we can begin to understand refugees as a recurring problem that have "definable and often identifiable patterns of behavior and causalities" rather than unique and isolated occurrences (Keller quoted by Malkki 1995, 508). More succinct, and perhaps more applicable than Keller's very specific stages of refugeeness, is Peter Van Arsdale's assertion that all refugees, and even internally displaced persons, (IDPs) are involved in preflight, flight, and postflight experiences that can be defined and discussed (Van Arsdale 2006, xi). For my own work with the Lost Boys, this three part framework has been useful to examine the underlying conditions that forced the Lost Boys to flee, such as the breakdown of the post-colonial state in Sudan, long held ethnic and religious divides between the North and South, the actual flight experience of the Lost Boys, and their experiences of resettlement in both refugee camps and in the United States.

Despite the usefulness of defining universal stages of refugeeness, this concept has come under criticism by those, such as Malkki, who say that it "posits a single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition" (1995, 511). By attempting to define a set of causal behaviors or circumstances that produce refugees, we can begin to see refugees as a group of people without individual histories or circumstances that have led to their present situations (Malkki 1995). On top of essentializing refugees and their experiences, viewing the processes that refugees go through as they are displaced in a linear

20

progression presupposes the superiority of the nation-state and assumes that "identity can only be whole and well when rooted in a territorial homeland"(Malkki 1995, 511). Malkki suggests that the result of the view that the nation-state is the only acceptable political form can lead to the negative practices such as the sealing of national borders against asylum seekers, and attempting to control refugees by placing them in camps (1995, 512).

For this study, I think it is important to consider both the idea of refugeeness *and* the unique experiences had by people or groups of people who happen to be refugees. The preflight, flight, and postflight experiences, as outlined by Van Arsdale, are helpful for the reasons discussed above; they paint a vivid picture of cause and effect in terms of what causes people to flee and what the effects of flight and resettlement are. On the other hand, and especially because this is a case study, the unique experiences of the Lost Boys as refugees will be discussed. By looking at the Lost Boys as both individuals and as refugees, the broad historical and political problems such as colonization that create refugees—and processes such as conversion, which help people cope with their displacement—can be seen as they play out in distinct, unique group of people who happen to have become refugees.

Refugees and Identity

During the process of displacement, refugees are often thrown into conditions unlike any they have ever experienced before. According to Harrell-Bond and Voutira, "refugee predicaments involve cultures in violent collision," which necessitate that refugees "adapt to radically new social and material conditions" in order to survive

(1992, 7). In the process of adapting to new environments, refugees often begin to question the "utility of beliefs, values, technology, statuses, exchange systems, and all other aspects of society" (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992, 9). In the case of the Lost Boys, displacement meant having to adapt to life without one's parents or immediate family, adherence to military-type discipline within the refugee camps, and diminished material resources, such as severe lack of access to food and water. On top of this, the Lost Boys, for the most part from insular villages in southern Sudan, were thrown into refugee camps where they encountered people from ethnic groups and countries they had never encountered before. As Harrell-Bond and Voutira suggest, situations such as this can cause the displaced to question their beliefs, and therefore I will examine what the beliefs of the Lost Boys were to begin with, and whether or not these were questioned as they fled and were resettled.

While Harrell-Bond and Voutira suggest that refugees enter radically different social situations upon their displacement, Malkki challenges the assertion that one's "social universe stops abruptly at the border of their own country or that the lifeworlds just across the border could be as axiomatically alien" as some researchers have suggested (1995, 509). Rather, Malkki states that people often decide to leave once their "own accustomed society has become 'strange and frightening' because of wars, massacres, political terror, or other forms of violence or uncertainty" (1995, 509). In other words, refugees are essentially "normal," and often-times well-educated people who have been forced to flee from their accustomed homes because war, civil-war, or other political upheavals have made their usual homeland "strange" (Malkki 1995, 509).

The idea that borders do not necessarily define or confine identity that Malkki raises is an important is one which will be discussed in more detail below. In addition to lending itself to identity, the issues raised by Malkki also raises the point that the term "refugee" is often used to define a group of people who come from varied political, economic, religious, and ethnic groups, but they are rarely treated as individuals with individual reasons for fleeing, because of this, we will now turn to how anthropology can contribute to the study of refugees.

Refugees, far from being the "undifferentiated mass" that Harrell-Bond and Voutira say that humanitarian organizations view them as, come from cultures as varied as the conflicts that have produced them (1992, 8). To understand refugees as people, ethnography, the main method used by anthropologists in their fieldwork, has much to offer the discipline of refugee studies. Through this case study, which relied on ethnographic methods of participant observation and first-person interviews, I have come to understand the unique situation that caused the Lost Boys of Sudan to become refugees, and also how their unique refugeeness led to eventual conversion to Christianity. Through these methods, the global phenomena of refugees can be understood through practices manifested on a local level.

In attempting to understand refugees both in terms of global processes and as individuals, it is important to discuss identity. In particular, ethnic identity strongly influences refugees' (and all people's) perceptions of themselves and others' perceptions about them as a group. Ethnic identity becomes particularly important when it is understood that the majority of conflicts throughout the world in the past 15 years or so

have been both internal and ethnic (Eriksen 2002, 2). While it has long been believed that globalization would begin to break down borders both within and between nation-states and in doing so, make ethnicity more fluid, this has not been the case (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 4). In Sudan, ethnicity can be seen simultaneously as a very fluid and a very fixed identity both historically and regionally (Van Arsdale 2006, 117), and has been a major factor in both the civil war and in the current Darfur conflict. Additionally, the Lost Boys have formed a particular identity for themselves as a group; an identity that I will argue in a later chapter includes Christianity as a main component.

Fredrik Barth, an early writer on ethnic groups and boundaries, discusses ethnicity in terms of ascription and identification (Barth 1969, 10). In other words, our identity is a dialogic process, made up of both what others think we are, or ascription, and what we think of ourselves, or identification. More concretely, Barth outlines several criteria for ethnic groups saying that they must be: biologically perpetuated, share fundamental cultural values, make up a field of communication and interaction, and have a membership that can identify itself as a group as well as be identified as a group by outsiders (Barth 1969, 11). In other words, ethnic groups must have some common ancestry, have a common recognized culture, communicate and interact, and most importantly, label themselves and be labeled by others as a group. It is important to note that this final criteria goes back to Barth's first point, that identity has both to do with our own perception of ourselves and others' perceptions of us.

Although the most current and widely used theory of identity, the constructionist approach, is largely based on both assertion of our identity and assignment of identity by

others (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 77), this has not always been the case. In the early 1900s, social scientists began to question past theories of races and ethnicity that were rooted in biology (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 42). Influenced by the work of Franz Boas, sociologists of this time period began to look at ethnicity as both fluid and culturally based (Cornell and Hartman 1998). Arising out of this theoretical base and heavily influenced by the influx of immigrants into the U.S. at this time, sociologists from the Chicago School of sociology formulated an assimilationist model of identity, which stated that immigrant groups went through a series of stages whereby they gradually assimilated to American culture and eventually lost their old ethnic identity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). As the twentieth century progressed, however, the assimilationist model fell apart as newly created post-colonial African and Asian nation-states collapsed because as Cornell and Hartmann state, they "often were at odds with the political and civil traditions of the former colonial societies that now tried to put them to work" (1998, 44). In the U.S. as well, ethnic identity made a strong resurgence in the 1960s with the civil rights movement and counter reclamation of ethnicity by European-American immigrant groups (Cornell and Hartmann 1998).

In reaction to the increasingly inadequate assimilationist model came the competing theories of primordialism and circumstantialism. Primordial theorists argued that the assimilation model failed because ethnicity is "fundamental and intractable" (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 48). In other words, ethnic identity is something we are born with and cannot be changed. Circumstantialists, on the other hand, argued that assimilation theory was inadequate and no longer applicable because ethnicity is fluid

and easily affected by circumstances (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 48). Proponents of this theory asserted a utilitarian theory of ethnicity, which stated that people used their ethnicity, or change their ethnicity, when it was the most advantageous for them (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 57).

Despite the fact that these arguments seemed to be better models than assimilation to describe ethnic identity, both had serious flaws. Primordialism, in its insistence on fixed ethnicity, didn't allow for instances such as those where people identify equally with more than one ethnicity, people identify more strongly with their religious identity than their ethnic identity, and or as Barth suggests has been the case with people of the Darfur region of Sudan, where people freely change their ethnicity (Barth 1969, 23 and Cornell and Hartmann 1998). Circumstantialism, alternately, fell short by not acknowledging that ethnicity runs deeper than circumstances, as evidenced by the fact that some groups retain their ethnicities even when it is not advantageous to do so (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 64).

The most recent and widely used theory to tackle issues of identity is constructionism, which attempts to incorporate both primordialism and circumstantialism into its discourse. Harkening back to Barth's theory of identity, constructionists stress the importance of both ascription and assertion in the formation of a group's identity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 77). Identity is formed by our perception of ourselves and others' perceptions of us. In this way, constructionists, like circumstantialists, allow that circumstances can shape identity, but unlike circumstantialists, assert that ethnic groups play a role in their own identity construction, thereby asserting that ethnic groups have

agency (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 73). This idea, that both outsiders and insiders shape identity, is where primordialism comes into play in this theory in that constructionists accept the fact that ethnic identity for groups is often rooted in "blood ties or common origins" be they real or imagined (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 89). Finally, constructionists also stress the idea that ethnicity can be "thick" or "thin" in that how important ethnicity is changes from group to group, and during different historical and political circumstances (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 82-83).

The constructionist approach to identity lends easily lends itself to application in the globalizing word in which refugees live, in that it acknowledges that identity can be both intertwined with homelands at the same time that it can be continually renegotiated and changed. The idea that identity is both rooted in homelands and mobile also comes into play in the work of Appadurai, who uses the term "ethnoscapes" to describe groups of people on the move who make up the globalizing world (Appadurai 1992). As these people move throughout the world, they constantly renegotiate their identity while retaining ties to both real and imagined homelands, a point which will be touched on in more detail below.

The constructionist approach and the idea of ethnoscapes brings up another important point about identity, the notion of boundaries, which for Barth are more important than what groups contain (1969, 15). As Barth says "if a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion," (1969, 15) it then becomes important to determine what this criteria is and how group members determine

what makes them part of a group. A much more recent writer on the subject of ethnicity and identity, Thomas Eriksen, author of *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, says that boundaries between groups become much more pronounced during times of social upheaval (2002). Perception of threat to a group almost always causes them to maintain their boundaries such as during "migration, change in demographic situation, industrialisation or other economic change, or integration into or encapsulation by a larger political system" (Eriksen 2002, 68).

Identity can also be discussed in terms of another sort of boundary: that of the nation, as Eriksen and Stephen Cornell and Douglass Hartman, authors of *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, have done. According to Eriksen, ethnic identity is formed around notions of shared origins, be they real or imagined (2002, 59). The notion of shared origins also factors closely into the formation of nation-states, a point that will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4. Cornell and Hartman give a similar definition for ethnic identity, based on the Weberian model, which says that ethnicity is formed around claims of real or imagined common ancestry and some sort of shared, identifiable culture in the present (Cornell and Hartman 1998,19).

Related to the issue of identity is that of community, also an important variable in this study. Much like identity, community is predicated on the conception of self and of the "other." According to Anthony Cohen, author of the book the *Symbolic Construction of Community*, communities are groups of people who "(a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups" (1985, 12). Boundaries therefore factor heavily into communities

and serve to "encapsulate" the identity of communities as members interact with those from different communities (Cohen 1985, 12). These boundaries can be concrete, such as physical divisions of lands for different groups, while others are intangible, such as purported ethnic differences (Cohen 1985). These abstract or constructed boundaries are where the "symbolic" nature of communities becomes apparent in that much of what makes up a community is based on the common perception of a group, and not on any finite reality (Cohen 1985).

In terms of both identity and community, the Lost Boys provide an interesting case study. In this research, I will examine how they have created their own identity, how southern Sudanese people have conceived of an identity, and how Lost Boys factor into this larger southern Sudanese identity. Additionally, I have looked at how attempts by northern Sudanese nationalists to foster a national Sudanese identity have contributed to the creation of a new, pan-southern identity, and how the war has intensified ethnic and religious identities in both northern and southern Sudan. As far as communities are concerned, I have examined how the Lost Boys have come to constitute a community of their own, both as they moved together through Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan in the refugee camps, and how they have formed a distinct community within the United States. Most importantly, though, I will look at how Christianity has factored into the identity of the Lost Boys, the identity of the South as a whole, and in the communities constructed by the Lost Boys in Africa and America. We will now turn to acculturation, a theory used in the past by anthropologists, which incorporates the ideas of identity and community to explain culture contact.

Acculturation

Although anthropologists have begun recently to incorporate the study of global processes on the populations they study, the initial forays of anthropologists into studies of cultural contact can be traced back to at least the 1930s to studies of acculturation and assimilation. Acculturation, in its broadest sense, has been defined by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) as "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems" (1953, 974). Herskovits, citing a definition from Lesser, defines acculturation by saying that "acculturation may be taken to refer to ways in which some cultural aspect is taken into a culture and adjusted and fitted to it" (1958, 7). In other words, acculturation happens when a cultural group adopts the traits of another and in the process of doing so, modifies them to fit with their own culture. A much earlier definition of acculturation taken from a collaborative article written by Herskovits, Redfield, and Linton more explicitly lays out the criteria for acculturation, saying that acculturation constitutes: "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (1935, 145-156). This particular definition raises several important points about acculturation, namely the idea that contact between two groups must be continuous in order for acculturation to take place, and that acculturation is a process that can affect both groups involved in this contact.

The two-way nature of acculturation is an oft debated topic, at least in the early literature. Spindler in particular emphasizes the "reciprocal nature" of acculturation, something she says that previous studies of forced acculturation at the hands of the colonists have largely ignored (1977, 31). Lesser similarly states that: "acculturation is a reciprocal relationship. Both [cultures] give and take" (Herskovits 1958, 7). Although the general consensus in the literature seems to be that there is at least a small degree of reciprocal transmission of cultural practices inherent in the process of acculturation, several authors site the largely unequal relations between the groups involved. Teske and Nelson, while stating that acculturation is a "bidirectional" process, say that "it should be acknowledged, though, that this two-way process is not necessarily egalitarian" (1974, 354).

The idea of the two-way exchange of culture inherent to acculturation is necessary to understand the difference between assimilation and acculturation. There is a general consensus in the literature that assimilation implies acceptance of the assimilating group by the group that people are being assimilated into. Assimilation can also be differentiated from acculturation in that the transmission of culture largely flows in the direction of the group that is attempting to assimilate and rarely in the direction of the "out-group" or group that people are assimilating to. These differences are perhaps most clearly defined by Teske and Nelson who say that assimilation requires both out-group acceptance of the group attempting to assimilate as well as a positive "orientation" of the assimilating groups toward the out-group (1974, 359). In other words, the dominant group must want to allow the groups attempting to assimilate to do so, and the

assimilating group must value the culture of the dominant group and accept it. In acculturation, it is not necessary for the two groups to value the culture they are acculturating to, nor is it necessary that either group wants the other to acculturate. In this way, acculturation is a more autonomous process than assimilation. A further difference between assimilation and acculturation is that assimilation requires a change in values, whereas acculturation does not (Teske and Nelson 1974, 361). During acculturation it is possible for a culture to take on the cultural practices of another group without taking on or even fully understanding the values behind these practices. Additionally, acculturation is always part of the process of assimilation, but the opposite is not always true; people do not have to assimilate in order to acculturate (Teske and Nelson 1974, 365). Spindler also points out that although anthropologists presumed in the past that acculturation was basically a stop along the way to assimilation, the natural end result, many no longer believe this to be the case the case. She says that acculturation is seen as "adaptive strategies used by people who have to cope with economic, social, and political disadvantages of their position as minorities" (Spindler 1977, 33).

Conversion

Going hand-in-hand with the processes of acculturation and globalization, which will be discussed below, is the process of conversion. As might be expected, conversion has been looked at differently by the numerous stakeholders involved in its study. While anthropologists often discuss conversion in terms of syncretism, theologists do so using

the theory of inculturation. The term inculturation came into use in the late 1970s,

particularly among Catholic churches and missionaries, and has been defined as:

> [t]he incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so to bring about a >>new creation<< (Appiah 2000, 20).

In other words, inculturation refers to the process whereby Christianity is understood

through the particular culture into which it is introduced. Francis Bowie, an

anthropologist and author of the article "The Inculturation Debate in Africa," says that

inculturation can be defined as the "insertion of Christianity into a culture, generally

outside the Western Judaeo-Christian context, and that culture's response to the Christian

message" (1999, 70). Additionally, Bowie suggests that inculturation is similar to both

acculturation and what she calls "indigenization," but says that inculturation differs in

that it is strictly theological in nature (1999, 70). Like acculturation, it is possible for

inculturation to be a two-way process in that both the culture that is converting and the

Christian faith will undergo change during the process of inculturation (Bowie 1999, 71).

Edward P. Antonio, in an article entitled "Inculturation and Postcolonial

Discourse," describes inculturation in Africa as a much more self-aware process than

Bowie by imbuing it with a strong sense of agency on the part of African Christians.

According to Antonio, inculturation in Africa is a conscious reclamation of African

identity expressed through Christianity and is therefore a critique of colonial hegemony

(2006). For Antonio, inculturation in Africa is inseparable from post-colonial discourse

in that they both attempt to deal with similar issues such as "culture, the interface

between indigenous knowledge systems and western systems of thought, the relation of

the past to the present, liberation, difference and otherness" (2006, 1). In this way, inculturation is not just the distinctly African way in which Christianity is understood as Bowie has suggested, but it is an " 'anti-colonial' recuperation of their [African] varied cultural traditions"(Antonio 2006, 8).

While anthropologists have "reclaimed" the term "syncretism" and now use it almost synonymously with "inculturation" churches, in particular the Catholic church, views these processes as opposites, associating inculturation with the "legitimate take-up of selected aspects of indigenous culture into Christian practice," and syncretism with "nativism or apostasy" (Bowie 1999, 68). Syncretism has commonly been viewed by the church as simply combining what it views to be the binary opposites of indigenous religions and Western religions, and has ignored the fact that even the Christian church has incorporated pagan practices into its discourse (Bowie 1999, 69).

Inculturation and syncretism are important concepts to consider when discussing the Lost Boys, particularly in understanding how the abstract notion of Christianity became accepted and fitted to Dinka culture. As such, both the traditional animist religion of the Dinka, and the particular brand of Christianity that was being proffered to the Lost Boys will be examined in subsequent chapters in order to understand how Christianity fit into Dinka culture and what had to be adapted to do so. We will now turn to yet another process that has affected the conversion of the Lost Boys: globalization situated in the context of the nation-state.

Although the theory of acculturation was used by early anthropologists to explain the effects of culture contact between two or more groups, and inculturation has been

used by theologists, they have become increasingly inadequate to explain the interaction of cultures in today's globalizing world as well as the complexities of religious conversion. Whereas in the past people may have only been influenced by people who they physically came into contact with, this can no longer be assumed to be true. People in even the most remote places in the world, such as southern Sudan, are influenced by people all over the world, be it through trade, in refugee camps, or through mass media. It has therefore become much more useful, particularly in the last twenty years or so, to use globalization as a framework to study refugees. As such, we will now discuss the study of globalization and refugees situated within the context of the nation-state.

The Nation-State and Globalization

The study of refugees is intimately tied to the study of globalization as globalization is directly tied to the breaking-down of borders that for so long have defined nation-states. Both the creation of the nation-state and its subsequent break-down in many Third World countries has been integral in the production of refugees. As Phillip Marfleet says in his book, *Refugees in a Global Era*, all aspects of the refugee experience, from initial displacement, to flight, to exile, are shaped by the nation-state and its institutions (2006, 38). This is true in the country that refugees originate from, the country or countries they are hosted in, and in their final place of exile. Also bound up with the nation-state, are processes such as "decolonization and superpower conflict," which have contributed to many of the current flows of refugees around the world (Maalki 1995, 503). Adding to this observation, Marfleet states that while superpower conflict that emerged from the Cold War played a hand in refugee movements in the

1970s and '80s, this assertion "understates the extent to which such movements were associated with the legacy of colonialism, with crises of the world economy, and with policies of dominant states towards other that were weaker and more vulnerable" (2006, 39). Furthermore, Marfleet suggests that the majority of refugee flows in Africa, especially those that began decades ago, often were contingent upon decolonization (2006:40).

Although the processes of colonization and decolonization that have contributed so greatly to the creation of refugees have been studied for some time by anthropologists, the refugees that result from these processes have only recently begun to be studied. As Malkki suggests, the pullout of colonizing forces has lead to reshuffling of borders and creation of new nation states, ones that are not always in the best interest of the people living in these areas (1995, 503). With national borders being changed and becoming, at least in most cases, less permeable, people throughout the world have become displaced on a scale that has never before been seen. To this day, southern Sudan is still dealing with the repercussions of attempts by both their former colonizers, namely the British and Egyptians, and the northern Sudanese, to unite the North and South under the rubric of a unified state. Years of civil war have been the result with the majority of destruction and casualties occurring in the South. While the breakdown of the attempted Sudanese nation-state has caused this destruction, the refugees that result, such as the Lost Boys, have had to deal with the global problem of less permeable borders among old and emerging nation states that border Sudan and in countries such as the United States and Australia that have taken them in. In order to better understand the problems facing the

Lost Boys and the country of Sudan, it is important to understand what exactly a nation

state is and how the differing identities of North and Sudan fit into this definition.

The Breakdown of the Post-Colonial African Nation-State

Issues surrounding the creation and the break-down of the state have plagued

Sudan and other decolonized countries for years. According to Max Weber, in order for

a nation-state to be formed and remain stable, several factors need to be in place, namely

a common national language, a common cultural heritage and "political power which is

endowed with sufficient military power" (Mommsen 1974, 38). Weber points out that

common cultural heritage is not necessarily predicated on ethnic homogeneity, but at the

very least people need to share real or imagined "notions of common descent" (Gerth and

Mills 1958, 173). In order to legitimate themselves, states and the people who make

them up must believe, prima facie, that their culture is superior to others (Mommsen

1974, 38). As Weber, (quoted by Mommsen) says, "the significance of a 'nation' is

usually anchored in the superiority, or at least the irreplaceability, of the culture values

that are to be preserved and developed only through the cultivation of the peculiarity of a

group" (Mommsen 1974, 39).

Before discussing the nation-state in the context of Africa, it is important to note

that the terms "nation," "state," and "nation-state" should not be used interchangeably,

and in fact the difference between the term "nation" and the term "state" factor into the

current political situation in Sudan. A state can be defined broadly as a geographically-

defined entity. As such, the notion of a state lends itself to quantitative measure, such as

miles or kilometers or longitudes and latitudes (Connor 1994, 36). Nations, on the other

hand, lend themselves to qualitative data, such as languages spoken, religions practiced, or ethnicities claimed. Even more intangibly, the nation has to do with what people "believe they are," instead of what they actually are or do (Connor 1994, 37). Joseph Stalin, also speaking to the imagined, intangible nature of nations, says that although people making up a nation may share ethnicity, or language, what really matters is that people share a "historically constituted community" (1994, 18). It is not just a real or imagined shared past that makes up a nation though, but also stability, or the belief that the nation is permanent, and believed to be so because of a shared language, a shared economy, a common territory, and some kind of overarching "psychological make-up" or a "national character" that lends itself to a shared culture (Stalin 1994, 20). For Stalin, all of these factors must be in place in order for a nation to exist. In other words, a nation is always—at least using Stalin's definition, which includes a shared territory—a state, but a state is not always a nation.

Adding to the discourse on nation-states, and speaking specifically about Sudan, Sharkey discusses several other elements which are integral to the formation of states. According to Sharkey, a nation is formed around people sharing a "common cause" and is focused around claims to a particular land, claims to autonomy, and claims to a common past that "legitimate the present and offers signposts for the future" (2003, 124). Much like Weber and Stalin, Sharkey suggests that elements such as ethnicity, religious practices and shared language also aid in formation of nations (2003, 124).

Benyamin Neuberger adds more generally to the discussion of the post-colonial African state in his piece "State and Nation in African Thought." According to

Neuberger, the African experience of nation-state building has been entirely different from that of the Europeans (1994, 233). Whereas in Europe, states and nations evolved together, and "states established nations and nations established states" (Neuberger 1994, 233), post-colonial Africa was, for the most part, left with states established by colonial powers, but little in the way of nations. In fact, many European states, such as Britain and France, formed for reasons other than a strict desire for nationhood (Neuberger 1994). Rulers of post-colonial African states, on the other hand, have consciously attempted to build nations among the populations confined to the borders of the imposed state (Neuberger 1994). Because the borders for African states have so often been imposed with little regard for the populations that live within them, and often cut across ethnic, religious and linguistic divides, nations, especially as Weber has defined them, they have been hard to build. Despite these difficulties, attempts have, and continue to be made throughout Africa, to build nation-states. Neuberger explains that there are really only two options open to African states attempting to build nations: either to break away from a larger nation-state in order for a smaller group with a shared identity to become a nation, or, for nationalist leaders to "give the external shell of the state an internal national content" (Neuberger 1994, 234). In other words, a nation would need to be imposed on an area that constitutes a state. In Sudan, clearly the latter option is the one that has been pursued by the northerners and will be discussed in more detail later on.

The Global and the Local

Despite the fact that global processes such as decolonization, the building-up and the breaking-down of the nation-state, and the extreme impoverishment of the developing

world are the main factors contributing to the creation of refugees, it is in the "local" or on a small-scale, that these processes are most noticeable. Marfleet states that forced migration is most importantly caused by "failures of basic survival systems and the weakening or collapse of social and political structures, often structures of the local state" adding that these processes undoubtedly have a "global dimension" (2006, 21). It is also at this "local" level that anthropologists are most accustomed to working. According to Appadurai, anthropologists need to add the global to their studies of specific localities (1992, 199). In this research, the global phenomenon of Christianity is examined through its role in the lives of a group of young men now living in Denver.

Another way in which the global is brought to the local in the study of refugees is in the "imagination" of people in the Third World (Appadurai 1992). As the world becomes increasingly deterritorialized, more and more people have begun to make up what Appadurai refers to as "ethnoscapes," which as we have previously discussed are groups of people on the move across national boundaries, such as refugees, guest workers, and tourists (1992, 192). The people making up these ethnoscapes, through their own movement and through the globalized media, are being exposed to ideas and practices that they heretofore have not been and through this exposure the "imagination" of these people has expanded" (Appadurai 1992, 198-199 & 2000, 625). Although this may seem positive in that people are offered more choices in their lives, Appadurai points out that what people in the Third World see in the media and can imagine is often not attainable in real life (1992, 198). Some examples of "disjunctures" between what people can imagine and what they can actually attain include images in the media "which cannot

be satisfied by national standards of living and consumer capabilities" and "flows of discourses of human rights that generate demands from workforces that are repressed by state violence which is itself backed by global arms flows" (Appadurai 2000, 625).

While it may seem overly abstract for an ethnographer to attempt to "imagine" the "imagination" of others, what Appadurai is suggesting is that to understand the social imagination of a particular social group and how this factors into the identity that they construct for themselves, is to begin to understand the effects of globalization on specific groups of people (1992, 199). In this way, the "undifferentiated mass" that constitutes refugees to the general public can begin to be illuminated. For this research, beginning to understand how Christianity factored into the imagination of the Lost Boys is important. What did they know of Christianity before they converted? How and by what means did Christianity reach southern Sudan? How did living in refugee camps change what the Lost Boys imagined the larger world to be and how did Christianity factor into this new worldview? Did Christianity accompany other processes such as Western-style education? By answering some of these questions, we can begin to understand some of the global forces acting on a particular to a group of Lost Boys and also begin to understand how Christianity fit into to their larger imagination of their social reality.

To better understand the imagination of the Lost Boys, it is also important to factor in the global phenomena of the refugee camp. Refugee camps, because of their function of grouping people together, often become sites of collective narratives (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992, 8). Some of the Lost Boys spent nearly fifteen years in refugee camps, for many the majority of their lives to that point. As such, it is important to look

at the collective social imagination and group narratives that formed in these camps. What were the Lost Boys exposed to in these camps that they would not have been exposed to had they remained in Sudan—people from other countries, religions, new technology? How did these factors change what they could imagine for their lives and how did Christianity factor into this new social imagination? These issues will be further explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

In the next chapter, I will discuss Dinka life in Sudan as it was before the arrival of colonizers, the Egyptian/Turkish and British/ Egyptian colonization of Sudan, the pull-out of these forces after World War II and the effects that this had, leaving the South to fend for itself in the midst of northern domination and the devolution of the country into civil war as the North attempted to force a Sudanese nation-state.

Chapter 3—Historical Background

Dinka Culture Prior to 1955

As little literature specifically pertaining to Bor Dinka exists other than that produced by missionaries who have worked in the area, the history of the Dinka tribe will be presented as that of the Dinka tribe as a whole, and will not just be confined to the narrow literature of Bor ethnography. Although some variations in culture are recognized between different groups of Dinka (of which Bixler says there are about 25 (2005, 36) and the area in which the Dinka live is vast, Lienhardt calls the cultural and linguistic homogeneity among different groups of Dinka "striking" saying that "despite regional variations in dialect, custom, and some aspects of social structure" the Dinka may be treated as "a single people" (Lienhardt 1961, 1). Several of the Lost Boys confirmed this relative similarity as well. Additionally, by looking at the history of the entire Dinka tribe, I was able to include a body of literature that has major contributions from Sudanese anthropologists such as Francis Mading Deng and Jok Madut Jok, which help paint a more emic picture of life in Sudan.

The ethnographic literature that exists for the Dinka is made up largely of three sources: 1) missionary literature, in this case, largely that of Marc Nikkel, an Episcopal missionary and amateur ethnographer who worked closely with the Bor Dinka, 2) native southern Sudanese anthropologists such as Jok Madut Jok and Francis Mading Deng and, 3) British and American anthropologists such as Godfrey Lienhardt, who worked with the

Dinka, and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who dealt with the closely-related Nuer tribes of Sudan. Although it would seem that this varied body of contributors would provide differing accounts of Dinka culture, they often reach similar conclusions, largely because many of these authors have relied on the early accounts of Pritchard and Lienhardt to fill in gaps in their research.

Origins of the Dinka

The Dinka, at least prior to widespread Christianity, traced their origins through the creation myth of the traditional religion which in many ways is similar to Christian creation stories. According to Lienhardt, this myth states that earth and sky were originally one; connected together by a rope that man could easily climb to reach *Nhialic*. As in the biblical myth, there was one man and one woman, who were given the food that they needed by *Nhialic*, but were forbidden from grinding or planting any more grain than what they were supplied with. The woman however decided to plant (or pound) more grain, because she was "greedy." *Nhialic* was struck by her mallet and decided to sever the rope that connected the earth with the sky. People now knew hunger, death, and sickness and were permanently separated from *Nhialic* (Lienhardt 1961, 34).

Other aspects of the traditional Dinka religion, such as the supreme being, *Nhialic*, who is considered to be the creator and worshiped above all other divinities, have caused many to speculate that the Dinka have had contact with or that their religion was influenced by "Near Eastern" thought (Nikkel 2001, 39). The similarities between aspects of Dinka religion and the bible, specifically the Old Testament, have been traced by some to possible contact between the southern Sudanese and the Hebrews, or to an

origin of the Dinka people in either northeastern Africa or the Middle East (Nikkel 2001, 43). Nuer religion similarly has been compared to the Old Testament, something that was observed by Evans-Prichard who says:

> Only the religion of the Dinka can be said to have strongly marked affinities with it, [Nuer religion] and it can be further said that in some respects the religions of these two peoples resemble less other Negro religions than some of the historic religions (1956, vii).

Others however, believe that the idea that the Dinka are relatively recent inhabitants of southern Sudan is simply a ploy by the North to construct a discourse that southerners have no claim to Sudanese land (Nikkel 2001, 40). More recent evidence based on linguistics seems to suggest that the Upper Nile area (in which Bor, where many of the Lost Boys are from, is located) has been continuously occupied for several millennia (Nikkel 2001, 41). Going still further, some have proposed that southerners actually originated as far north as Khartoum, and that even the name is taken from the Dinka word *Kiertoum* which means "the meeting of rivers," a theory which Dinka oral tradition seems to support (Nikkel 2001, 41-42).

When the "World Was Spoiled": Turko-Egyptian and British-Egyptian Invaders Come to Dinkaland

How does the spoiling of the world come about?
Our land is closed in a prison cell
The Arabs have spoiled our land
Spoiled our land with bearded guns
Guns which thunder and then even sound beautiful
Like the ancient drums with which buffaloes were charmed
Until their horns were caught
Is the black color of the skin such a thing
That the Government should draw its guns?[4]

Regardless of which group inhabited Sudan first, it seems that both the North and the South have tried to manipulate history in order to paint a favorable picture of Sudan's

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[4] Taken from a Dinka song (Deng 1972, 150).

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early habitation. The focus of this chapter will therefore deal with recorded history, which reaches a stronger consensus than oral history, in particular beginning in the 1800s. The ramifications of the Turko-Egyptian and British-Egyptian colonization of Sudan and the slavery that accompanied this process is especially relevant as it laid the groundwork for much of the conflict that created the Lost Boys and continues in Sudan to this day. The lasting legacy of enslavement of southern Sudanese by northern Sudanese has figured closely into current events. As Bixler says "slavery and its history in Sudan is critical in understanding the forces that led to civil war and, ultimately, to the refugee crisis that separated so many boys from their parents in southern Sudan in 1987 and '88" (2005, 45).

Contact between northern Sudan and the Middle East has occurred for thousands of years mainly in the form of trade (Deng 1995, 9). Sudanese in the North gradually began to identify with Arab culture, in particular because of the promise of wealth and prosperity that it brought with it, a process that intensified with the Islam's beginnings in the seventh century A.D. (Deng 1995, 26, Jok 2001, 75). Further aiding the Islamization of the North were invasions in the seventh and ninth centuries A.D. by Egyptian colonial forces (and slave raiders), who defeated the Beja and Nubian kingdoms of northern Sudan, which were largely Christian at the time (Deng 1995, 10, Jok 2001,75). Enslavement of Sudanese by Arabs became legal, and entrenched (Jok 2001, 75). By the 16th century, the identity of northern Sudan was almost totally an Arab one (Wai 1981, 26).

Concurrent to the developments in the North, little was changing in southern Sudan. The Sudd, a massive swamp that physically separates the North and South of Sudan played a hand in keeping Arabs out and the few that dared cross it were further deterred from remaining in the South by "the difficulties of living conditions, including the harshness of the tropical climate for a people accustomed to the desert, and the resistance of the warrior Nilotic tribes" (Deng 1995, 10). There was also little incentive for the Arabs to attempt conversion among southern populations because to do so would be to take away the potential to enslave southern people as Islamic law prohibits the enslavement of Muslims by other Muslims, but not of people of different religions (Deng 1995, 10, Bixler 2005, 40).

It was not until 1820 that forces were put into motion that would vastly alter the course of southern Sudan. In this year, northern Sudan was invaded by Turkish and Egyptian forces that planned to make northern Sudan their base from which to make slave-raiding expeditions into the South. They were led by Muhammad Ali, a representative of the Ottoman Empire and viceroy of Egypt (Deng 1995, 10, Bixler 2005, 39-40). In part, Ali wanted slaves to help strengthen his army, but there were other objectives as well, namely the acquisition of gold and ivory and control of the vast swath of land that was Sudan (Bixler 2005, 40, Wai 1981, 26). In his thirst for slaves, riches and land (with help from others from many areas of the world including Europe and northern Sudan, which rushed in to pillage human cargo for themselves), Ali "spoiled the world" of those in southern Sudan (Bixler 2005, 40). In many ways similar to what happened during the civil war, and what is currently happening in Darfur, a scorched

earth policy was pursued by the Arabs: women and children were kidnapped by armed

horsemen and men were killed, whatever was left was burned (Wai 1981, 28). Ali's

incursion into the South not only led to these "rapacious slave raids," but also was the

beginning of "clashes between the differing [southern] societies and their respective

cultures" (Wai 1981, 27). This "exploitation of tribal hostilities" in the South as Wai

suggests, was the beginning of inter-ethnic violence that would manifest itself once again

in the twentieth century civil war in Sudan (Wai 1981, 28).

By the 1860s, a new viceroy had come to power in Egypt, the grandson of

Muhammad Ali, named Ismail Pasha (Bixler 2005, 41). Unlike his grandfather, Ismail

had plans to modernize Egypt, something that would require funds from Britain and

France, which were both opposed to the slavery that was taking place in Sudan.

According to Bixler, Pasha not only "opened Cairo's first opera and built the Suez Canal

with backing from European countries," but he also "responded to their [Britain and

France] abolitionist pressures" (Bixler 2005, 41). Although the British themselves had a

murky past in the Sudanese slave trade, they procured Sir Samuel Baker, an explorer who

was commissioned by the Egyptians to secure the Upper Nile for Pasha's empire and to

abolish slavery (Wai 1981, 28, Bixler 2005, 41). In reality, Baker was heavily

outnumbered by the slave traders and their armies made up of Arabs and southern slaves.

Baker's work had little effect and the slave trade continued unabated; the British,

however, were placated by Baker's attempts (Wai 1981, 29, Bixler 2005, 41-42). Charles

Gordon was eventually sent in by Britain to replace Baker, but met with similar troubles,

including the fact that the Sudanese and Egyptian soldiers assigned to him seemed to find

nothing wrong with slavery. On top of this, the South had been so decimated by the slave trade that there was little hope for those slaves who he was able to free who would often starve to death or simply be recaptured by slave traders (Bixler 2005, 42).

Although the seeds of distrust had been sown in the southern tribes by the devastating slave raids of the North, the two areas found some common ground in 1881 with the coming of the Mahdi, a northern Sudanese man who "wanted to defeat the enemies of Islam," among them the Turko-Egyptian colonizing forces (Bixler 2005, 43). As Deng says "reaction to the Turks and the Egyptians came from both North and South and had a unifying effect on the country as they pulled together to resist foreign domination" (Deng 1995, 10-11). The Mahdi forces managed to largely drive out the Turko-Egyptians forces by 1885, sometimes with armies made up of joint North and South forces (Wai 1981, 30). Despite the fact that the South assisted the North in their victory, enslavement of southerners by the North continued. Jok says that the slave trade actually increased during this period and "drove millions of African Sudanese from their villages and made them die of hunger and war-related deaths" (Jok 2001, 75). In 1882, the British attempted to intervene and extricate their Egyptian interests in Sudan. They succeeded only in getting General Gordon, who they once again sent into Khartoum, killed (Bixler 2005, 43). The British did not attempt an invasion again until 1896, not so much an effort to avenge Gordon's death (as it was touted to the British public), but as an attempt to stave off France's interest in gaining control of the Nile River (Bixler 2005, 45-46). The British succeeded in 1898, declared slavery illegal and then embarked on

their own colonization of Sudan (called the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium), which would last until 1955 (Jok 2001, 75-76).

Sudan Under British Control

The colonization of Sudan by the British and Egyptians led to a host of new problems for the country, not least of which was the fact that the British (who held the real power in Sudan) administered the two radically different halves of Sudan as separate entities (Bixler 2005, 46, Wai 1981, 34, Deng 1995, 11). Deng says that part of the reason, beyond the noticeable differences between the regions, was that the British wanted to keep the possibility of annexation of southern Sudan to neighboring East African colonies open"(1995, 11). Wai, in his explanation of the so-called British "Southern Policy," which laid out the different style of government to be used for the South, similarly states that this policy was based on the premises:

> (1) that the Negroid Africans of the South are culturally and, to some extent, racially distinct from the Northern Arab Sudanese; and (2) that the Southern provinces would either develop eventually as a separate territorial and political entity or be integrated into what was then British East Africa (1981, 35).

In many ways, the British belief that southern Sudan was fundamentally different than the North led to a hands off-approach to their governing of the South. The Southern Policy, by separating the two halves of Sudan, allowed the British to divide and make Sudan easier to rule (1972, 137). In particular, because of the perceived "pride and ethnocentrism, the Dinka were a potential threat to the [British] ruler; and the more they stayed in the abyss of backwardness the better" (Deng 1972, 137-138). The British did little to modernize southern Sudan, a decision which was based, at least in part, on the wishes of southerners who were not initially keen on education, as it was thought to

interfere with traditional practices of cattle-keeping and pastoralism. Additionally, Deng says, there was the perception by the British of southerners as "noble savages" underdeveloped but harmless, and likely to stay that way if no attempts were made to change them (1972, 138). The lack of modernization in the South left it a "huge fertile ground for anthropologists," according to Wai and it is true that much of the notable work on southern tribes, such as that of E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Godfrey Lienhardt, came out of this period.

What modernizing elements that did come into the South were largely those brought in by the missionaries that the British government allowed into southern Sudan (Bixler, 2005). During British rule, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic missionaries all came to southern Sudan and began to set up schools and churches (Bixler 2005, 47). While British interference in the South was on a small scale and did little to change the lifestyle most Dinka were used to, the British poured time and energy into modernizing the North. Wai says of the disparity between northern and southern development: "whereas education and social services were left in the hands of the missionaries in the South, the colonial regime was actively engaged in expanding education and economic development and modernization in the North" (1981, 52). Deng, also discussing the relative lack of involvement on the part of the British in southern Sudan says: "the principal objective of colonial rule in the region was the establishment and maintenance of law and order" (1995, 11).

While the British did little to interfere with the culture of the southern tribes, and in many ways sought to maintain them, they did actively seek to eliminate all Arab

influence from the South (Wai, 1981). This was achieved by deposing all Arabs from positions of power in the South and through the resurrection of African laws and tribal languages (Wai, 1981). Additionally, English replaced Arabic in the newly constructed mission schools and in the workplace (Wai, 1981).

In many ways, the "Southern Policy" allowed southerners freedom of a kind that they had not experienced for centuries. The British were in some ways surprisingly attuned to the culture of the Southern tribes and according to Wai, "British colonial administrators were required to be fully informed of the social structures, beliefs, customs and psychological predispositions of the people [of the South]" (1981, 35-36). The Dinka and other tribes, although they would have much preferred to have been left alone both by the North and the British-Egyptian forces, came to "trust" the British (Bixler 2005, 47). This is not to say that there was no opposition to the British invasion. Despite the somewhat "benevolent" presence of the British, the separate and unequal administration of southern Sudan was part of their overall strategy to use the South as a pawn in their game to control much of northeastern Africa and the Suez Canal.

The Departure of the British: "Independence" for Sudan

In light of the end of World War II, which radically changed Britain's position from an empire to be reckoned with to a "nation that had yielded military supremacy to new superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union," (Bixler 2005, 49) and also due to shifting international sentiments about colonialism, the British were ready by the mid-1940s to withdraw from Sudan. In 1946, discussion began among the British about how best to extricate themselves from the country. Although the British had long

governed the North and South as two separate and unequal entities, the idea of uniting the North and South as one upon the pullout of the British became popular, especially under increasing pressure from Egypt and northern Sudan who both had designs on the South. In the same year, the Sudan Administration Conference was held in Khartoum and while participants acknowledged the unequal development in the North and South, it was decided that the two halves must become one (Wai 1981, 39). Not surprisingly, the South was not represented at this conference. Although another conference was held at the behest of British governors who feared for the South in the southern town of Juba, the decision had already been made and the fears of British governors and southern chiefs were disregarded (Wai 1981, 42). In 1947, the British reversed the Southern Policy and contact between the North and South was intensified as the British and mainly northern Sudanese continued discussions about the country's future (Deng 1972, 138, Bixler 2005, 49).

Not only was the fate of southerners decided with limited input from that half of the country, but little attempt was made to put into place safeguards that would have protected the South from northern domination. Deng says the British had "neither the time nor the political will to put in place constitutional arrangements that would ensure protection for the South in a united Sudan" (1995, 11). Wai says that although the government eventually passed several measures that allowed for some representation of the South in legislative matters, they were continually attacked by northerners who said the British were once again aiming to separate the two halves of the country (1981, 44-

45). In the legislating bodies that were eventually formed, the South was woefully underrepresented, despite these safeguards (Bixler 2005, 51, Wai 1981, 45).

Many British in positions of power in the South had strong objections to this policy, which they realized would effectively lead to the destruction of the South. The British governor of the southern Bahr el Ghazal province lamented the fact that no southerners were present when the decision to lump the two halves of the country together was made and said that the "Conference gave us the uneasy feeling that the South's fate is not to be decided principally on grounds of morality or expediency for the Southerners but as a pawn in the power politics game" (Wai 1981, 39). Another British governor stationed in the South, calling up the horrific enslavement of southerners by northerners in pre-colonial times, stated that to unite the North and South would lead to northerners treating southerners as "their fathers did" (Wai 1981, 40).

Why would the British continue with a policy that was so unpopular among their own ranks and leave the South to a fate that the British had initially sought to stop? In short, to keep the Egyptians and northern Sudanese happy. The northern Sudanese had long been pressuring the British to make the country one, ostensibly to unite the country, but really as Wai points because the northerners were "entertaining cultural imperial interests in the South" (1981, 51). The "jubilation" that the northerners expressed at the eventual pullout of the British was as much about the "coming of freedom as it was about the prospect of finally and effectively bringing the South under northern control" (Jok 2001, 76). The British relationship to Egypt, which was, at least in name, part of the British Condominium government, factored heavily into the decision to leave the South

and North as one. The Egyptians, who originally colonized Sudan a thousand years before, were looking to add Sudan to their provinces once the British left (Wai 1981, 51). The British, who were looking to their strategic interests in the Middle East and their interest in the Suez Canal, did not want to "antagonize Egypt in the Sudanese affair" and so, the "southern Sudan was to be sacrificed to appease Egypt" (Wai 1981, 51-52). By the time of the British pullout in 1956, the two halves of the country had already reached the breaking point.

The Anyanya War

By the time the British withdrew from Sudan in January 1956, civil war had begun. Southern troops who were to be transferred to the North mutinied amid fears that they would be underrepresented in the army and subsequently killed when they reached the North (Deng 1972, 138, Bixler 2005, 50). The southern troops killed many, both northern troops and civilians, and the North quickly retaliated (Bixler 2005, 50). The South's worst nightmares had been realized. In many ways, war had been imminent since the British decision that the country must be one and so for months before the official pullout of the British, southerners rebelled "against what they perceived as northern dominance in forging the first government of an independent Sudan" (Bixler 2005, 51). The North immediately sought to "unify" the halves of the country, with Islamization and Arabization being their methods of choice, which to the South was "tantamount to replacing British colonialism with Arab hegemony" (Deng 1995, 12).

The average civilian was slow to join the fight and for years the battle languished as a low-level conflict between southern liberation/succession movements and the

northern government (Deng 1995, 11-12, Bixler 2005, 50). In the late 1950s, the northern government began targeting educated southerners in the South as possible opposition to northern domination, but it was not until the 1960s that large numbers of Dinka began to take up arms after further intensification of the Islamization process by northerners in the South (Deng 1995, 12, Bixler 2005, 50). The northern government tried to interfere in almost every aspect of the daily life of southerners, replacing English with Arabic in mission schools, making the official day of rest Friday, the Muslim holy day, and eventually, in 1964, expelling all Christian missionaries from the South (Bixler 2005, 50).

After years of fighting, the socialist Nimeiri government came to power in the North after a military coup in 1969 (Wai 1981, 145, Bixler 2005, 52). Nimeiri, who himself had worked in the South, recognized the South's right to autonomy and the integral differences between the two regions (Wai 1981, 145, Bixler: 2005, 52). In 1972, Nimieri and the southern rebels signed the Addis Ababa Agreement, which effectively ended the civil war, at least for the time being (Bixler 2005, 52, Wai 1981, 157).

Return to War 1983-2005

The peace, however, was short-lived. Nimieri, "under pressure from the conservative and radical fundamentalist elements" in his regime and who himself became a born-again Muslim during his tenure, soon began appointing conservative Muslims to government positions and began to impose Islamization policies on the whole country (Deng 1995, 12). In 1983, the civil war began again when Nimieri, in an attempt to "foster factionalism" along tribal lines in the southern half of the country, split it into

three separate regions (Branch and Mampilly 2005, 5). This, coupled with his imposition of *sharia*, or Islamic religious law, in the whole of Sudan was a "major force in returning the nation to civil war" (Bixler 2005, 53).

On top of North/South hostilities were the ongoing problems between tribes within the South. Nimieri's decision to split up the South brought to the surface long-simmering tensions between the largest and most dominant tribe, the Dinka, and the smaller Nuer and Equatorian populations in southern Sudan. The Dinka-dominated rebel army, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), treated Equatorians badly and moved Dinka populations onto Equatorian land where they would have "better access to relief aid and avoid the worst fighting further north" (Branch and Mampilly 2005, 5). In 1991, a further rift within the South began. Three commanders, led by Riek Machar, split from SPLA leader John Garang over whether the SPLA should seek autonomy from the North or whether it should try to remain united and secular (Bixler 2005, 66). Machar's faction, known both as the SPLA-Nasir and the SPLA-United, wanted a separate southern Sudanese state. Garang's faction, known alternately as the SPLA-Mainstream and the SPLA-Torit, wanted a united, but secular Sudan (HRW/Africa 1994, 6). Machar also believed that Garang was using child soldiers (although later in the war many, including the Red Cross, would claim that Machar was doing the same thing), a claim that was eventually backed up by Human Rights Watch/Africa. What started out as an ideological rift soon turned ethnic, as Machar was Nuer and Garang, Dinka. Fighting between the Nuer and Dinka ensued and many were killed. The so-called South-South civil war reached its pinnacle in October and November of 1991 when the Nuer orchestrated a

massive raid of Bor Dinka cattle and massacre of the area's inhabitants. The implications that this raid had on conversion will be further explored in Chapter 5.

With the reigniting of the civil war, according to Bixler, the government began bombing civilian targets, stealing grain from southerners, and arming Arab militias (2005, 56). Before turning our attention to how this situation created groups of refugees like the Lost Boys, I will first delve further into the issue of the nation-state and how attempts to build a nation-state made clear and reinforced the separate identities of southern and northern Sudan, highlighting how Christianity began to become part of the southern Sudanese identity as the civil war wore on.

Chapter 4—The Sudanese Nation-State and its Breakdown

To begin to understand the refugee experience of the Lost Boys and their subsequent conversion to Christianity, it is important to understand how the Sudanese nation-state came to be, and how its breakdown has created the largest number of refugees and IDPs in recent history, including the Lost Boys. To begin, I will discuss how after the departure of British and Egyptian colonial forces, Sudan as a whole was consistent with a state, but not a nation. I will then discuss the tactics that northern nationalists attempted to use to foster a unified Sudanese nation-state rooted in Islamic and Arabic identity and the response of people in the South to these attempts. Finally, I will discuss the emergent pan-southern identity of the South and how the "new nationalism" of the South relies heavily on Christianity.

Colonial Bureaucracy and the Northern Nationalists

Having discussed the criteria for a nation-state in Chapter 2, which generally includes a shared language, culture, and a real or imagined shared past, it could easily be argued that northern Sudan possessed all of the qualities necessary for its formation both at and before independence from Britain. Arabic was the dominant language, identification with the surrounding Arab countries was widespread, and the North possessed a standing army to carry out the will of those in power.

Northern Sudan did not always identify itself as a nation-state, however, but began to conceive of itself as such through the emerging nationalism of the young northern Sudanese men working for the British colonial government (Sharkey 2003).

These young men, who were often hand-selected by the British to be educated and work within the bureaucracy that kept the colony going, began to circulate nationalist beliefs through new technologies of the colony, such as the printing press (Sharkey 2003). Although in the other colonies British colonies the British usually relied on missionary-run Christian schools to groom native men for colonial work, they were faced with a unique situation in Muslim-dominated northern Sudan, and therefore had to create their own school to educate young men (Sharkey 2003). In northern Sudan, one school in particular supplied much of the support staff for the colony; the Gordon Memorial College,[5] founded by the British for the sole purpose of turning out low-level Sudanese bureaucrats (Sharkey 2003, 7). Gordon College opened in 1902, and according to Sharkey, "served as both a training ground for bureaucracy and a crucible for nationalism" (2003, 7). The college, which mostly admitted young men from Arabic-speaking, high status families from varied tribes in the North, trained them for bureaucracy by providing them with a "strong literary education in both Arabic and English, and introduced new communications technologies such as typing and printing" (Sharkey 2003, 8). According to Deng, Gordon College and a similar institution, the Khartoum Military School[6] fostered nationalism in several ways. To begin with, they taught their students to read and write, and by doing so "broadened their perspectives" (1995, 102). In addition to allowing their graduates access to literature, these schools also brought the bureaucrats that they graduated into contact with their colonial masters,

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[5] Named for Charles Gordon, the British general who was killed by Mahdi forces in the 1880s.
[6] It should be noted that the Khartoum Military School also turned out graduates from southern Sudan who eventually participated in the South's fight for independence against the North. One such graduate was Joseph Lagu, the founder of the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) (Deng 1995).

the British and the Egyptians and gave them a chance to see their "contrasting attitudes toward rule" (Deng 1995, 102). Furthermore, these schools allowed their graduates employment opportunities that not only "raised their expectations," but also showed them how limited they were within the colonial bureaucracy (Deng 1995, 102). Finally and most importantly according to Deng, Gordon College and the Khartoum School "enabled the young Sudanese of varied ethnic, tribal, and social backgrounds to become acquainted, to develop common grounds, and to act together in solidarity" (1995, 102). While selecting students based on their ethnicity and training them in new technology made for a strong workforce for the colony, these same qualities also contributed to an emerging nationalist movement as Gordon College graduates began to see how restricted they were within the colonial system and also provided them with an opportunity to come into contact with northern Sudanese from many different tribes and begin to explore a common identity.

The realization by Gordon College-educated northerners that their potential was limited under the British led them to become more and more disillusioned with the colonial state. According to Sharkey, "as government employees, the new educated classes were an intrinsic part of the colonial system, but they bristled at their restriction to the bureaucratic underclass and saw themselves as extrinsic to the regime" (2003, 10). For these young men, Arabic literature became the outlet for these frustrations and a way to understand their identity, and the printing press, brought in with the British, their means by which to disseminate it (Sharkey 2003, 10). By the late 1910s, what Sharkey calls a "vigorous Arabic print culture" had emerged that used poetry, short stories and

prose, to give voice to the educated northerners and sow the seeds for a new, nationalist movement among the northern Sudanese (2003, 10).

Egyptian Influence

As Gordon College graduates became exposed to the outside world through print media and began to explore their shared frustration with the colonial system, they were encouraged by the Egyptian nationalist movement that was occurring concurrently in the early 1900s (Deng 1995, 102). At this point, Egypt was hoping to incorporate Sudan into its territory when it became independent from Britain, a hope that soon became a point of contention among northern Sudanese nationalists. The debate centered around whether they would they be their own nation or whether they would be unified with neighboring Egypt, which although Muslim, was Sudan's former colonizer. Although this is a point which would continue to be debated until Sudan's independence in 1956, the Egyptian independence movement nevertheless became an inspiration for Sudanese nationalists. In 1924, the British governor-general of Sudan who was also the commander of the Egyptian army was assassinated by Egyptian nationalists in Cairo (Deng 1995, 106). As British officials, chary of an attack, raced to get all Egyptian units out of Sudan, northern Sudanese troops refused to assist or obey orders from their British masters (Deng 1995, 106). Many Egyptians were killed as the British forced them out of Sudan and back over the border. When this was done, the British were the sole colonizers of Sudan[7] (Deng 1995, 106).

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[7] Despite being forced out of Sudan in 1924, the Egyptians reentered the condominium government of Sudan through a treaty with the British in 1936 (Deng 1995, 117).

One of the direct consequences of the 1924 uprising for the northerners was a growing distrust by the British of the northern bureaucrats that they themselves had trained (Deng 1995, 109). Whereas before the uprising they had enjoyed at least a cordial relationship with their colonial masters, the British attitude toward the "educated class, the engine of modernization, was [now] openly hostile" (Deng 1995, 109). The northern Sudanese responded to this hostility by beginning to more clearly define and discuss their identity as Sudanese. As northerners began to delineate what it meant to be Sudanese, they began to articulate an identity that was "both introspective within the northern context and expansive to the outside world in identification with Arabism and Islam," the result of which was "the gradual evolution of a modern northern identity that was at once nationalistically Sudanese and pan-Arab-Islamic" (Deng 1995, 114).

"Sudanese" Versus "Tribal"

One of the ways in which northern Sudanese bureaucrats began to assert this new pan-Arab identity and foster solidarity among northern Sudanese was through their rejection of the tribal labels that the British often tried to place on them. In some cases, these labels were intended to differentiate between Arabs, blacks, Nubians, and Sudanese-born men with Egyptian parents (Sharkey 2003, 30). Until the late 1920s, the term "Sudanese" or *sudani,* had mainly been used to denote black southerners (or their descendents) who had previously been enslaved by northerners and were living in the North, (Sharkey 2003, 31), although the term was most likely first employed by the British and later became an attempt to distinguish the colonized people of Sudan from other British colonies such as Egypt, particularly after Egyptians uprisings against British

rule in their own country in the 1920s (Sharkey 2003). The term could also be used to refer to southerners and people from the Nuba Mountain area in general (Sharkey 2003, 36). The nationalists, however, began to adopt the word "Sudanese" as their own, sometimes defying their British masters by employing it on job applications and forms instead of disclosing what tribes they were from (Sharkey 2003, 31). According to Sharkey, the use of this word by northern nationalists conveyed their "belief in the integrity of the Sudan as a political and cultural unit" (2003, 31).

Rejection of tribal labels was also a way for northerners to distance themselves from southerners and assert what they perceived to be the more civilized, modern identity of the North. According to Deng, "next to non-Arab African identity, the educated northern Sudanese loathed tribal identity, which they considered primitive, disdainful, and obstructive to the forward march of progress" (1995, 116). By rejecting tribal labels, Northerners were aligning themselves with the rest of the modern, Arab, world and distancing themselves from southerners whose identities were often strongly tied to their tribe.

Although northern Sudanese bureaucrats asserted their own identity in small ways such as their rejection of tribal labels, direct opposition to their British colonizers was rare (Sharkey 2003). Instead, Sharkey says, the coexistence of Sudanese colony employees and the British was one of "cautious coexistence" rather than outright aggression (2003, 102). In part this was because many of the Sudanese bureaucrats were able to maintain a fairly comfortable lifestyle through their government jobs and did not want to jeopardize this relative security (Sharkey 2003, 102).

Rejection of tribal labels by northern nationalists in the 1920s was a very tangible rejection of their mixed African-Arab roots and a strong claim to a universal Sudanese identity rooted in Arabism and Islam, but it was not the first time northerners tried to distance themselves from their tribal roots: Northerners had been slowly shedding tribal identities for years in favor of a more universal Arab identity. As far back as the seventh century when the North began to Arabize, northern Sudanese have adopted, or been forced, to adopt an Islamic identity (Wai 1981). Even though northerners are made up of a handful of tribes, they have been unified by "the predominance of Islamic religion, culture, and institutions; the racial and ideological identification with the Arabs of North Africa and the Middle East; and the widespread use of the Arab language" (Wai 1981, 23). Although some of the groups absorbed into the encompassing Muslim and Arab identity of the North have real hereditary ties to the Arabs, many do not, or are of mixed ancestry between the black South and Arab North (Wai 1981). Tribes such as the Fur and the Masalit, who have been encompassed into the North but were originally considered to be ethnically African, have gone so far as to claim ancestry from "esteemed Arab tribes" in order to identify as northerners (Wai 1981, 22).

One of the main reasons for the Arab North's insistence on a unified, Arab identity for the whole of the country and their rejection of the obvious differences between North and South was because they felt that their Arabic and Islamic culture was superior to what they perceived to be a "cultural vacuum" in the South (Wai 1981, 24). This belief is in keeping with Weber's assertion, articulated in Chapter 2, that in order to legitimate states, the people who attempt to enforce them must believe that they are

65

culturally superior and that the nation can be formed only out of the "cultivation of the peculiarity of a group" deemed to be superior (Mommsen 1974, 39). In Sudan, this group was clearly the Arab, Islamic Sudanese. Another reason for the dogged insistence by the northern Sudanese on a unified, Arab Sudan was their belief that "the strong tie between their Islamism and their Arabism [was] is the spearhead leading them toward the future and should be the basis on which to build a Sudanese nation" (Wai 1981:24). The idea that an Islamic and Arabic identity was what was driving Sudan in the direction of progress and the most pure source of identity from which to build a state is also consistent with Sharkey's comments on the nation, discussed in the last chapter, which state that nations are formed around claims to a common past which "legitimate the present and offers signposts for the future" (2003, 124).

Other aspects of northerners' attempts to create a shared identity are also consistent with theories of the nation. Attempts such as trying to do away with historically based tribal identities by northern nationalists, and ethnically African tribes creating "imagined shared pasts" in an attempt to create a broad, pan-Sudanese identity fit into Weber's ideas about nations needing real or imagined "notions of common descent" (Gerth and Mills 1958, 173) and Stalin's ideas about a "historically constituted community" (1994, 18). By doing away with labels based on tribal affiliations, northerners were rejecting claims that there were discernable differences between tribes and by doing so, began to assert a shared past and identity for themselves. Claims by groups made up of African or mixed African-Arab peoples of Arab ancestry further demonstrates the lengths that people go to create shared history and identity.

66

Additionally, northerners were beginning to assert their identity around a "common cause"—independence from the British—which, as Sharkey points out, is how nations are formed (2003, 124).

Another important piece of the nation-state, which both Weber and Stalin have discussed, is the necessity of a shared language. This piece was also in place for the northerners well before independence from the British as Arabic was widely spoken in the North and put into writing in 1949 when it was declared by northern nationalists that all schools, including those in the South, would use Arabic as their language of instruction (Sharkey 2003, 131-132).

Southern Identity

Although the North at independence had a strong sense of nationalism, it is much harder to argue that the same was true for the South or for the country as a whole. The South, since the time of the first incursions of the Egyptians and northern Sudanese into southern Sudan, was based on a tribal structure, which emphasized small clans as the most important unit of division within society (Hirschberg 1965, 53, Bixler 2005, 36). Far from having an overarching southern Sudanese identity, (although this would emerge during the civil war) the South was made up of Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, and numerous other tribes, each with its own language and customs. Allegiance within these groupings were first to immediate family, then to clan, and then to tribe.

Despite the disparity and autonomy of tribes in the South, there are many similarities among them, specifically those of the Nilotic group, which include the Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk, who speak related languages and recognize common geographical

67

origins (Evans-Pritchard 1940:3-4). Despite this, and at least until well into the war, southerners had rarely discussed a common southern identity. They continued to speak tribally distinct languages, articulated separate, tribally-based creation myths, and had no pan-southern army to speak of, at least not until the creation of the SPLA in the second half of the civil war.

While northern Sudan, even prior to independence from Britain, seemed to possess many of the characteristics needed to form a state, and the South, very few, it is equally evident that under the rubric outlined by Weber, Sharkey, and Stalin, that the country as a whole did not have enough of a shared identity to constitute a nation-state. There was no common language, (although the North did manage to impose Arabic on the South for a time, and the missionaries, English) no shared cultural heritage or past, and no common army. In fact, attempts by the British to form a unified Sudanese army failed miserably: when southerners were sent north to join the northern army, they mutinied, starting the first phase of the civil war in 1955 (Deng 1972, 138, Bixler 2005, 50).

Forcing the "Nation"

The beginning of the civil war in Sudan in 1955 marked the culmination of years of forcible attempts by the North to incorporate the South into northern Arab and Islamic culture. According to Sharkey, the nationalist movement in the North articulated that if "Arab or Arabic identity did not exist in certain regions, then their [government] policies should help to create it" (2003, 132). As mentioned in Chapter 2, and in accordance with the principles of the state outlined by Weber, one of the ways this was done was by

declaring Arabic the official national language in schools in both the North and South (Sharkey 2003, 132). In 1960, the northern government declared that the official day of rest, traditionally Sunday under the British, would be changed to Friday in accordance with Islamic tradition (Deng 1995, 138). To further create continuity between North and South, northern politicians expelled all Christian missionaries in the South in 1964, who had thus far been the main source of education for southerners, and gave educational and charitable opportunities they vacated to Muslims instead (Sharkey 2003, 132). The government justified the missionaries' expulsion by saying that the missionaries were purposely driving the two halves of the country apart by deliberately trying to encourage the "set-up of a separate political status for the southern provinces thus endangering the integrity and unity of the country" (Deng 1995, 139).

In addition to attempting to foster religious and linguistic unity among the North and South of Sudan, northern nationalists also attempted to create a shared "history" for the two halves of the country, albeit one that favored those of Arabic descent, through the writing of northern Sudanese nationalists (Sharkey 2003, 131). In particular, nationalist writers attempted to assert that the "people of Sudan were the historical product of a 'mixing' or 'commingling' of immigrants and 'Arabs' with an original population of 'Blacks,' but in doing so, attributed "cultural superiority, acquired through reason, intelligence, and courage, to the 'Arabs'" (Sharkey 2003, 133).

Despite attempts by the North to impose a unified identity on the country as a whole, these attempts have largely failed as demonstrated by the devastation of the 50-plus year Sudanese civil war. As Deng says, although the measures taken by the

government "were aimed at cultural integration as a means of attaining the goal of national unity, their effect was to antagonize the South and to widen the cleavage between the two parts of the country" (1995, 139). Rather than adopting the Arab and Muslim identity of the North, the South, especially in the second half of the war, began to foster a unified southern identity, partially under the rubric of Christianity in an effort to avoid being forcibly assimilated into the Arab and Muslim culture of the North.

Emergence of a Pan-Southern Identity: the SSLM

Under extreme pressure from the North to assimilate or be annihilated, southerners, beginning in the 1960s, began to foster their own pan-southern identity. According to Deng, it was the belief that southerners had "no coherent culture or system of spiritual and moral values worth recognition and respect" that had led to their mistreatment by foreigners and northerners, and also resulted in the rush of missionaries into southern Sudan at colonization (1995:185). Despite this long-standing belief, predicated on the fact that southerners came from numerous tribes, spoke various languages and in many cases had no sense of a shared past, they did have several things in common. Most importantly, they were facing a common battle against the North and the Arab and Muslim identity that northerners were trying to impose on them. Even if they did not have an identity yet as southerners, they began to coalesce around their opposition to northern domination. The tribes of the South also shared much more with each other in terms of culture than they did with the North as their languages and customs were often very similar. Religion was another shared value in the South as the vast

majority of southerners shared similar animist or Christian beliefs. In addition, very few southerners were Muslim.

The first overt signs of an emergent southern identity began in the 1960s with the formation of liberation movements among exiled southerners (Deng 1995). Out of this group the Anya-Nya or "snake venom" fighters were organized and became the military might behind the movement (Deng 1995). Even after the formation of the Anya-Nya, however, those involved continued to work with the tribal differences in the South rather than attempting to assert a uniform southern identity. According to Deng, the Anya-Nya "used existing social structures, including tribal structures," to carry out its attacks on northern government stations in the southern provinces, a method that sometimes led to conflict among leaders from different southern tribes (1995, 140). After several years of in-fighting among the varied southern liberation movements, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) was formed in 1970 by Joseph Lagu (Deng 1995). Several years later all of the remaining political parties in the South joined the SSLM (Deng 1995).

In a manifesto put forth by the SSLM in the mid-seventies, the emergent identity of the South as a pan-southern, African-identified nation was made clear. The manifesto proclaimed the South's right to either remain unified with, but autonomous from the North, or "having nothing whatsoever to do with the North and tie our future with that of our African brothers in their states on our Southern borders" (Deng 1995, 141). Furthermore, it stated that the war that was being waged by the South was "in defense of

southern Sudanese identity and its African values," values that were distinct from the Arab Sudanese of the North (Deng 1995, 141).

Despite assertions of mutually exclusive North and South identities in the sixties and seventies, Arab and African values, and even a mutually constructed Afro-Arab nation did briefly flourish in Sudan after a military coup in 1969 brought Jaafar Muhammad Nimeiri to power and the Addis Ababa Accord was signed between the South and the North in 1972. The Addis Ababa Accord gave the South many measures of autonomy, including their own governing body and president, the freedom to travel, and the resurrection of tribal law in the South (Deng 1995). According to Deng, Nimeiri himself did much to foster unity between North and South through his socialist values that stressed equality and by acknowledging the distinct African character of the South and its place within the Sudanese nation (Deng 1995). Unfortunately, the national unity brought by Nimeiri was short lived: By the early 1980s, under the influence of his advisors, Nimeiri returned to the sort of nationalist, northern-centric views that had led to the civil war in 1955. By 1983, Nimeiri had attempted to re-impose shari'a on the southern half of the country and the North and South were again at war.

Christianity and Southern Identity

Even before the creation of the SSLM, southerners educated in the mission schools were beginning to come together over their shared beliefs. As discussed in previous chapters, Christianity was slow to take hold in Sudan because as Deng suggests, it was viewed as detrimental to the traditional mentality of young men as cattle keepers and warriors and it was in direct conflict to Dinka culture, which preached that

"knowledge was presumed to accumulate with age and proximity to the ancestors" (1995, 206). This view began to change, however, as the Dinka realized the contact with the outside world was inevitable and the youth educated in the mission schools were the people who possessed the knowledge and skills to mediate this contact (Deng 1995, 207).

From the ranks of these newly educated and missionized southerners a new political identity began to emerge, an identity that according to Deng "transcended tribal loyalties and created a southern nationalist sentiment that was both intrinsic and anti-North" (1995, 210). Education and Christianity acted as a shared source of identity, and allowed southerners to come together, regardless of tribe, to combat northern domination (Deng 1995). The government quickly took note of the role that educated and missionized southerners were playing in the southern liberation movement and often made the educated the first targets of attacks on southern villages (Nikkel 2001, 223).

Another way exposure to the outside world began to push southern identity toward something of a nation-state, was through the discovery by the southern Sudanese that black peoples had been disadvantaged throughout history (Deng 1995). By recognizing that their subordination by the North was not a unique situation, southerners began to see themselves as part of a larger group. Through this recognition, they began to "see the plight of the individual as part and parcel of a collective identity that is intrinsic to their race and ethnic group" (Deng 1995, 216). Wai similarly states that exploitation of southerners by Europeans and Arabs "served to deepen a consciousness of African identity among them and has brought about a general consensus of accepting and of treating their territory of habitation as a distinctly and exclusively African entity" (1981,

73

19). Much like the northerners, who asserted a shared past and looked at Islam as a "signpost" for the future, southerners were beginning to see the past that they shared with other southern Sudanese, and more broadly, with other colonized African peoples and begin to recognize this identity as a method for imagining their future. As the war progressed, and particularly in present day Sudan, Christianity has become integral to this southern Sudanese vision for the future.

One of the reasons that Christianity became integral to southern identity is that it was believed that something more than the local gods, or *jak*, of the past were needed to combat the hegemony of Arab and Islamic identity. In an interview Nikkel conducted with a young SPLA member from the Bor area of southern Sudan, he was told that people were converting to Christianity because:

> The *jak* were known to possess power in local disputes between neighboring clans, but the present war was national in scope and here the *jak* were impotent. In combat with the 'Arabs' only the supreme power of *Nihalic* [God] is adequate" (2001, 253).

In addition, Nikkel states that beyond being able to combat the ideology of the Arabs, *Nihalic* was presumably also able to unite the Dinka with "their southern neighbors in battle against a common enemy" (2001, 253). Deng gives a similar analysis of the unifying power of the church and says that conversion filled the southerner's need for a "coherent competing modern religious identity with which to oppose the Arab-Islamic identity" (1995, 217). Wheeler also touches on the void that southerners began to feel, particularly after the departure of the British, saying that Christianity not only filled the void left in southern identity and political expression, but much like Deng and Nikkel, states that Christianity was a way for southerners to challenge the "Northern Sudanese

74

claim to total superiority" (2005, 55). In essence, Christianity became a way for southerners to level the playing field with the North.

The beginning of the war again in 1983 increased the southern Sudanese people's contact with the outside world exponentially as hundreds of thousands were displaced into refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia.[8] In these camps southerners were grouped together, regardless of tribe, an experience that was new to many of them. Being thrown together with so many other people of varying tribes and religions, southerners were not only given many Christian denominations from which to choose, but also were given a route to overcome the insecurities they felt in being displaced and placed among strangers (Nikkel 2001). People in the camps, as Harrell-Bond and Voutira have suggested, often began to question the utility of their beliefs and look for ways to adapt to their "radically new social and material conditions" (1992, 9). As more and more joined the churches, southerners achieved what Nikkel calls an "unprecedented level of ecumenical co-operation" (2001, 238). It was also in these camps where a real southern identity, based on Christianity began to solidify. This phenomenon was not unique to the early refugees of the war, but is one that also aided in the Lost Boy's adoption of a Christian identity, a point that will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Although the beginning of the civil war in southern Sudan pitted a unified North against a loosely-affiliated South, by the end of the war the emergent southern liberation movement and Christianity had radically changed the identity of the South to a united one. While southern Sudanese may never share as close ethnic and linguistic ties as the

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[8] Later in the war, southerners were sent to nearly all of countries that border Sudan including Uganda, Central African Republic (CAR), and Egypt.

northerners do (or perceive they do) they have achieved many of the markers of a nation-state that Weber, Stalin, and Sharkey have discussed. One of these markers, outlined by Sharkey, is a common cause that is focused around claims to a particular land and autonomy. This marker was clearly present for the southerners and was focused around their right to self-governance and autonomy on their own land in the South. The southern Sudanese have also begun to become to recognize and articulate a shared past among southerners as a whole and with neighboring East African countries, and through this recognition, have begun to articulate the kind of visions for a shared future that Sharkey has discussed. For southerners, this shared future includes retaining the culture and traditions of southern Sudan along with tying their fortunes to that of the global Christian community. Other factors that point to the emergence of a nation-state in southern Sudan is the resurgence of a lingua franca, English, and the continued presence of an armed wing of the liberation movement, the SPLA.

Another indication that southern Sudanese are attempting to build a nation-state is evident in the self-awareness of those trying to build the state. For a nation to be formed, those attempting to build it must be aware of what they are trying to do and believe in the superiority of their group and land. This sort of agency in southern Sudan became very clear to me as I looked over the new curriculum of the southern Sudanese school system aimed at illiterate adults, which I came across while working at my internship at Project Education Sudan. On page one of the manual, under the heading of "Goals and Guiding Principles of Education for Southern Sudan" the third goal reads: Education shall foster nation building through integration, peace, self-reliance, patriotism and promoting respect

and tolerance for other cultures, traditions, opinions and beliefs".[9] Although this is a

broad-minded and much more encompassing statement than has been made by northern

nationalists, who have generally sought to build a nation by forcible and violent

assimilationist policies, it is nevertheless an acknowledgement that southerners are

consciously cultivating a nation-state.

By looking at the breakdown of the Sudanese "nation-state," we can start to

understand the situation that began to lead southerners toward an identity that has become

focused around Christianity. While northern Sudanese have had a unified identity and

many of the qualities that are necessary to form a functioning nation-state for quite some

time, the South has only recently begun to qualify as something similar to a nation-state.

According to both Sharkey, and Jeffrey Haynes, author of the book *Religion and

Politics in Africa*, the breakdown of the so-called Sudanese state should not come as a

surprise, as this is a process that has happened to countless colonized countries upon their

independence from colonial powers. Haynes says that the inheritors of post-colonial

power in African states often rely on the same authoritarian, hegemonic rule that

colonizers used to rule because they often have difficulty forging national unity (1996:79-

80). Sharkey similarly states that there are several weaknesses which all post-colonial

states inherit including: the imposed geographic borders that colonialists created, borders

which often cut across linguistic and cultural lines, cultural plurality, which was

encouraged by colonial authorities in order to "divide and rule," the autocracy of colonial

states, which rarely employed "local parliaments to keep them in check," and the fact that

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[9] Taken from the Broad Curriculum Framework for Basic Adult Literacy Program (BALP) handbook.
Provided by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS).

colonists tended to favor certain ethnic and class groups who would eventually become the new nationalists at independence (Sharkey 2003, 125-126). In the case of Sudan, these weaknesses became apparent upon the pullout of the British. The emerging "monocultural elite" of northern Sudan, which Sharkey calls "Arabic-speaking Muslim males from the riverain North" were essentially handed power by the British and began to push their nationalist, northern-centered agenda (2003, 123). Instead of allowing the relative "plurality" of the North and South as the British had done, the North immediately sought to quash the identity of the South in favor of a unified Sudanese identity. This was done by employing what could be called an autocratic government based in the North, with very little input from southerners in the newly formed national parliament.

In the next chapter I will continue to discuss life in Sudan prior to the Lost Boys' separation from their parents, highlighting the importance of cattle in daily life, the role of the traditional religion, and the hard-fought battle early missionaries undertook to try to win early Christian converts. Finally, I will discuss in more detail the major impetus for conversion among non-Lost Boy Sudanese: a raid of Dinka cattle of historic proportions.

Chapter 5—Religion, Conversion, and Cattle in Southern Sudan

In this chapter, I will discuss the traditional religion of the Dinka, including the mediating forces of the divinities that rule everyday life, the role of the supreme god, *Nhialic*, and cattle sacrifice to explain the state of religion in Sudan leading up to the time when the Lost Boys were separated from their parents. I will then move will move to the role of cattle in Dinka life. Finally, I will discuss the attempts at Christian conversion by western missionaries, explaining the years of missionary endeavors and the dramatic, cattle-related events in the 1990s that finally pushed the Dinka to convert in large numbers.

The Religion of the Dinka: *Jak* and *Nhialic*—Flexible Monotheism

The connectivity of men with cattle and other aspects of the natural world that surrounds them is highly evident in Dinka religion, however, the traditional religion of the Dinka is different than many other so-called animist religions in that Dinka religion has often been called flexible monotheism. The term flexible monotheism refers to the Dinka belief in both *Nhialic*, the "supreme being" who is believed to live above, much like the God of western religions, and the *jak*[10] and *yieth*, or the lesser gods that are present in everyday life (Nikkel 1995, 31). In the traditional religion, Dinka believe that the gods of all major religions are the same, saying that *Nhialic ee tok*, or *Nhialic* is one (Lienhardt 1961, 56) a belief that also speaks to their monotheistic beliefs. Deng also comments on this flexible monotheism, saying that "their belief in complex system of

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[10] *Jak* is the plural form of the word *jok*

supra-natural divinities tends to blur the monotheistic picture of Dinka religion," but nevertheless, "the Dinka believe that God is One and cannot conceive of Him as a plurality" (Deng 1972, 122).

As mentioned in the first chapter, the Dinka creation myth[11] is somewhat similar to the biblical one: There were originally two people on earth, a man named Garang and a woman named Abuk. They lived in a world where the earth was connected to the sky by a rope and they could reach *Nhialic* whenever they wanted by climbing the rope. There was no death at this time, and the people lived easily, grinding only the grain that *Nhialic* gave them, which was enough to satisfy their needs. One day, the woman, being greedy, ground more than the allotted amount and swung her hoe too high, striking *Nhialic*. *Nhialic*, angered by her actions, sent a bird named *atoc* to cut the rope, thus separating the earth from the sky and "spoiling the word" by bringing death and forcing people to work hard for their food and know hunger (Lienhardt 1961, 34).

Lienhardt interprets the Dinka creation myth to explain physical realities in Dinka life—the separation of the earth from the sky, the distance that Dinka feel from the creator *Nhialic* and the reasons for sickness and death (1961, 36-37). This distance from *Nhialic* accounts for the importance and daily presence of the *jak* and *yieth*, and is explained in the paragraphs below.

The three key elements of Dinka religion are *Nhialic*, the *jak*, and the *yieth*, but despite this seeming trinity, the Dinka do not view *Nhialic* as a plurality (Deng 1972, 122); on a daily basis, the Dinka are most concerned with the *jak* and to a lesser extent,

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[11] This version is adapted from Lienhardt's retelling of the story in *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka.*

the *yieth*. The lesser importance of *Nhialic* (on a daily basis, at least) is because as Deng says, "religion is not an affair of the soul in a world yet to come; it is rooted in Dinka demands for a secure life in this world and continued participation after death" (1972, 122). Further illuminating the role of traditional religion in Dinka daily life, Lienhardt notes that while the Dinka divide the world into that which is of men and that which is of the *jak* (or Powers, as he calls them), they believe that these forces reside in this "single world of human experience" (1961, 28). The *jak*, called "free divinities" by Lienhardt and "independent spirits" by Deng, are those that are not associated with any specific descent group (Lienhardt 1961, 31, Deng 1972, 122) and according to Seligman and Seligman (married anthropologists who lived among the Dinka) are appealed to "in the ordinary affairs of life" much more often than *Nhialic* (1932). Similarly, the *jak* are much more commonly a topic of discussion than the *yieth* (explained in more detail below), which in my experience with the Lost Boys, were rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Unlike the *jak*, the *yieth* are associated with specific clans and descent groups (Lienhard 1961, 30). The *yieth* are sometimes thought to represent ancestors as well (Deng 1972, 122), which explains why they are associated with a particular clan or descent group. Within the *yieth*, the Dinka distinguish between two types of *yieth*, the first are the "clan-divinities" that often manifest themselves in material form, many times as animals (Lienhardt 1961, 30). According to Lienhardt, the manifestation of this class of *yieth* is what has often led them to be classified as totems in anthropological literature, something he does not believe to be entirely accurate (Lienhardt 1961, 30). The other class of *yieth*, which Lienhardt calls "free-divinities," tend to form relationships with

81

individuals rather than clans, although they may then form relationships with families through these individuals (1961, 30).

Deng describes an even higher order to the relationship between the *jak* and *yieth*, saying that the two represent the balance of good and evil. The *yieth*, or spirits of the ancestors, represent a "protective force," while the *jak* represent a more "destructive" presence (Deng 1972, 122). This is not to say that *jak* are intrinsically bad, as they can be a "necessary evil to enforce, reinforce, or sanction a virtue," or enact a punishment for a clan-divinity that has been wronged (Deng 1972, 122). Despite the everyday presence of the *jak* in the lives of adult Dinka, and to a lesser extent the *yieth*, children do not have the same type of interactions, or even awareness of these forces.

Although often mentioned only in passing in the anthropological body of literature, children often were not involved in the traditional religion of the Dinka. I asked the Lost Boys how they could give up the traditional religion they had presumably spent their whole life practicing. Several told me, rather offhandedly, that it was easy as children weren't allowed to participate in the traditional religion. At first I thought this was a glib response, maybe even purposely misleading or trying to cover up how intense the process their conversion had been, but after hearing this from several interviewees, I took a closer look at the literature. Seligman and Seligman mention it briefly, saying: "The *jok* know when a child is born, and protect it from the beginning, though a man does not tell his child about the *jok* until it is well grown, perhaps not until the age of ten" (1932, 185). Nikkel, who arguably has written more about the conversion of the Dinka than any other author, talks about the exclusion of children from the traditional religion

82

only in relation to the unique role that youth displaced to Khartoum in the 1960s (discussed in more detail below) had in the Episcopal church, but goes into little detail in regards to their absence in the traditional religion (Nikkel 2001, 230). The unique opportunities that the Lost Boys were given to participate in Christianity in the refugee camps were central to their conversion and will be explored in more depth Chapters 6 and 7.

Cattle Sacrifice

Up until the last twenty years or so, cattle sacrifice was considered the central religious ceremony of the Dinka (Nikkel 1995, 26, Lienhardt 1961, 10), a fact that should not be surprising considering the interconnectedness of humans and cattle in Dinka culture that will be described throughout this chapter. According to Lienhardt, the use of cattle as a substitute for men, be it in sacrifice, as a marriage payment, or as a way to make amends for a murder, was a way to ensure the continuity of "the human generation which has been broken by the loss of a member to the lineage" (Lienhardt 1961, 26).

Seligman and Seligman, who lived among a handful of tribes in Sudan, call the Dinka and Nuer "intensely religious, in our experience by far the most religious peoples in Sudan," also saying that "…it is no exaggeration to say that there is no happening or event …that is not regarded as of religious significance and as an occasion for sacrifice" (1932, 178).

Because of the significance of cattle for sacrifice, cows in the past were never killed strictly for their meat, although after they had been sacrificed for a particular cause, they were eaten, with the meat divided according to custom and the choicest parts given

to the elders, and then divided among the family members of the sacrificer. A portion would also be left out for the clan divinity (Lienhardt 1961, 24).[12]

Cattle in Dinka Life

As evidenced by the impact of cattle on Dinka religious beliefs, cattle form the basis for life in southern Sudan. For generations, the lives of the Dinka and other Nilotic tribes in southern Sudan have been inextricably linked to their cattle. Not only have cattle and cattle sacrifice been the basis for the traditional religion of the Nuer and Dinka, but they have relied on them in all facets of their lives. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who worked with the Nuer in the 1930s, writes that cattle and their byproducts are evident in nearly every aspect of Nuer life:

> Nuer wash their hands and faces in the urine of the cattle…drink their milk and blood, and sleep on their hides by the side of their smoldering dung. They cover their bodies, dress their hair, and clean their teeth with the ashes of cattle dung, and eat their food with spoons made from the skins of their horns (1940, 37).

According to Deng, cattle are equally important to the Dinka and he says "their dried dung provides the Dinka with fuel and fertilizer, their urine with disinfectant, their hides with bedding skins, and their horns with snuffboxes, trumpets, and spoons" (1972, 3). Speaking to broader issues of Dinka culture, Nikkel states that "cattle are integral to the

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[12] In all three of the villages I visited in Sudan, goats were slaughtered upon our arrival, with little ceremony. However, in the first village we visited, where one of the Lost Boys I interviewed was reunited with his father after 20 years apart, we were "given" a cow as a welcome gift. Unlike the goats, when it was time for the cow to be killed, our group, along with many people from the village, gathered in a field to watch the cow being killed, which was done with much ceremony (and a little trouble too—the cow took so long to die that the village elders, who were embarrassed by this, eventually distracted our group with a dance). Afterwards, the cow's head was hung in the tree while the rest of the body was chopped up and prepared for cooking. The cow's head remained in the tree for the entire day, and my questions to the Lost Boys in our group as to why the head was placed in the tree went mostly unanswered, but there were some similarities to a cattle sacrifice Lienhardt witness that involved propping the head of the sacrificed sow on tree boughs (1961, 267). It is my guess that the cow I saw was also being offered to a clan divinity, but that this was not openly discussed in the now largely Christian village.

economic, social and religious life of the Dinka, and provide the basic metaphors of self-understanding" (Nikkel 2001, 24).

Because of the interconnectedness of men and cattle in daily life, is should come as no surprise that the ideals of beauty for men in Nilotic society are connected and similar to the ideals of beauty for their cattle. Beauty for both men and cattle are bound up in the notion of *dheeng*. Francis Deng, a Sudanese anthropologist, discussing this central concept of beauty to the Nilotes says the word *dheeng* can be translated as "nobility, beauty, handsomeness, elegance, charm, grace," etc. (1972, 14). Although this definition makes it sound like *dheeng* is only associated with physical beauty, this is not the case: Deng says, "a remarkable feature of Dinka culture is that it gives everybody some avenue to dignity, honor, and pride…any demonstration of aesthetic value, is considered *dheeng*" (1972,14-15). Activities or actions such as decorating one's body, initiation and wedding ceremonies and display of one's "personality" or "song" oxen are ways that people and activities are imbued with *dheeng* and are a way for those not born with physical beauty to achieve it (Deng 1972, 14).

Body ornamentation in particular is a way for people to gain *dheeng* and has many parallels to cattle and the way they are ornamented by the Dinka. According to Deng, it is not physical ugliness that is considered ugly, but rather not taking care of oneself that is (1972, 15). To enhance or create beauty, Dinka men and women wear beads and shells on the wrist, neck, and the forehead, ivory bangles worn on the upper arm or the wrist, and long metallic bracelet coils worn on the arms of both men and women and on the legs of women (1972, 16). These coiled bracelets are particularly

85

interesting in that they are sometimes used to simulate the horns of oxen. This is done by tightly coiling one's arms so that it has the same appearance as the trained horns of a display ox. (Deng 1972,17).

Beyond ornamentation, people can also be considered *dheeng* through their actions and the ways in which they treat others. Treating others with respect or acquiring wealth through hard work can also contribute to one's *dheeng* (Deng 1972,15). Engaging in song or dance and especially being creative in composing songs can also allow a person to have *dheeng*. Young men who can compose the most intricate and interesting songs about their cattle are often considered to be the most intelligent and subsequently they are perceived to be more attractive (Deng 1972). Songs about oxen typically refer to what is most aesthetically pleasing about them, such as how the horns are shaped, their size, or the color-configuration of a man's ox (Deng 1972, 81). Sometimes while singing ox-songs a man will imitate cattle by holding his hands up to simulate horns and if no ox is present, another man will jingle a bell and simulate the noises an ox would make (Deng 1972, 83).

I frequently saw what I would consider to be *dheeng* on display at social events with the Lost Boys in Denver. Nearly every graduation ceremony, wedding reception, birthday party and even fundraisers, featured group dancing. These dances would start with the young men, who had usually changed into some combination of fake animal skins, feathers or some other brightly colored clothes, dancing in a circle and singing loudly. Oftentimes each group member would have a pot or pan to bang on, or sometimes a cooking utensil or other long object that could stand in for a club or a spear. While the

men were in a group, and performing as one, they would also try to stand out, singing loudly or dancing more creatively than others. The pride the Lost Boys took while dancing in both their appearance and in the way they moved, continually trying to be more creative and distinct in their movements, embody a kind of *dheeng*, one which is removed from cattle, but nevertheless demonstrates some of the aspects of what is considered attractive in cattle and men: unique colors and markings and a way to catch the attention of the opposite sex. It should be noted that women also participated in these dances, usually as supporting characters, doing a dance that mostly consisted of jumping up and down. At other times, however, women were the ones to start the dance and would show off with much more creative dances.

The interrelatedness of men and cattle in regard to the concept of beauty is further illustrated in this quote from Deng:

> When singing over his 'personality oxen,'[13] a man strolls with grace and revealed inner pride, his body covered and loaded with objects of beautification, a bundle of decorated and polished spears in his left hand, his left arm hanging from an angle formed by the large bangle bracelet on his upper arm…and his ox ahead of him waving the bushy tassels, ringing the bell, and echoing with bellows of accompaniment (1972, 17).

This passage is evocative of the fact that the beauty of one's ox can enhance the beauty of that person. According to Lienhardt, association with one's cattle is so strong that men looking for a girl to court will often parade their oxen in front of the girls while the girls are milking the cows, in the hopes that the girl will be attracted to the man and his cow (1961, 17). According to Lienhardt, the attractiveness of one's ox was so important that girls were reportedly known to prefer a "somewhat ugly young man with a fine ox to a handsome man with an indifferent ox" (Lienhardt 1961, 18). Nikkel similarly states that

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[13] Ox is the word typically used to refer to a castrated bull.

87

"social standing and self-esteem are, for the Dinka, intimately related to the ownership of cattle" (2001, 25).

While cattle aesthetics define the attractiveness of men in Dinka and Nuer culture, the human values of *dheeng* define what is aesthetically pleasing in cattle. This interconnectivity in aesthetics begins to make more sense when we understand that Nilotics view cattle on some levels as having the same qualities as men, and because cattle are seen as surrogates for men in sacrifice. (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 36). To better understand the attributes of Nilotic cattle that are valued and add to one's *dheeng*, the cattle aesthetics of the Nilotes will now be discussed.

Arguably, Dinka and Nuer aesthetics are most evident in the vast and intricate vocabulary that they employ to describe the color-configurations of their cattle. Dinka color-configurations, which include different words for color and pattern, number in the thousands (Coote 1992, 285). Far from simply being a way for the Nilotes to speak about their cattle with "precision in situations of practical husbandry," color-configurations also help to enrich the "language of poetry" (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 41). Lienhardt similarly calls the names which the Dinka give to their cattle "poetic" and gives examples of color-configurations that are particularly so, such as *ke dhiau tiki kok,* literally "what makes women's elbows crack," or a reddish cow whose color resembles the beer that women grind grain to make (1961, 14). Another configuration indicative of the intricacy used in naming the colors of cattle is *ajing* or *majing*, which alludes to a cow with *maker* configuration, one of the many black and white color configurations, and means "soldier

ant" referring to "black ants carrying white particles, grain, ants' eggs or termites" (1961, 14).

Not only are cattle color-configurations vast, but they are often the basis through which the Dinka and other Nilotic tribes understand the colors of other objects that they encounter. Lienhardt describes how children often learn to apply the name for cattle patterns to the world around them before they ever have seen a cow with that particular configuration (1961, 12). Further demonstrating that the importance of color-configurations in understanding the world is the fact that new patterns or items introduced to the Dinka are also often understood through the cattle-configuration that they most resemble (Lienhardt 1961, 12).

The intricacy and vastness of the Nilotic cattle-color vocabulary obviously goes beyond what is strictly necessary to describe cattle for everyday purposes. As Lienhardt says, cattle color names "represent a deliberate effort to link cattle with features of the natural and social environment," but also display the aesthetic ideals of the Dinka (1961, 15). Certain color configurations, such as *majok*, a black and white marking that loosely resembles the marking of American dairy cows, are revered above all color configurations. Although bold markings such as *majok* stand out among the usual grayish white of Dinka cows, this configuration is in no way connected to the health or other practical qualities of an ox (Coote 1992, 286). Well-marked cattle generally are not healthier or better meat producers than ordinary oxen and in fact the best-marked oxen are usually castrated and therefore excluded from contributing to the gene pool (Coote 1992, 286). Although well-marked cows do not symbolize health, they often do become

healthier and larger after they are castrated because castration encourages them to grow and they are doted upon and given the best food by their owners (Coote 1992, 288).

The cattle that the Nilotes choose to castrate because of attractive markings then become "song" or "display" oxen (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 37, Lienhardt 1961, 15). Song oxen, called this because the Dinka often make up songs about their beauty, are decorated with tassels on their horns and beads and bells around their neck to enhance their beauty and call attention to them (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 37). Young men who do not have a display ox of their own were said to have walked around the village with a bell to simulate the sound an ox would make in order to enhance their own attractiveness (Lienhardt 1961, 17).

Display oxen are also physically altered to enhance their beauty. Soon after an animal is born and is deemed to be of superior marking, its horns are cut so as to make them grow asymmetrically and be more aesthetically pleasing. Much like cattle-coloring though, there is a practical element to horn-shaping, as those cattle with the most unusual horns are easy to pick out from among a large herd. At the same time, Coote points out, "the curving shapes of Nilotic cattle horns have great visual appeal, especially when they are seen moving through space as the cattle move their heads, and when the arcs the horns make in the air are exaggerated by the swinging movement of the tassels," that one would see on a display ox (1992, 288).

Aspects, such as the horns of oxen, that are considered particularly visually appealing are often those displayed in other forms of visual and auditory art in Dinka culture, such as dance and song, and even in the games of children. Particularly well

90

known in the anthropological literature is a dance done by both men and women, which involves throwing ones' hands above the head in a simulation of cattle horns. While doing this dance, men sometimes lower their left arm to simulate the "artificially deformed and trained horns of the display-oxen" (Lienhardt 1961, 17). Another dance, involving both men and women, simulates cows (women) running among a herd of bulls (men) (Lienhardt 1961, 17). The men advance and retreat, steering their female partners as bulls do to cows that have mixed with the herd (Lienhardt 1961, 17). In this dance, men cry out "*e-yi, e-yi,*" not in an attempt to actually recreate the sound of oxen, but to represent and "express the whole rhythm of the beasts" with their powerful ambling gait and swaying heads" (Lienhardt 1961, 17).

In both of these dances, things that are found aesthetically pleasing about the bulls are what the dance attempts to recreate. In the first dance, the horns of the bull are celebrated, with hand movements modified so as to show the most aesthetically pleasing, asymmetrical horns of a display ox. In the second dance, the power and paradoxical grace of the bulls is recreated and contrasted with the docility of the cows, simulated by the herding of women and their passive role in the dance. This dance also could be understood to display gender roles among the Nilotics in general, wherein women are expected to submit to their husbands and maintain a quieter, more refined disposition than their male counterparts.

The aesthetics of the bull's horns are not just limited to dance, but are recreated both in body ornamentation and ceremonial objects among humans. In both Dinka and Nuer culture, young men (and occasionally women) receive scars on their foreheads as

part of the initiation process. While some receive concentric lines that run the length of their forehead, others (including several of the Denver Lost Boys) have either one or a series of stacked v-shaped scars in the middle of their forehead. According to Coote, these marks are sometimes thought to symbolize the horns of the cattle (1992, 291). The pain that young men incur in this process is often compared to the pain that cattle feel when their horns are cut prior to their castration and further links cattle and human aesthetics (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 38).

Beyond bodily modifications through scarification and dance, the Nilotes also create physical representations of cattle horns in their *tim ke jak*, literally poles of the spirits or gods, which are poles driven into the ground in villages and cattle camps as shrines to the traditional gods (Nikkel 1995, 90). These poles bear a strong resemblance to the trained horns of Nilotic cattle with their curved and pointed shape, and in recent years, have begun to be painted with acrylic paint, sometimes in the distinctive black and white of the coveted *marial* and *majok* cattle color-configuration patterns (Coote 1992, 290). The existence and form of these poles will be discussed in greater detail later on in their relation to the current form of Dinka crosses.

Perhaps most useful in synthesizing important aesthetic concepts of the Dinka and other Nilotic tribes can be seen in the mud cattle figurines given to and made by children. These figures exaggerate all that is considered attractive about cattle to the Nilotes, leaving out only color-configurations, which are hard to render in mud. According to Evans-Pritchard, the games of Nuer children center around making miniature cattle byres and filling them with these mud figures of cows and oxen (1940, 38-39). In these

models, the horns, the hump found on the back of cattle, and what Coote calls the

"overall bigness or fatness" of the cattle are exaggerated and other less important parts

such as the head, legs, and hooves are either left off the model or downplayed (1992,

293). Some of the cattle figurines also have decoration added to the horns to simulate the

decoration that would be given to the horns of a display ox (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 39,

Coote 1992, 293). Not only are these teaching aids that help children learn the desirable

aesthetic qualities of cattle, but they are also highly informative to the outsider in terms of

understanding "the ideal forms in terms of which actual cattle are assessed and

appreciated" (1992, 293).[14]

Early Christianity

By the mid-1800s, missionaries began to see the cattle-based culture of the Dinka

as a possible sphere for missionizing. In even their very early interaction with

Westerners, the Dinka revealed the depth of their existing religious beliefs. According to

Nikkel, during a voyage of discovery into the Upper Nile region by missionaries in 1839,

the missionaries were welcomed as "manifestations of Creator" (2001, 61). Despite the

reverential treatment they originally received, it was to be over one hundred years before

the missionaries made any significant progress, and the conversion that eventually

happened was due in large part to the work of indigenous missionaries, not westerners.

Some of the earliest missionaries in Sudan were Catholics (Nikkel 2001, 62). The

approach of these first missionaries was drastically different than the later, more

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[14] When I was in southern Sudan in 2008, the children of the village of Maar quickly learned that
Americans were very interested in the mud figurines. Before we left the village, the children had filled
every available space in our eating huts with figurines, mostly of cattle, but with a few people, dogs and an
elephant too. The figures looked exactly as Evans-Pritchard describes, with exaggerated horns, humps and
genitals.

indigenous movements among the Dinka, although they were similar to tactics used by missionaries around the world at the time. In northern Sudan, Austrian Catholic missionaries set about to find marginalized southern Sudanese slaves, buying according to Father Camboni, an early Roman Catholic missionary in Sudan, "youths who looked intelligent" (Nikkel 2001, 67). Although there was much hesitancy about converting on the part of the slaves and escaped slaves who found their way there, more and more slaves and orphaned children began to seek out the mission (Nikkel 2001, 67). In the missionary tradition, these earliest missionaries began to study the culture and language of their students (Nikkel 2001, 68). The missionaries taught their students a variety of topics and skills that they hoped they would eventually bring back with them to the South. They also began admitting girls and eventually, by 1873, had so many students that they had to expand their building to house them all (Nikkel 2001, 69). Despite the appearance of success, the missionaries were unable to get any of the students to return to the South to spread their newfound religion or skills, prompting the Austrian counsel to note "not one of the Africans who completed remained a Christian or earned an honest living," once they finished their education (Nikkel 2001, 69).

At the same time that missionaries had set up shop in Khartoum, they also continued pursing their ultimate goal of gaining access to southern Sudan. In 1848 they succeeded in gaining the supposed blessing of the Pasha to enter southern Sudan by way of the White Nile (Nikkel 2001, 70). In reality, the Pasha did everything in his power to stir tensions among the missionaries and the southern populations, enlisting Turkish guides that were sent along with the missionaries to ensure that the southern tribes would

fear the missionaries, and vice versa (Nikkel 2001, 71). For the southern tribes, this chicanery initially worked, as they could not distinguish the missionaries from their Turkish guides, a group that had long mistreated southerners (Nikkel 2001: 72). Soon, however, the southerners began to realize that the missionaries had different aims; according and early missionary, one Nuer chief told him at the end of the visit "I will consider you a traitor if you do not pay me another visit on your return, provided, of course, that you are not accompanied by Turks, with whom I want no dealing" (Nikkel 2001, 72).

The missionaries left their initial voyage to the South with great hope for the future of the church in southern Sudan (Nikkel 2001, 73). In 1852, within several years of this voyage, the first permanent mission was established in the territory of the Bari in the Upper Nile area of southern Sudan; two years later, the first mission was established in Dinka territory, close to Bor (Nikkel 2001, 73).

In the early years of these southern missions, many of the missionaries died of fever and other illnesses (Nikkel 2001, 74). Despite illness and deaths of so many, much progress was made as the missionaries began to learn and catalogue the religion and culture of the Dinka (Nikkel 2001, 76). Like many missionaries before them, they were quick to label the Dinka as savages, citing their aversion to wearing clothing, greediness (something that many missionaries blamed on the contact that the Dinka and other southern tribes had had with merchants and traders), and preoccupation with and refusal to slaughter their cattle except during ritual sacrifice, even during times of famine, as evidence of their inferiority (Nikkel 2001, 77, 82). The missionaries were further troubled

by the fact that the Dinka did not appear to believe in an afterlife (Nikkel 2001, 80).

According to Nikkel, the Catholic missionaries took this as a particularly bad sign as "the

greatest benefit of the Catholic faith was assurance of eternal life," and because of this,

foresaw that "evangelization would be an arduous process" (2001, 80).

The Dinka, for their part, often felt that the missionaries themselves were savages,

and were particularly shocked at their willingness to slaughter cattle for food (Nikkel

2001, 81). The lack of understanding between the missionaries and the Dinka certainly

did not help to win over the Dinka, and this lack of understanding, coupled with the

countless deaths of Catholic missionaries due to illness, convinced them to pull out of the

South within just a few years (Nikkel 2001, 82). The missionaries' faith in the ability to

convert was flagging, leading one of the missionaries to say that:

> While we cannot say that we achieved much we can no longer say that it is impossible to civilise
> these peoples. But the supreme graces is not yet visibly spread among the Africans, which is
> urgently required if they are to change from pagans to good Christians (Nikkel 2001, 82).

While the missionaries felt that they had accomplished little, the Dinka were still

sad to see them go, saying that the missionaries had helped protect them from armed

tribes and helped cure illnesses (Nikkel 2001, 83). By 1874, only one mission in

Khartoum remained, nearly all of the priests (19 out of 21) had died, and only a dozen or

so southern Sudanese had been baptized (Nikkel 2001, 85). Little progress had been

made, but the seeds had been sown for further missionary endeavors.

A new Anglican mission was built south of Bor in 1906, modeled after the

Church Missionary Society (CMS mission) in Uganda (Nikkel 2001, 104). The

missionaries were again met with much difficulty in trying to convert the Dinka.

According to Nikkel, the British missionaries were baffled at how the Dinka could

possess desirable qualities such as having "well-defined morals which kept them from promiscuity," while at the same time they were "quarrelsome" and prone to begging and stealing (2001, 107-108). Attempts to draw the Dinka closer by offering employment also proved disappointing to the missionaries as the Dinka seemed to have little interest in the material goods such as cloth and beads that the missionaries offered in return for work (Nikkel 2001, 107).

Eventually, the missionaries were able to set up a nightly service, inviting four local men to gather around a fire where they would recite prayers that had been translated using the missionaries' faltering Dinka (Nikkel 2001, 109). Small successes such as these, however, were short lived and the mutual suspicion that existed between the missionaries and the Dinka persisted. The Dinka still seemed to associate the missionaries with the rest of the colonizing forces and were not at all convinced of the usefulness of Christianity, and the missionaries for their part still believed the Dinka to be lazy, demanding, and incapable of understanding the value of western religion (Nikkel 2001, 111).

After only two years at the new mission, nearly all of the missionaries had fallen ill or had requested permission to take leave. The mission was shut down for a time and when it reopened, this time at a new site in Malek, Archibald Shaw was the only missionary from the initial group to return (Nikkel 2001, 115). Unlike the other CMS missionaries, Shaw set about learning the Dinka language and began to make lasting friendships among the Dinka, sometimes even participating in the famed wrestling matches of the young men (Nikkel 2001, 116). Possibly most important to Shaw's

acceptance, however, was the fact that he tended to a herd of cattle owned by the mission and was able to pay boys and young men in the village in cattle in exchange for their assistance with small jobs around the mission (Nikkel 2001, 117). Shaw was also given the cattle name *Macour*, which Nikkel translates as "gray vulture" (Nikkel 2001, 117).[15]

Realizing that the young boys whom he hired to do odd jobs around the mission never stayed around long enough to learn much about Christianity, Shaw began to offer a sort of contract to prospective converts by offering them food, clothing, and a calf in exchange for several years' service and for attending school (Nikkel 2001, 121). It was from this group that the missionaries gained their first documented convert in 1914 (Nikkel 2001, 122). Over the next few years several more converts were drawn from the ranks of "Shaw's boys," but their conversion was far from complete as many were drawn back toward polygynous marriages and the *jak* (traditional gods), two things that the missionaries would not tolerate (Nikkel 2001, 123).

It should noted that at this point, converts tended to be drawn largely from the ranks of those on the fringes of society. As Nikkel says, it was the "impoverished, orphaned, wayward, or the last sons of inferior wives" who made up the groups of boys who attended the mission schools, and as such, the new converts had little power to sway other members of their communities to convert (2001, 131). As the few converts that came out of this era were all from the mission schools, they came to me known by the Dinka in the area as *Nhialic Thakool*, or "God of the school" (Nikkel 2001, 132), or as

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[15] Conferring a cattle name on a foreigner is often a sign of affection or respect. In my experience, it is often based on some physical characteristic, such as hair or skin color that is similar to a bull. I was given the cattle name of *Amour* on my trip to Sudan and found it to be a cream and brown colored cow that roughly matched the color of my hair. Other members of my group who had blonde or gray hair were given names such as *Mathiong*, which are given to all white cattle.

the "children of the missionaries," (Deng 1995, 2006) further setting them apart from mainstream Dinka, and reinforcing the belief that religion was intrinsically tied to the colonizing forces.

Conversion picked up in 1940s as some of the first converts began to preach on their own and as mission schools became more popular among boys from wealthy families (Nikkel 2001, 140). Deng says that in part this increase in conversion had to do with increasing feeling among the Dinka that reading and writing "represented a revolution in knowledge…knowledge that would inevitably lead to power" (1995, 206). Although the knowledge gained in school was in some ways held in high esteem, particularly by the younger Dinka, it left many elders feeling bereft of their rightful place in Dinka society in which "knowledge was presumed to accumulate with age and the proximity to the ancestors" (Deng 1995, 2006). Despite the disruptions that Christianity brought to the traditional order of Dinka society, the Dinka, both the young and elders alike, were beginning to acknowledge that there was value in young men who were able to engage with the outside world, particularly as the civil war began to bring the Dinka into more frequent contact with the north (Deng 1995). Indeed in 1972, when the Addis Ababa Accord was signed, bringing peace to Sudan, it was the mission-educated southerners who were given positions in the local and national government (Nikkel 2001, 224). One thousand or so Dinka had converted to Christianity by 1951, but as Nikkel says, "the ancestral *jak* would soon reassert their authority" as the majority of these converts returned to the traditional religion (2001, 143).

In many ways, this early conversion, even as it became more of an indigenous movement, seemed likely to fail because of the perceived conflicts between Christianity and traditional Dinka life. According to Nikkel, the need to have a shrine for one's *jak* and the custom of polygamous marriage were two such conflicting beliefs that manifested themselves, particularly for the boys who had converted as children in the mission schools (Nikkel 2001, 151). As they grew older, boys came under increasing pressure to engage in polygamy both to increase their family's status and/or wealth, and in order to ensure that levirate marriages could be performed in the instance of a brother's death (Nikkel 2001, 151). Francis Mading Deng, the Sudanese anthropologist, was himself the son of a chief who was educated in the mission schools in the late 1940s. He recalls how elders in his village objected to his and his brother's mission education and repudiation of traditional beliefs, saying that they could not fathom how he and his brother, "being sons of the Chief, could be monogamous" (1972, 157). Nikkel also notes that "a husband and father was expected to install a shrine in his homestead where he could offer sacrifices to his ancestral *jok* for the protection of the family. If as a Christian he refused and mishap occurred, he came under severe censure" from his relatives (Nikkel 2001, 151). Deng, adding to this discourse and quoting anthropologists Lilian and Neville Sanderson says that:

> There was no indigenous role that it [religion] could improve his capacity to fulfill; on the contrary, by restricting his opportunities to learn, by observation and experience, the skills of a highly speacialised transhumant pastoralist and of a warrior, it diseducated him from the fundamental roles of an adult male (1995, 206).

Despite the ways in which Christianity was often at odds with the social norms and values of Dinka culture, one method was used with schoolboys to instill the lessons

100

of the bible in a culturally relevant way: songs. These songs, which Deng says were sung "by the pupils collectively with all the social, cultural, and aesthetic gratification that the society traditionally associated with singing and dancing," were much like the gratification a boy would normally feel from displaying his song oxen or decorating his body (1995: 205).

Young schoolboys further understood their life at school through the Dinka lens of a cattle camp, with Deng saying that they "viewed themselves in traditional terms as an age-set of warriors with pens for the spear and the school as a cattle camp" (1995, 205). Furthermore, Deng says, the way in which the young men displayed their "newly acquired skills, wisdom, and status" was with an "exhibitionist self-esteem, alternately referring to themselves as I or we, all characteristic of the individual-communal dynamics of traditional society" (1995, 206). This interesting dynamic, which I came to call "group autonomy" during my work with the Lost Boys in Denver, is one that is observable in almost every ceremony and group event I attended with the Lost Boys, and during my trips to Sudan, and as Deng describes, was one of the most effective ways that conversion took place among early converts.

Despite the beginnings of a Christianity that appealed to cultural practices of the Dinka, many converts who were won as children could not reconcile their familial duties with their newfound religion, and as a result, would often turn back to the traditional religion. To use the words the Lost Boys often used when discussing Christianity, this new religion was simply not "working" for these early converts. The old way of *jok* and *Nhialic* still had relevance, and in a sense, were "working," at least for the moment. One

did not need to read to understand this religion, families were still largely intact and adhering to their traditional structure, and chief and *tiet*, the diviners of the traditional religion, still held the power.

The missionary era all but came to an end in the 1960s. In 1962, the Missionary Societies act was passed by the Sudanese government, effectively ending proselytization and severely limiting the activities of missionaries in the South (Nikkel 2001, 221). Two years later, all missionaries were expelled, with the North claiming that missionaries were purposely "encouraging the setting up of a separate political status for the southern provinces thus endangering the integrity and unity of the country" (Deng 1972, 139). Although the missionaries were dismayed to be forced out, this process was not as detrimental to the CMS mission as it was to other missionary groups such as the Catholics, as the Anglican had established a more indigenous church than other groups, and they were already well into a process of handing over power to Sudanese priests and lay people (Nikkel 2001, 222).

Conversion in the North—The Khartoum Clubs

As the war began to ramp up in southern Sudan in the 1960s, increasing numbers of Dinka (primarily men and boys) began to flee to Khartoum (Nikkel 2001, 226). It was here, among the displaced that a separate conversion began to take place in the so-called "Khartoum Clubs." Since the 1950s, Dinka had been heading to Khartoum for employment and education and Nikkel says that by the mid-1950s, "Sunday mornings found Khartoum's Anglican cathedral 'filled to the doors' with southern Christians" (2001, 225). In the 1960s, two displaced lay leaders, both Dinka, began to open "clubs"

for the displaced southerners that provided both education and bible instruction (Nikkel 2001, 226). These clubs offered something that the Dinka living in the North could not find anywhere else in Khartoum: "oases where cultural identity could be affirmed and status improved" in the midst of discrimination and abuse the Dinka were met with by northerners (Nikkel 2001, 227). Out of an estimated 15,000 Dinka living in the North, approximately 500 to 800 Dinka attended each of the two worship services held each weekend (Nikkel 2001, 229).

Although club numbers were small, in many ways, parallels can be drawn between those converting in the clubs of Khartoum and the situation in which the Lost Boys converted. In both situations, converts, separated from their families, were surrounded by people of all age groups, instead of being combined into the traditional age-sets to which they were accustomed, and bereft of the cattle on which they had based so much of their lives in the South (Nikkel 2001). Of the Khartoum groups, Nikkel writes "Divested of cattle and the social and religious framework of which they were a part, the spiritual inclinations of the Dinka found release in a new, youthful community of faith" (2001, 229) and led to a period of conversion that was distinct, and much more effective than the conversion that had taken place in the South. In the Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis, the precise social conditions that surrounded the Lost Boys as they fled the South and their conversion will be discussed further.

Conversion: 1983-Present

After the peace agreement in 1972, many of the young Dinka trained in the clubs of Khartoum returned to the South, ready to evangelize (Nikkel 2001, 242). As these

indigenous missionaries began to spread the word, one of the most powerful and well-known figures in the conversion of southerners (as well as in the conversion of the Lost Boys), Nathaniel Garang, who had been ordained in Nairobi, returned to southern Sudan (Nikkel 2001, 242).[16] Garang, who is now the Bishop of the Diocese of Bor, and one of the longest-serving Episcopal bishops in Sudan, is something of a folk hero to both the Lost Boys in Denver and people in southern Sudan because he remained inside Sudan, with his people, for the entirety of the war, when so many others who held the sort of power he did fled the country (Wheeler 1997, 23). Like others who rose in the ranks of the church in Sudan, Garang came from a family that was extremely powerful within the traditional religion of the Dinka. According to Nikkel, not only did he posses the last name "Garang," which is one of the free divinities of the traditional religion, but his mother came from the family who had "long maintained the respected cult of Lirpiou, the *jok* of the 'cool heart' " (Nikkel 2001, 244). Although Garang was now a confirmed Christian, his lineage helped to bring legitimacy to his preaching, which Nikkel says drove some new converts to proclaim that "the *Nhialic* of Macour, he is *Nhialic*!" (Nikkel 2001, 244).[17]

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[16] On my trip to Sudan in 2008, I had the pleasure of meeting Nathaniel Garang in Bor town, southern Sudan. (I and several other representatives from Project Education Sudan had come to talk to him about school-building projects in southern Sudan.) Garang was in his late seventies or early eighties and had a round pot belly (very rare in Sudan) and an extraordinarily calm, kind air to him. He received us at his modest home in town, just a few hundred feet from the banks of the White Nile. This brief encounter helped me to understand the reverential tones the Lost Boys, and really all Sudanese people, used when talking about him.

[17] Macour was the name given to Gordon Shaw by the Dinka. This new saying is understood to mean that Dinka began to believe that the God they (or their ancestors) had been introduced to fifty or so years before was really the *Nhialic* they had believed in all along.

Cattle Raids of 1991—"The gods have gone with the cows to Nuer country"

The cattle raids of 1991 represent yet another unique and intense period of conversion for the Dinka, one that can also be used to briefly explain the conversion of the Lost Boys. As fighting between the Dinka and Nuer increased during the second half of the civil war, cattle raiding, which for generations has been a common occurrence between Dinka and Nuer, intensified. Whereas in the past, when cattle raids were generally nonviolent, or at least confined violence to the men raiding and those being raided, cattle raiding took a violent turn during the war that involved the killing, raping, and burning more commonly associated with attacks from Muslim raiders from the North. These raids were to have to have a violent and dramatic effect on the lives of southern Sudanese and were also the impetus behind conversion on a scale that had never been seen before.

Although much of the civil war in Sudan pitted northern Sudan against southern Sudan, fighting broke out among the Nuer and Dinka tribes in the South in 1991. The Nuer orchestrated a series of raids of Dinka cattle in the Bor region of the South and massacred the area's inhabitants. While cattle-raiding between the Dinka and Nuer is a practice that has gone on for hundreds of years, it had rarely been pursued with the kind of ferocity that was shown in this raid. Far from being just a raid to garner resources made scarce by the war, Nikkel calls these raids "an attempt to annihilate the Jieng [Dinka] Bor as an ethnic identity" (Nikkel 1997, 68). According to Wheeler, tens of thousands of people were killed and a million cattle taken, leaving 250,000 Dinka to flee their land under attack from the Nuer (2005, 61).

Also singled out for and killed in these raids were the diviners or *tiit* of the traditional religions who were guarding the shrines of the *jak* and sacrificing "countless bulls in a fruitless attempt to turn back the enemy" (Wheeler 2005, 62). The events of the 1991 raid had far reaching consequences and are often cited as a major impetus for Christian conversion among the Bor Dinka, particularly as much faith was lost in the traditional gods' ability to protect the people and because virtually all cattle, necessary to appease the traditional gods in sacrifice, were taken. It has been estimated that after these raids, Christianity among Dinka living in the Bor area where the raids occurred may have soared to as high as 90 percent (Wheeler 2005, 62).

Along with Christianity came destruction of many of the objects associated with the traditional religion, which were burned en masse at the construction of a massive shrine in the shape of the cross (Wheeler 2005, 62-63).[18] The event, which happened in 1994, was inspired by Paul Kon, a prophet who emerged around the time of the cattle raids, who was reportedly inspired by the Isaiah passage about Kush, a passage often cited by the Lost Boys as integral to their conversion as well (Wheeler 1997, 22). According to Wheeler, the passage describes "both suffering and eventual redemption and a turning to the God of 'Zion'" (1997, 23). Kon, who is related to Nathaniel Garang, had maintained his own local divinity until he was baptized, at which point he renounced his *jak* and began having prophesies (Nikkel 1997, 71). The mass burning was held at a site that Kon, who had been killed by the SPLA in 1992, had prescribed, a cross-shaped

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[18] In Sudan there are now many churches shaped like crosses. They are made out of mud that is wetted and shaped into the cruciform shape and then thatched with dry reeds. One church that I visited in the village of Pagok was not only laid out in the shape of the cross, but also had an altar that was made from mud and formed into the shape of the cross as well.

building built on a former cattle camp called Pakeo and site of a previous burning of *jak* that was ordered by British colonial forces 40 years earlier (Nikkel 1997, 72, Wheeler 1997, 22).

The major episodes of conversion in Sudan, such as that which followed the cattle raids and the massive conversion of the Lost Boys illustrate that over 100 years of attempting to convert the Dinka, nearly all of the conversion that has taken place has happened in the last 25 years and has been largely an indigenous movement, spearheaded by Dinka priests and evangelists trained in the Khartoum clubs or in surrounding east African countries. The seeds that were sown by the missionaries had come to fruition, but it took events such as the cattle raids of the 1990s for Christianity to become relevant to the lives of the Dinka in southern Sudan. As the Lost Boys would say, in world where cattle were no longer available for sacrifice, and where the *jak* were no longer relevant, Christianity was now "working" for the Dinka. It should be noted that the Lost Boys themselves were not part of this large-scale conversion that happened in Bor in the 1990s. All of those considered to be a part of the Lost Boys group had been gone from the Bor area for some time at this point, and were already converted in the Ethiopian camps, or would soon convert in the camps of Kenya.

The Lessening Importance of Cattle

Despite the continued importance of cattle to the life of the Nilotes, the civil war and subsequent conversion to Christianity in southern Sudan has begun to erode the traditional role of the cow. Many Nilotes have been separated from their cattle, particularly in the second half of the civil war (1983-2005) when many Dinka and Nuer

107

were in refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda. As well, the Christian conversion that took place among the Dinka, and to a lesser extent the Nuer, in the 1990s has changed many of the traditional practices of their cattle-based culture.

As mentioned above, the mass destruction in 1994 of traditional religious objects included sacred spears, shields and the *tim ke jak,* or *jak* poles that resembled the horns of oxen and were used to practice the traditional religion and to differentiate the shrines of different divinities. In place of these objects, Christian crosses began to "supplant artifacts of traditional culture" (Nikkel 1997, 87). In some cases, *jak* poles literally were pulled from the ground and hastily constructed crosses have been put into the holes that they left as a sign of conversion and protection from the *jak* (Nikkel 1997, 108). As "reliance upon two elements integral to indigenous identity and world view—cattle and the *jak*—has been profoundly altered," the attention of the Dinka to their cattle began to shift to the cross (Nikkel 1997, 89). Nikkel says that, the "aesthetic energies once given to grooming and adorning their oxen, or in personal body decoration, have recently been invested in new designs for the cruciform shape" (1997, 89).

The replacement of *jak* poles with crosses is particularly interesting in that both in form and use, they were linked to cattle. These forked poles, as described earlier, are shrines to the traditional gods where offerings and libations were placed (Nikkel 1997, 90). Their appearance, with curved, shaped points jutting out like trained cattle horns and painted in what Coote says are colors possibly related to cattle patterns, took what was aesthetically pleasing about cattle and put it on display (1992, 290). While replacing *jak* poles with crosses is a direct attempt to show that the old religions were being replaced

108

by Christianity, it should be noted that this practice does display continuity in that both *jak* poles and crosses are symbolic of sacrifice. While the *jak* poles are places to give offerings to the spirits who often demand cattle sacrifice, the cross is a symbol of human sacrifice (Nikkel 1997, 93-93). As Nikkel says, "it is in this intimate identification with Christ that the cross derives its power. Virtually all Jieng [Dinka] of this generation have witnessed the drama of [cattle] blood sacrifice and are aware of the indigenous meanings of blood shed for individual or communal guilt"(1995, 93).

Dinka crosses are made from a variety of materials, sometimes from those that have gained a special significance for the person carrying it, such as wood from boats used to travel the Nile by evangelists (Nikkel 1995, 91). In terms of monetary value, however, Nikkel says crosses made of ebony are considered the most valuable, but in terms of theological significance, those made from the wood of the *jak* poles are the most significant because they show a break with the traditional religion (1995, 91). The reconfiguration of a *jak* pole which originally had visual ties to cattle, into something that looks like a cross, could also signal the lessening importance of cattle as people turn to Christianity.

Although some traditional items are being replaced by the emergent Dinka crosses, this is not to say that the aesthetic form and energy that was previously put into cattle-based objects is not being integrated into this aesthetic innovation. As Nikkel says "much of the psychic energy that once flowed towards efforts to possess, nurture and groom cattle, with all their aesthetic, social, economic, and religious meanings, has, in part, been transferred to the "tree on which Christ was crucified"(1995, 89).

109

One example of how aesthetic properties of cattle have been translated to the cross is in the *dheeng* one gains from carrying a cross. The carrying of crosses, much like displaying and decorating one's oxen or one's body, carry with them the marks of beauty and sophistication (Nikkel 1995, 91). Acquiring *dheeng* from carrying a cross can be seen in the shape and form of crosses, which is derivative of two types of walking sticks (and the aforementioned *jak* poles), the *thiec* and *yuai* commonly used among the Dinka (Nikkel 1995, 89). The *thiec* are spears that young men receive upon their initiation. Meant to be used as weapons against enemies and animals, these clubs are long and heavy and made of ebony. They are meant to display virility and power (Nikkel 1995, 89). *Yuai* are longer, more slender poles which are used by men and women alike. According to Nikkel, *yuai* are sometimes decorated with bands of brass or surface carving and as a "thing of beauty, it denotes prestige, sophistication, and maturity" (1995, 90).

Like their predecessors, the *yuai* and *thiec*, which call attention to a person and enhance their personal appearance, crosses are a way to set oneself apart and to "make special". In this way it could be said that within the traditional framework of *dheeng*, to ornament oneself with a cross is a way to add to personal beauty and dignity. In their initial incarnation among the Bor Dinka in the 1970s, Dinka crosses were a way for evangelists to identify with their "stick-bearing kinfolk while distinguishing themselves as a unique minority," and also to serve as an entry point for conversations with those still practicing the traditional religion (Nikkel 1995, 91). In this way, the carrying of a cross in much like the decoration of oxen, it is used to call attention to something, in this

110

case Christianity, perceived as beautiful. In a more literal sense, the increasing presence of crosses among the Dinka and other Nilotic tribes calls attention to the fact that a radical shift is taking place among a people formally dedicated in all aspects of life, including religion, to their cattle.

When I was in Sudan, Dinka crosses had become ubiquitous. We were greeted in the many of the villages we entered by choirs of women (usually members of the mothers' union) wearing identical white dresses and headscarves and all carrying the long, slender Dinka cross, usually holding it aloft as they sang hymns and welcoming songs. At Dinka services at St. P.J's in Denver, the older members of the congregation generally brought Dinka crosses with them to services and used them in much the same way they were used in Sudan. I never saw any of the Lost Boys (with the exception of Lost Boys who were repatriated back into Sudan after the war whom I met there) in Denver carry a Dinka cross, a possible testament to the fact that because they were not exposed to the traditional religion or *jak* poles, and would not have been old enough to carry a *thiec* or *yuai* when they left their families, they never found a need to find a replacement for these objects.

As *jak* poles are metaphorically ripped from the ground to be replaced by crosses, the Dinka are accepting a new religion that, on a surface-level, at least, seems to be threatening to erode thousands of years of cattle-based religion, culture and aesthetics. Despite this, Dinka culture is still so intimately connected to cattle, and the Dinka who have been repatriated to southern Sudan have begun to increase the size of their herds to sizes that rival the beginning of the war, that it is hard to gauge if their cattle-based

111

culture will ever be fully discarded even in the face of increased Christian conversion. As Lienhardt points out, even those Nilotic people who have been long separated from their cattle seem to retain the cattle color vocabulary (1961, 13). And in my own experience working with Christian Lost Boy refugees from southern Sudan, I have witnessed the strong connection to cattle that has survived amidst the separation of the Lost Boys from their cattle, in many cases for close to 20 years. Cattle are still used as a means of gaining access to wealth, and many of the Lost Boys in Denver regularly send money to family members in Sudan so that they can maintain a herd either to be used as a bride price should they want to marry and bring their bride to the U.S., or as insurance and as a means to have wealth should they eventually return to Sudan. Cattle names based on recognized color configurations adopted in childhood are still the preferred method of address among the Lost Boys, and are still considered a source of pride, particularly if one is named after a prized configuration. Despite this, Christian names taken at baptism are often used in work and school settings, mainly for ease of understanding among American coworkers and friends.

In the next chapter, I will explore how the Lost Boys became refugees, highlighting the radical shift between the cattle-based life they would have had in Sudan and the new reality that they faced.

Chapter 6—The Lost Boys as Refugees

Flight from Sudan

Unlike the tradition-heavy, cattle-centered existence the Lost Boys would have likely been immersed in if not for the civil war, they instead found themselves as victims of a failed nation-state. Like many other decolonized African countries, which have attempted to force nations on preexisting state borders, Sudan's attempts have resulted in civil war and a massive refugee crisis. The Lost Boys as a group represent the worst possible outcome of a failed nation-state. Adding to the misery that the Lost Boys have endured as refugees is the fact many were so young when they became separated from their parents that the stories of their journey have become at once muddled, hard to recall and discern from one another, and yet at the same time, so fresh in their memories that at times vivid details come rushing back in conversations and in dreams. Unfortunately, the media has latched on to certain elements of the Lost Boys' stories, the walking, the mud, the lion attacks, and forgotten that these were individuals, young boys, whose lives they were describing. The Lost Boys for their part have not always corrected the inaccuracies and misconceptions about their stories, sometimes because they feel that people would not care to hear their own version of the truth, more interested instead in the stories they have heard than to learn the harsh and very individual horrors that each of the Lost Boys experienced.

What I learned about the Lost Boys' experience as refugees came to me slowly. Because I did not design my interviews to ask directly about the Lost Boys' journey,

what I learned from them was generally in snippets of conversation I overheard, or in passing remarks they made about their trek. The Lost Boys rarely outlined their entire journey for me or others, but would sometimes make an offhand remark such as "yeah, when we crossed the Gilo [River], that is when the crocodiles attacked." Other times, jokes they made would convey the dire circumstances that they had been in during their months-long trek. One of these jokes alluded to the extreme lack of food that the Lost Boys faced as they walked to Kenya and Ethiopia and were forced to eat things such as leaves and grass. Because of this, many Lost Boys call all green vegetables and salads they encounter "grass" and regard them as undesirable to eat. A typical example would be for one of the Lost Boys to say: "John doesn't want to eat those noodles, they have too much grass in them," and then John would respond by saying "Nah, man, you're the one who likes grass, you eat it!" Occurrences such as these often corroborated details given in many of the books about the Lost Boys and gave me some sense of the similar experiences all had gone through.

Mark Bixler, a journalist who followed a group of Lost Boys living in Atlanta for several years and wrote the book *The Lost Boys of Sudan: An American Story of the Refugee Experience* also found many similarities among the Lost Boys' stories about their refugee experience. He speculates that these similarities are indicative of the fact that "people who are being written about often have an interest in how their story is told, and the writer must consider a person's motivation for portraying events in a certain light" (2005, xiii). I found this adage helpful in my own work with the Lost Boys and in the literature that exists about their flight from Sudan to Ethiopia to Kenya. Because of

uniformity of this literature, I would like to first discuss what the typical explanation has been, both by the Lost Boys and in the media, for the separation and flight of the Lost Boys. I will also discuss the literature generated by some of the humanitarian organizations that were on the ground in southern Sudan and in the refugee camps at the time of the Lost Boys displacement, which help to fill in the details sometimes left out by the Lost Boys and the media.

Numerous writers, from journalists, to missionaries, to anthropologists, to best-selling fiction writers such as Dave Eggers, have recounted the story of the Lost Boys. My own understanding of the Lost Boys' collective flight is therefore a compilation of all of these sources, in addition to what the Lost Boy community has told me, in bits and pieces, about their journey. As I have stated previously, I did not ask specific questions about the Lost Boys' flight during my interviews with them nor did I ever ask them to recount from beginning to end the story of their journey to the refugee camps or to the U.S. In the two years since I first met the Lost Boys of Denver, these stories slowly emerged and have been supplemented by popular literature, journal articles, and film accounts of their journey. Rather than telling the story of any particular Lost Boy, I would instead like to give something of a composite sketch compiled from all of these resources. The story of the Lost Boys, as I understand it is as follows.

Southern Sudan is not a densely populated area. Although the entire country of Sudan, including North and South is the largest country in terms of land mass in Africa at one million square miles and had an overall population of somewhere around 25[19] million

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[19] Currently, the population of Sudan as a whole is estimated at about 28 million and southern Sudan, between six and eight million (Wheeler 2005:54 and 77).

people at the time the Lost Boys became separated from their families, the South, in the late 1980s was home to only about 4.3 million of these people (Human Rights Watch/Africa 1994, 5). Villages in the South are spread over this vast landscape, with concentrations of people around some of the larger towns such as Juba (the current capital of the South), Bor, and Nasir. Generally, each family, made up of a husband, his wife or wives and all of their children, has a plot of land that houses the family's huts, and a barn (Deng 1995, 187). Outside of the village, sometimes a distance of only several hundred feet and other times up to a few days walk away, are the cattle camps. Cattle camps, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, are seasonal grazing grounds for the cattle, and also the place where young men are said to become men, to learn to live on their own. They are the only place where young men milk their own cows, something which is never done in the presence of women. It is not uncommon for young men to be away at these camps for months at a time, returning only for village ceremonies or at the end of the dry season. It is in the cattle camps that most Lost Boys say they were when the Arabs began to attack.

Losing Sudan's Boys

In 1983 with the reimposition of shar'ia law by the northern government, political parties were abolished, the press was censored, suspected dissidents were arrested and tortured, and public floggings and amputations were reinstated as punishment for crimes (Human Rights Watch/Africa 1994, 5-6, Bixler 2005, 53). In addition, all non-Muslims were barred from serving in top government positions, tipping the political balance in the favor of the already privileged North (Bixler 2005, 53). In response to these actions,

southern rebels formed the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and "took to the

bush" in anticipation of war (Bixler 2005, 53, Wheeler 2005, 56) while the North and its

allied miltias, such as the Baggara, a nomadic Arab group made up of many tribes who

have "warred with their Dinka neighbors off and on for a hundred years or more"(Bixler

2005, 63) began attacking villages in southern Sudan (Bixler 2005, 56-57). A "scorched

earth" policy was pursued by the raiders who often attacked villages just after

government planes finished bombing. Huts were burned, crops and cattle stolen, and

villagers were either shot or kidnapped, sometimes to be sold into the slave markets of

northern Sudan . Those who were able to escape took to the surrounding forests to hide.

Caught up in the horror of the war, which was waged almost entirely on southern

soil, numerous young men were separated from their parents, particularly in the late

1980s (Bixler 2005, 60). Bixler accurately sums up a common explanation given by the

Lost Boys for their separation from their families:

> Most said they were six, seven, eight, or nine and were tending cattle away from home as
> is the custom for boys that age in Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups of southern Sudan, when
> government soldiers or militias aligned with the government attacked their villages.
> They said assailants killed and kidnapped relatives, stole cattle, and burned huts and grain
> before vanishing towards the horizon from which they had come. Sometimes the
> attackers were turbaned Arab horseman. In other places, they carried AK-47 assault
> rifles. Most of the boys said they saw the attack from a distance or learned of it as they
> walked home [from cattle camp]… Inevitably, they said, an adult in the group of
> survivors asserted himself and led them on a treacherous, barefoot, weeks-long march
> east, toward the promise of safety in refugee camps across the border in Ethiopia (2005,
> 60).

This passage from Bixler is evocative of much of the literature and testimonials by the

Lost Boys that asserts that they became separated from their homes and families because

they were away at cattle camps and were able to escape the attacks, which usually

targeted the villages, eventually trekking to Ethiopia in groups of boys, sometimes led by

117

an older boy or man. Despite this uniformity in stories, there are other reasons that the Lost Boys of Sudan are mostly male.

Humanitarian organizations such as Human Rights Watch/Africa, which was on the ground at the time of the civil war, have documented some of the other reasons that so many young men from southern Sudan walked on their own to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya: namely to be educated and to be trained as child soldiers. Although the media and the Lost Boys themselves have portrayed their story as a uniform one; that the Lost Boys' villages were attacked, and that they were told to head toward Ethiopia to safety and to receive "education," this was not always the case (Human Rights Watch/Africa1994). According to Human Rights Watch/Africa, boys left their villages and headed to Ethiopia under varied circumstances including; after their villages had been attacked, with their parents, and simply because the SPLA told young men to go to Ethiopia to get education (HRW/Africa, 1994, 6). Human Rights Watch further asserts that going through SPLA networks was the safest way for boys to get to Ethiopia, and that by 1988 "large networks of boys were being marched to Ethiopia, and in 1990 were observed by outsiders being transported by vehicle with adult supervisors" (1994, 9). According to Wheeler, in the southern Sudanese province of Bahr el Ghazal alone, 30,000 boys were recruited by the SPLA after a famine and militia attacks in 1987-1988 decimated the area (2005, 58). The boys became part of the "Jiec Amar," or the Red Army as it was known by the SPLA (Wheeler 2005, 58). The Jiec Amar was to be an "elite force of educated and ideologically sound young people, cut off from their roots, to build the 'New Sudan'" (Wheeler 2005, 58). HRW/Africa, who interviewed a former

SPLA officer about the Jiec Amar, was told the Red Army was usually made up of the older boys who were between 14 and 16 years of age. At first, the boys were used on the front lines of combat, but when they proved "too young" to handle the fighting as they were often "massacred," they were reassigned to more menial duties and eventually allowed to go to school (HRW/Africa 1994, 14).

Another reason for the mass migration of young men to Ethiopia is that village chiefs were asked by the SPLA to send boys, with the permission of their parents, to Ethiopia to be schooled (HRW/Africa 1994, 9, Jok 2005, 154). On top of this, the SPLA administered the refugee camps in Ethiopia and "according to SPLA officers and the children themselves, they [the boys] were given military training as well as education," (HRW/Africa:6) and in fact "some form of military training was admittedly given to all unaccompanied boys, regardless of age" (HRW/Africa, 1994, 14).

Military recruitment of young men and boys by the SPLA also helps to explain why so few girls trekked to Ethiopia in the 1980s and early '90s, and why there are few southern Sudanese girls who are considered to be "lost" in the same sense as the boys. According to Bixler, "the rebel army [the SPLA] did not use many female fighters," and:

> Perhaps more importantly, few families in southern Sudan would have willingly sent girls away from home. Girls are too valuable. They grow into young women who fetch dowries of valuable cattle when they marry (2005, 61).

In Dinka culture, girls are also kept much closer to the home and family than boys, who spend much of their time in cattle camps. Other sources have suggested that there were small numbers of girls, probably less than 2,000, who were essentially "lost" just as the Lost Boys were, but once in the refugee camps, were often placed with families for

119

whom they would perform domestic duties in exchange for shelter and food—they rarely lived alone as the Lost Boys did (Deng, Deng, Ajak and Bernstein 2005, 31).

Despite the varied ways in which Lost Boys ended up in the refugee camps, their stories have not betrayed this. Human Rights Watch, alluding to the similarity of the boys' stories says that "the SPLA instructed the boys in the camps what to tell expatriate relief workers and other outsiders about their relations to the SPLA" (1994, 12). Not only could admitting to military service bring shame to a boy and conjure unpleasant memories, but according to one of the Lost Boys living in Denver, they could also be barred from gaining passage to another country as an asylee or refugee if they discussed soldiering during an INS interview. Bixler, however says that that INS and State Department officials were "well-aware" that many Lost Boys had served as child soldiers in Ethiopia and had been told that many were being coached by other Lost Boys to cover this information up in interviews with the INS (2005, 89). According to the State Department, although service as a soldier did not make the Lost Boys any less eligible for resettlement, there was still a "perception in Kakuma [refugee camp] that it might" (Bixler 2005, 89). The Lost Boys, therefore, felt they had a strong incentive to keep their military status during the war to themselves, and thus it has often gone unspoken.

Although the story most often told about the Lost Boys' journey leaves out many important details in regards to their service as child soldiers, there are still elements of it that have been well-documented and which help to paint a clear picture of the hardships all endured, regardless of their military status. As I have previously stated, what has been called the "Journey of a 1,000 miles" (Wheat 2004, 1) began a few years after the civil

120

war started up again in 1983, as the SPLA carried out guerilla attacks on northern targets and the North retaliated (Werner, Anderson, and Wheeler 2000, 523). Between 1987 and 1988, suffering reached an "appalling climax" as these attacks began to intensify (Werner, Anderson, and Wheeler 2000, 525). Around this time, the Sudanese government started to more formally arm Baggara militias and some non-Arab tribes to attack the Dinka (Werner, Anderson, and Wheeler 2000, 525). Between 1987 and 1988, humanitarian workers documented the arrival of some 17,000 unaccompanied young men and boys into the Ethiopian refugee camps of Dimma, Itang, and Panyido, just over the Ethiopian border with Sudan (Bixler 2005, 59-60). According to Wheeler, the boys entered Ethiopia "exhausted, sick and starving, traumatized by their experience on the trek," (2005, 58) which was said to have included lion and hyena attacks, dehydration, the death of brothers and friends, and the consumption of things such as mud, animal skins, rats, and urine. Many boys apparently told humanitarian workers that they found their way to Ethiopia, a trek that took six to 10 weeks to complete, by following "the bones" of those that had attempted and failed the journey before them (Werner, Anderson, and Wheeler 2000, 528). In all, diplomats stationed in Ethiopia at the time estimated that 8,000 boys died on the trek from Sudan to Ethiopia (Wheeler 2005, 57).

Life in the Ethiopian camps was bleak. The boys who had entered the camps without family and found that they had family in the camps once they got there were not allowed to live together with them. All were kept separately in their own barracks even though surveys conducted in the Ethiopian camps suggested that up to one-fifth of the boys had relatives living in the camps (HRW/Africa 1994, 12). For the most part, the

boys were on their own; they built their own huts and made their own food with only minimal assistance from teachers, caretakers, and clergy (HRW/Africa 1994, 13).

Although they had been promised education in Ethiopia, most of the unaccompanied boys received little until their later years in the camps and according to a 1989 HRW/Africa survey, 90 percent of the unaccompanied minor population in the Ethiopian camps were either illiterate or in the first grade at the time of the survey (HRW/Africa 1994, 13). Despite this, Wheeler says that 12,000 boys were in schools run jointly by the SPLA and the churches that were in the camps (2005, 58). The Lost Boys' accounts of their time in Ethiopia also suggest that they received at least minimal education, although many discussed the fact that they were still not able to read or write in Dinka at the time they converted to Christianity in the Ethiopian camps in their interviews with me.   While is hard to say exactly how much education the Lost Boys received in the camps, their exposure to Christianity is well-documented.   According to Wheeler, the opposing forces of the military and the clergy were the most influential on the Lost Boys in the Ethiopian camps, with the clergy "struggling to keep them alive and to provide a gentler environment alongside the military discipline of the SPLA"(2005, 58).

Ethiopia and Conversion—"In my heart I had a feeling of doing it"

In my interviews with the Lost Boys, I discovered that many of the Lost Boys had had some exposure to Christianity before coming to Ethiopia, although they largely had not converted prior to their journey. Joseph said that when he was born "my mom and my dad, and my whole family, they were not Christian, but they were believing in local

122

gods."[20] Despite his family's traditional values, one of his older sisters converted to Christianity after learning about it from an aunt. She was the first in their village to convert and would sometimes sing Christian songs to her little brother, of which Joseph said:

> I was so little, but I can see her everyday she will pick up a bible and try to sing some songs in the bible. I feel really that I like those songs but I don't know what they were talking about until the war broke in Sudan and I had to leave and go to Ethiopia in 1987. In 1988, that's when I became a Christian (Interview 1-1).

One of my other informants, Deng, also grew up in a family that practiced the traditional Dinka religion. Although his family was animist, he rarely saw much of the traditional religion being practiced because he was in the cattle camp where cattle sacrifice did not happen, and more importantly, because the traditional Dinka religion was not "concerned with the kids" (Interview 2-1). He sometimes saw his parents bring cattle into the village to be sacrificed, but by his own account, didn't know what was going on. Once, at Christmas time, Deng heard some Christians marching and beating drums and asked his father who they were. His father explained and when Deng asked him if he could join, his father expressed the view that many Dinka held toward the traditional religion, saying Christianity was "'not for the kids,' that's what he told me, 'when you grow up later on, I'm gonna let you go, but it's not good for you now.'" (Interview 2-1)

My third informant, Lual, similarly said that when he was growing up, his family was not Christian "at all, they were still believing in those small gods [*jak*] that they know" (Interview 3-1). He said that the first time he learned about Christianity was not

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[20] Local gods are generally known as *jok*, or *jak* (plural).

until 1989, two years after he arrived in the refugee camps. Confirming what Deng

stated, Lual told me that children did not participate in the traditional religion and that

sacrifices were practiced in the main village, so if you were away at cattle camp or

elsewhere, you would not see the sacrifices. (Interview 3-1).

Unlike the majority of Lost Boys that I interviewed and met, who had not

converted before they arrived in the Ethiopian camps, Peter had. His mother was the first

in their village to convert (Interview 4-1). Despite his mother's early conversion, Peter's

father was reluctant to convert because in Peter's words, he was "angry" that women

were allowed to participate in Christianity, something that was not usually allowed in the

traditional Dinka religion. According to Peter, women were often present at cattle

sacrifices more to "share, and make guys feel motivated" by "making singing and all of

this stuff" than to actually participate in the ceremonies themselves (Interview 4-1).

Eventually, however, his father converted after Peter had already left for the refugee

camps and the rest of the family had already converted, after seeing:

> What chapters of the bible being taught to him by my mom and the rest of the people around,
> and he saw them, they are happening, like war in Sudan, and drought, animal are dying,
> everybody is dying. And after he learned all of this, I believe that what make him converted to
> be a Christian after I already left (Interview 4-1).

Despite his father's reluctance, Peter's mother still had him baptized when he was

very young and chose a Christian name for him.[21] In order for him to be baptized, Peter's

mother had to agree to teach him the bible as he could not yet read. Like Deng and Lual,

Peter stated that children had little interaction with the traditional religion and therefore

said it was "not too hard for me to change to Christianity, because the gods of my parents

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[21] For a women to have her child baptized against the wishes of her husband is unusual, but it is likely that
Peter's mother was helped by the fact that her brother, Peter's uncle, is a higher up in the Sudanese
Episcopal church, and the fact that maternal uncles often play a strong role in the lives of their nephews.

used to have was [were] not the gods for the kids." Parents did not want their kids around the jak because they believed them to be jealous and sometimes harmful to children, and therefore the kids rarely witnessed animal sacrifices and other aspects of the Dinka religion.   Because he knew so little about these gods, Peter was open to Christianity, saying that he was "still green," like a "brand new car which was ready for [a] road test" (Interview 4-1).

Once in the Ethiopian refugee camps, separated from their parents, the Lost Boys who had not converted, which made up the majority of their numbers, came into the church in different ways. Joseph, who was in Panyido camp, said that he became Christian in 1988, when he was eight years old. At this point, he said, "I was not even knowing how to write my name" (Interview 1-2). Searching for "something to believe in" in the absence of his family and his cattle, and knowing nothing about the traditional religion, Joseph said:

> I was not even able maybe to repair to my traditional beliefs. I was a kid, I couldn't even know what do you do for your local god to protect you, I'd rather join the majority. I didn't have a clue what Christianity is about, but in my heart I had a feeling that there is only one God, and that one God, I have to join this majority of people that are following the one God (Interview 1-3).

Before he was Christian, Joseph had an older friend in the camp who had already converted. Every evening, before they went to bed, his friend would call all the young boys to one place and sing songs for them and teach them to pray. From his friend's teaching, Joseph became "acquainted" with Christianity, but didn't really "know what was going on" (Interview 1-2). In October of 1988, that changed. Joseph was sitting by himself near the church, listening to the group inside. He said:

> There was really a very nice sound coming out of it [the church], and people, you can tell they
> that are so happy, and the worshipping was so wonderful, you can tell that! I thought to myself,

125

why I am I here lonely and who is protecting me now? I better join this group. And that's when I became Christian" (Interview 1-2).

Joseph went to the church then, and was baptized along with 500[22] or so other Lost Boys by an Episcopal priest named Mayol Ajak[23] who is well-known and regarded among the Lost Boys. According to Joseph, Ajak was the one "baptizing all the Lost Boys, most of them" (Interview 2-1). He was told to choose a name from the bible, and then he was given a Dinka bible. He couldn't read yet, but some of the older Lost Boys would read the bible to him. After being baptized, Joseph became as active as he could with the church, but was often limited by all of the chores that the Lost Boys needed to do to care for themselves, of which he said:

> From that day that I was baptized, I developed a habit of going to church every night, if I can, as soon as possible, if I can. But, we were responsible of our own life and all this kind [of stuff], so you have to be cooking sometime, be given a duty to cook, or you will be given something to do, so it will restrict our time to follow church activities. But in my heart I had a feeling of doing it. And before I go to bed, I pray, wake up in the morning, I pray. From that day up till now I do that (Interview 1-2).

Despite his conversion in Ethiopia, and his new habit of praying, Joseph didn't immediately become immersed in the church. Because the Lost Boys were so busy caring for themselves in Ethiopia, it was not until Joseph "came to Kenya, that's where I was really very much involved with church activities"(Interview 1-2).

Deng stressed his autonomy in his decision to become Christian. He said that "nobody came to me and said come go to church now, it was my feeling by myself" (Interview 2-1). Deng then went down to the church, but he didn't want to be baptized at

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[22] The large conversion ceremonies described by the Lost Boys have been well documented. According to Werner, Anderson, and Wheeler, large baptisms of thousands of boys were especially common in the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches (2000, 529).

[23] Mayol (or Mayul) Ajak, also known by his Christian name, Andrew Mayul, was the Episcopal pastor of Panyido, the "children's camp," in Ethiopia where all of the Lost Boys whom I interviewed lived in the late 1980s and early '90s (Werner, Anderson, and Wheeler 2000, 529).

first. He just went and listened. People at the church were teaching how to write in Dinka and he wanted to learn too, so he said "I'll try it" (Interview 2-1). The Sudanese preachers who were teaching Dinka also taught him about the bible and how to read it. Eventually, he decided he wanted to be baptized. Deng went to one of the priests and expressed his desire. He was told that he had to learn the doctrine of the Episcopal church, and how to "join the New Light" (Interview 2-1). Once he had done this, he was baptized with a large group of others. Some people, he said, didn't know much about the church yet, but were baptized anyway and allowed to learn about the church later on.

Like Joseph and Deng, Lual didn't immediately convert in the Ethiopian camps. When they first got to Ethiopia, he said the Lost Boys "were just in a group, we don't even know about what is God" (Interview 3-1). However by 1989, two years or so after most of the boys had arrived in the camp, the teachers were telling the boys to go to church. Despite this, the main reason, according to Lual, for going to church was not his teachers' insistence, but that "there were some friends in the group who used to go to church and they talked about how good it is" (Interview 3-1). Stressing the importance of following the wisdom of the group, Lual said that when someone says how good something is, you have to follow it and try to see how it is. Like Joseph, it was older boys who told Lual about church and persuaded him to go. When asked if they taught the bible in the schools, he said that it was just "general religion, not the bible, but religion books" (Interview 3-1).

In approximately 1990, after going to Sunday school and learning about the church for a year or so, Lual decided he wanted to be baptized. He was baptized in a

127

large group of boys, like my other informants. Mayol Ajak also helped him convert by telling the boys about "about the word of God…and preached to them" (Interview 3-1). Much like the other Lost Boys stated, Lual said that the church was much bigger in Kakuma, and that the "word of God was spread a lot more" because of the church's strong presence (Interview 3-1). When I asked Lual if he ever helped any of the other guys convert, he said that because all of the guys had been baptized, they didn't have to help each other convert, but sometimes they had to encourage someone who had been baptized, but had stopped coming to church to come back. When this happened, he said, "then you talk to him and tell him, yeah, to come to church" (Interview 3-2).

Kakuma

In 1991, after four years of relative stability and large-scale conversion in the Ethiopian camps, the Ethiopian government was overthrown by Eritrean and Tigrean[24] rebels who were backed by the Sudanese government and hostile to the current, socialist, Mengistu regime, the SPLA, and refugees Mengistu had allowed on Ethiopian soil (Bixler 2005, 64, Wheeler 2005, 59). With nowhere to flee, Sudanese refugees including the Lost Boys, fled back into Sudan en masse as they were attacked by Ethiopian rebels. In order to get back into Sudan, the Lost Boys and hundreds of thousands of other refugees had to cross the Gilo river, which separates Ethiopia and Sudan and was swollen from heavy rains that year (Bixler 2005, 65). Many young boys were sucked under by the current, attacked by crocodiles, shot by Ethiopian rebels and Sudanese government

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[24] Tigray is a region of Ethiopia named after the ethnic group which inhabits this area, the Tigreans or "Tigrayans" who were severely marginalized under the Mengistu regime (Van Arsdale 2006)

troops from their respective sides of the river, or bombed from the air by Sudanese planes (Wheeler 2005, 59).

The unaccompanied boys who survived wandered for months, building themselves huts and digging foxholes as they moved between small towns inside the Sudanese border (Bixler 2005, 67-68 and HRW/Africa 1994). Not only were these encampments targeted by the Sudanese military, but in 1991, the rift between the Dinka and Nuer factions of the SPLA and the subsequent arming by the government of the Nuer-led SPLA-United faction, threatened a large camp of boys at Pochalla (Bixler 2005, 67 and HRW/Africa 1994). The majority of the unaccompanied minors at this camp headed to another camp near the city of Kapoeta, which was also soon captured by government forces (Bixler 2005, 68). After the fall of Kapoeta, the Lost Boys began their journey to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, a huge camp that held a total of 28,000 Sudanese refugees—over a third of which were Lost Boys—and thousands of refugees displaced in other east African conflicts (Bixler 2005, 68). According to Wheeler, the Lost Boys demonstrated a "remarkable care and support for each other" as they marched to Kenya: "reading and writing lessons continued even as they marched…the strong carried their few belongings, or even those who were sick" (2005, 60). About 10,500[25] Lost Boys made it the Kakuma refugee camp located near the city of Lokichokio, Kenya (HRW/Africa 1994, 17) described by Bixler as a "collection of tents and mud huts perched on a broiling tabletop plain of northern Kenya" (2005, 13).

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[25] HRW/Africa has stated that the number of unaccompanied boys was originally estimated at closer to 12,000. The UNHCR and World Vision have speculated that the SPLA-Mainstream may have kidnapped between 1,500 and 3,000 boys from Lokichokio in one night and sent them back to fight or receive military training inside the border of Sudan.

In the Kenyan camps, the boys were no longer under the care of the SPLA, but rather of the Kenya authorities and humanitarian organizations such as the UNHCR who administered the camp (Bixler 2005, 68). They provided a stimulating environment, with more freedom, but also with more structure for the boys. According to Bixler, boys "attended school from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., attended church on Sundays, and moved into adolescence with a routine of class work and soccer and grinding grain for dinner" (2005, 13).

The Lost Boys' own accounts of their time in the refugee camps confirm the more structured nature of Kakuma described in the literature. According to both Joseph and Lual, the Lost Boys had more freedom in the camps because the UN took care of more of their needs than the SPLA had done when they administered the camps in Ethiopia. Deng added that the UN even paid Kenyans and Ethiopians to be teachers in Kakuma. Because of their lighter responsibilities in Kakuma, the Lost Boys were able to focus on school and also to become more involved with the church. Deng said that everything revolved around school and church in Kakuma; guys would go to school all day and then study late into the night, while the church was the "center of activity in Kakuma, people would go there to sing and dance and to have fun." Joseph similarly stated that "what you do [in Kakuma] is to go to school, and coming back from school, go home, that's it." Although Joseph had been baptized in Ethiopia, it was the freedom of Kakuma that really allowed him the time to get heavily involved with the church. Lual said that because the SPLA, with the help of some other Sudanese, were in charge of the Lost Boys in Ethiopia, they were "restricted from doing some other stuff," but in Kenya "because UN was the one

responsible for everything, and everything was under their control, so they [we] were allowed to do more activities than we used to [do in Ethiopia]." Deng also agreed that there was more time in Kakuma to do what you wanted to do.

Kakuma was also a place where the nascent faith of the Lost Boys in Christianity began to solidify. While most were baptized in Ethiopia, it was in Kenya where they began to attend church on a regular basis. Both Lual and Peter discussed how broadly the churches were represented in Kakuma, with Peter saying that there were Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, and Pentecostal churches, among others represented in Kakuma. In Panyido, the Ethiopian camp that he and many of the other Lost Boys were in, only Catholics and Episcopalians had been represented.

Peter, in describing a Christmas celebration typical of Kakuma, painted a picture of the strong Christian presence in the camp, as well as the solidarity and sense of community that Christianity gave to the Lost Boys. He also discussed how these types of celebrations may have caused those who not yet been baptized to want to join the church:

> **Peter:** If you go to Kakuma refugee camp [on December 24th or 25th], you will know exactly Jesus will come very soon (laughs), you will really feel it, a lot of drums, nobody is sleeping, everybody is drumming.
> **KS:** This is on Christmas?
> **Peter:** Yeah, during Christmas time. A lot of things are being done: everybody is marching on the street... Everybody is wearing the red: red shirt, red pants, red cross. And, everybody is marching on the road, and you see people beating the drum and a lot of song is sung on the roadside. And if you are not a Christian, those songs, those echoes, you know, those echoes that you hear from very far away?
> **KS:** Yes.
> **Peter:** Maybe sound very good to your ear, and you feel like when you understand it, you may feel "oh that that thing sounds very good I understand it. Why don't I join?' And then you may have a chance to read the bible by yourself and that may give you a clue to decide what to do."
> **KS:** You probably feel pretty left out too if everyone else is having, doing all this for Christmas and you're just sitting there and you don't believe in God?
> **Peter:** Yeah, yeah.[26]

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[26] Taken from Interview 4-2.

Although Kakuma was certainly more structured and stable than the Ethiopian refugee camps as these massive Christmas displays suggest, the Lost Boys' lives were still hard. They built their own huts from leaves, mud and sometimes concrete if it was available (Bixler 2005, 13). Most of the boys lived off of one cup of maize or sorghum a day (Bixler 2005, 13), which needed to be ground by hand. Often, the boys would take turns grinding the grain, with the designated grinder and cook for the day staying home from school to complete the chores. It should be noted that there is a strong taboo among the Dinka against men cooking, especially in the company of women. The only time men have traditionally cooked is when they are alone in cattle camp and no women or girls are around to do it for them. Several of the Lost Boys told me that if a girl happened to walk by as they were cooking in the refugee camps, they would hide, as even touching a cooking utensil in front of a girl was shame-inducing. Out of necessity, the Lost Boys have continued to cook for themselves now that they have resettled in the U.S. and which young men are good cooks is the subject of many jokes among them.

The Lost Boys spent years in Kenya and eventually began to settle into a routine of school, church, cooking, and soccer. Many, however, were understandably anxious to be reunited with family and to move on with their lives. Although the UNHCR usually tries to repatriate refugees back into their country of origin, or if that is impossible, into a nearby country, Sudan was still unstable in the late 1990s and the Kenyan government was unwilling to permit the Lost Boys to work within Kenya (Bixler 2005). By this time, most of the Lost Boys had been in Kakuma for seven or eight years. In 1999, officers from the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) arrived in Kakuma

to begin interviewing Lost Boys to be resettled in the U.S. (Bixler 2005). By the end of 2000, the Lost Boys who were selected had begun arriving in cities around the country (Bixler 2005). Although the U.S. government had initially expected to let in more than the 3,800 Lost Boys who had arrived by September of 2001, September 11th put a temporary stop to all immigration, including the remaining Lost Boys still in Kakuma (Bixler 2005, 132). When immigration picked back up again a few years later, Lost Boys still in Kenya were considered adults, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was close to being signed between northern and southern Sudan, and the U.S. had other refugee crises to deal with on top of the war in Iraq. The Lost Boys were no longer a priority. Those left in Kakuma were largely forgotten by the government, in essence "warehoused" as long-term refugees. With the signing of the peace agreement in 2005, many also began to make their way back into Sudan to find family and to be integrated into a country in which they had not lived for almost twenty years.

In the next chapter, I will discuss what the lives of the Lost Boys would have been like had the civil war not ripped them from their homes, families, and cattle, highlighting the aspects of Dinka culture, namely group autonomy and pragmatism, which allowed them to adjust to the radically new circumstances they found themselves in. I will also examine how the Christianity that the Lost Boys converted to in Ethiopia, which flowered in Kenya, was adopted as part of their new identity and the functions it served.

Chapter 7—The Lost Boys and Identity

The conversion of the Lost Boys I interviewed can in many ways be viewed as representative of the experiences of the vast majority of Dinka Lost Boys from the Bor area. The reasons for the relative ease of their conversion gives insight into the motivation for the conversion of the Lost Boys group as a whole. Chief among these reasons was the separation of the Lost Boys from nearly everything that they had come to regard as normal in their lives, including their families, their villages and their cattle. At the same time, the long-held Dinka values of pragmatism and group autonomy, perhaps the only constants in the lives of the Lost Boys, allowed them to be open to a religion that was rejected by southerners in the past and to retain this religion as they moved from Ethiopia to Kenya to the U.S, eventually making it a cornerstone of their identity.

To illuminate the radical separation of the Lost Boys from their former ways of life in this chapter, I will first discuss what the norm *was* for boys and young men in Dinka society, including the importance of age-sets, family relations, and cattle camps. In addition, I will illuminate the role that Christianity played in-flight and posit reasons that conversion was such an attractive prospect to the Lost Boys as they fled, particularly in relation to Dinka cultural norms, as a substitute for families and cattle, and as a way to fight the effects of extreme trauma. Finally, the group autonomy that the Lost Boys learned in their villages, before separation, will be explained and the role this value played in their conversion will be discussed.

Traditional Dinka Identity: Early Childhood

The early childhood of Dinka boys is marked in its closeness to the maternal side of the family, in sharp contrast to adolescence when the paternal side of the family and age-sets become the focus of much of their attention. Dinka mothers, often with the help of a younger female relative are the primary caretakers of infants.[27] After a baby has been weaned, it is sent to its maternal kin to spend the next several years until he or she reaches the age of six or so getting to know his/her mother's family. During this time, much love and attention is lavished on the child by its maternal grandparents. Despite the almost total absorption in the mother's side, the child is continually reminded of his loyalty to the father's side, learning to recite the names of all of his father's ancestors as soon as he learns to speak. At the age of six or so, the child is brought back to live with his father and other boys and men in the cattle camp. This shift is notable in the abrupt change it marks in a boy's life; whereas his early life is marked by close ties with the women and maternal relatives in his life, who generally shower him with displays of love, he is now expected to join the world of men, in which outward display of affection are not nearly as acceptable.[28] This shift, one which the majority of Lost Boys would have gone through before being separated from their parents, is a testament to the adaptability that is instilled in Dinka boys from early childhood. It is also in these camps where boys are encouraged to develop their individual and collective identity as an age-set.

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[27] In Sudan, mothers bring their babies everywhere they go using a sort of sling that they can wear over their arm like a purse or can sling over their knee if seated in a chair.

[28] The information is this paragraph relies heavily on the work of Deng, from *The Dinka of the Sudan*, 1972.

Childhood

In the cattle camps, Dinka boys and adolescents begin to learn the values that will allow them to protect their families and cattle and instill the traits that are valued in Dinka men: bravery, self-reliance, and the importance of the group. Deng says that at this time in their lives, boys "are made to value the sense of solidarity demanded and expected of them as the core of family unity, harmony, and continuity" (1972, 51). They are taught to fight honorably through staged fights with each other, feed themselves while away from their mother's cooking in the main village and to sleep lightly in order to fend off animal and human attacks on the cattle and people in the camps (Deng 1972).[29]

Most importantly, childhood is when Dinka boys learn how to herd cattle, and through herding, learn the values of "collective work" both in that it is often done as a group, or at least with each group member taking turns caring for cattle, and as each member of the herd must be given equal care (Deng 1972). The importance of independence from one's parents and reliance on one's age-set is further instilled through cattle herding, as Jeppsson and Hjernl,[30] point out, through long periods of herding cattle in grasslands far from the village (2005, 2). According to Jeppsson and Hjernal, the social organization and culture of the cattle camps provide young boys with:

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[29] The fighting of which Deng speaks was something I noticed among young boys when I was in Sudan as it was more prevalent than anything I'd seen among boys that age in the U.S. Punching, kicking, rock-throwing were common and on several occasions when I told boys who I thought were on the verge of seriously hurting each other to stop, I was met with either complete disregard, and less commonly, a grudging stop to the fight. Looking back, I realize that the boys, who were normally taught to be very obedient to elders, especially foreign elders, were not trying to be disrespectful, but were simply not used to be told to stop this kind of behavior. Deng explains this behavior as "geared toward developing in a boy an independent and courageous personality" (1972: 64). I also witnessed several boys killing small (and not so small) animals such as lizards. This didn't seem to be out of cruelty, but seemed almost akin to sport, and in hindsight, was probably good practice in a culture where big game such as antelope and ostrich are often hunted and killed by the men.

[30] Jeppsson and Hjernl conducted Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) research among the Lost Boys when they were in the Kakuma refugee camp.

> Common strength and protection against threats and enemies, a social support which provides food, water, protection and warmth, and a source of courage, emotional security, closeness and friendship" (2005, 3).

One youth, who was interviewed by another group of researchers working with Lost Boys in Kakuma to learn about coping mechanisms quoted one youth as saying:

> In Dinkaland, when they [boys] are 4 or 5 years, they go up to the cattle. Because young children go to the cattle camp and they feed with milk … you protect yourself as a human. At that time, you stay alone for certain months—like from January to May. So separated from your parents. And people manage it that way too (Luster, Qin, Bates et. al 2009, 208).

Adolescence

The boys often spend years learning in the cattle camps, before they begin preparation for initiation. When they are around 16-18 years old, age-sets[31] acquire a "father," usually an elder from a chiefly lineage who looks after the boys, gives the age-set a name in concert with the village chiefs, and gives the age-set permission to be initiated when the time is right (Deng 1972). When permission is granted, the initiates generally receive a series of stacked cuts on their foreheads, which are often v-shaped and thought to symbolize the horns of cattle (Coote 1992, 291).

After initiation, young men experience yet another change in their lives—they live together in special villages and are not allowed to touch cattle as they are considered somewhat "impure" (Deng 1972, 73). Deng calls this period in a young man's life the most "colorful" period in his life, when they are encouraged to gorge themselves on food, have few responsibilities, and compose numerous songs that explain the liminal period that they are in and the somewhat ambivalent attitudes their fathers hold toward them as

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[31] It should be noted that girls are also organized into age-sets, but the literature tends to focus on the importance of male age-sets as they relate to cattle camp and provides few details on female age-sets.

they move from being obedient sons to men with a claim to their father's cattle (1972, 72).

Adulthood

After their period of isolation ends, the teenagers emerge, considered for the most part to be adults. Deng says that the end of the initiation period marks the beginning of adulthood and the assumption of a young man's role as a "gentleman and a member of a corporate group with a defined vital role to play in society" (1972, 73). As a "gentleman," a young man is imbued with *dheeng*, or "dignity" as Deng translates it (1971). To fully become an adult however, a young man must be married (Deng 1972, 93).[32]

In the past, the rules and activities permitted during courtship were somewhat more liberal than they are today. Teenagers were allowed to spend time alone together, and in some cases, were allowed to have sexual relationships as long they didn't result in pregnancy (Deng, 1972). Widespread Christian conversion in the South has drastically changed attitudes toward premarital sex to the point that is completely unacceptable for women, and definitely frowned upon for men (although it is my opinion that it is tacitly allowed for men if it is done in a discreet manner) to have sex outside of marriage. According to Deng, the first step toward marriage is "seeing" a girl, or when a man has decided to marry and expresses this desire to his family (1972, 94). The family must

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[32] I found out firsthand about this rule when I was in southern Sudan. At 27 years old at the time, I considered myself squarely in the adult category, but found myself asked several times by young girls and young men whether I was a "girl." At first, I was a little bit offended, thinking that maybe despite my long hair and the long skirts I had been instructed to wear while in Sudan I was being mistaken for a man. I would counter this by asking what they meant and would then be asked if I was married. I usually responded "no" and would then launch into an explanation about how I was not yet married, but would soon be as I was engaged at the time. One of the young girls who asked me this studied me for a bit and then said "well you're a really old girl then." In her eyes, my unmarried status still made me a child, despite my age.

agree to the union and then proceeds to determine if there is any possible familial

relationship between the bride and groom or other circumstances that might bar marriage

(Deng 1972, 95). Once it has been determined that no relationship is present between the

bride and groom,[33] negotiations for the brideprice can begin. This can be a lengthy

process, imbued with much ceremony and pomp (Deng 1972). Deng puts the average

brideprice at around 50 cows, but says that this number can grow to over 100 for a girl

from a prominent family (1998).

Once a brideprice has been agreed upon by both sides, the girl, accompanied by

her age-mates, is finally "given away," to the family of her husband (Deng 1971, 167).

The age-mates of both bride and groom stay for several days of revelry and the bride and

groom spend their first night together and consummate the marriage (Deng 1971).

Francis Deng identifies three overriding goals in the lives of the Dinka:

procreation, unity and harmony, and human dignity. As no birth control is used

traditionally among the Dinka, and children are considered integral to carrying on one's

name, in effect being the only way for a person to have life after death (although cattle

can, in some ways, do the same), couples attempt to become pregnant as soon as possible

after marriage (Deng, 1972, Lienhardt, 1961).[34] The importance in bearing children is

further illustrated by the presence of levirate and ghost marriage in Dinka culture,

customs in which a dead man's relatives bear children with his widow in order to carry

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[33] It is not at all uncommon for kin relationships to be uncovered that bar marriage. In the Lost Boy
community in Denver, it often came up in conversation that one of the Lost Boys was interested in
marrying a particular girl in Sudan, only to have his hopes quickly dashed by finding that they shared some
distant relative.
[34] It should be noted, however, that the Dinka do not entirely rule out the presence of the deceased in the
lives of those on earth; according to Deng, the dead still communicate with the living through dreams and
divinations (Deng:1972).

on his legacy and ensure that he has an avenue to life after death through these children (Deng 1972, 9).

Identity in Flight

When the Lost Boys were separated from their families in the mid- to late eighties, few were old enough to have become initiated. By and large, they were a group of children who had known both the warmth and comfort of their early childhood, as well as the collective independence and autonomy they had learned in the cattle camps. While the warmth and comfort they had come to know nearly vanished, the value of the egalitarian groups that the Lost Boys grew up in remained—both in-flight and in the refugee camp—and stayed constant. In many ways, these groups were a contributing factor to their conversion and remained a strong part of their identity.

Evidence of the experience the Lost Boys had as members of an age-set in cattle camp, and value of these egalitarian groups can be seen in a report from a study of post-traumatic stress among a group of Lost Boys in Kakuma. In the report, 79 percent of the Lost Boys said they had spent time away from their parents in cattle camps before they were separated (Jeppsson and Hjernl 2005, 8). As the attacks on southern villages intensified in 1986 and 1987, the groups of boys who were separated from their parents were able to put to use the skills they had gleaned in the cattle camps, whose distance from the main villages was quite likely the reason they were able to escape. As their villages were attacked, young men and boys who lay hidden in the underbrush and trees crept out and banded together, not for any cultural reasons, but rather for survival; in many cases, young boys were the only people who were not in the village and therefore

saw signs of the attacks from the distance, often smoke, gunshots, or the pounding of horse or camel hooves on the earth. As mentioned before, other boys were sent by their parents, sometimes at the behest of the SPLA, with the belief that they would be educated, or even that they would join the army, in either case, sent away in desperation as their parents waited for the next attacks. As lines of young men and boys snaked eastward toward Ethiopia, however, the group identity they had formed in the cattle camps was employed not only for survival, but as a way to create a life that had meaning.

As they walked, the Lost Boys cared for each other, sharing what little food they could find or had brought with them and caring for those who fell sick and were injured (Bixler 2005, Deng, Deng, Ajak & Berstein 2005). In particular, boys looked out for their younger brothers and boys from their own villages. There was one exception to this rule, however: when a boy became too ill to move, or seemed to have given up (as often happened), all but his closest friends would stop associating with him. On a practical level, this helped boys from passing illnesses to each other, and on a psychological level, it helped the stronger boys disassociate themselves from those who would likely die, lessening the emotional blow that his death would bring.

Upon their arrival in Ethiopia, the Lost Boys found nothing. In his account of the life of one of the Lost Boys that weaves both fact and fiction, author Dave Eggers describes the differences between what Achak, the book's main character, thinks Ethiopia will look like and the stunning nothingness that it actually is:

> …in Ethiopia, we were told, we would be safe and there would be food, dry beds, school. I admit that in that way, I allowed my imagination to flower. As we drew closer to the border, my expectations had come to include homes for each of us, new families, tall buildings, glass, waterfalls, bowls of bright oranges set upon clean tables.
> But when we reached Ethiopia, it was not that place.

-We are here, Dut said.
-This is not that place, I said.
-This is Ethiopia, Kur said.
It looked the same. There were no buildings, no glass. There were no bowls of oranges set upon clean tables. There was nothing. There was a river and little else (Eggers, 2006, 233).

Eggers fictionalized account is strongly support by reports from Human Rights Watch Africa, which say that when one international NGO visited the Ethiopian camp Panyido (or Fugnido as it is sometimes written) in 1987, they saw only "naked bodies, very thin, of boys, as far as the eye could see. They did not even have *tukls* [huts] to live in" (Human Rights Watch Africa 1994, 14). The boys were divided into smaller groups designed to keep those who had fled together and were from the same area together and then into larger groups of 200-300 boys (Jeppsson and Hjernl 2005,4). In a testament of what the boys were able to achieve as a group, they eventually built their own living quarters and schools; teachers were either drawn from their group or assigned by relief agencies (Human Rights Watch Africa 1994, 14, Jeppsson and Hjernl 2005, 4).

The bonds of the groups the Lost Boys were assigned to were further solidified through the strict daily routines that they had and by the fact that the boys were kept separated from the other refugees in the Ethiopian camps. These groups, for the most part, kept intact the groups the boys had fled in and/or the groups they had settled into on their long journey to Ethiopia (Jeppsson and Hjernl, 2005, 4), meaning that they were usually made up of boys from the same tribe, region, and often, age-set. In Ethiopia, boys were responsible for the "whole range of household chores normally split up among family members according to age and sex" (Bixler 2005, 65). On several occasions, the Denver Lost Boys related to me how they were assigned the typically "feminine" chores of fetching water and cooking. Cooking, in particular, is considered shameful for men to

engage in in Dinka culture, and as a result, the Lost Boy put in charge of cooking would often hide, particularly in Kakuma where the chance of a woman catching a man cooking (considered an extreme embarrassment) were much higher than anywhere else.

Despite the fact that up to one-fifth of the boys in Ethiopian camps had families in the camps, they were kept apart in their own groups, made up largely of boys their own age (HRW/Africa 1994, 14). Human Rights Watch says that this practice was allowable because the SPLA, not the UN, was administering the camps and because of Dinka cultural practices that often kept young boys separated from their parents (1994, 14). In particular, Human Rights Watch cites the cattle camps that have been previously discussed, and the practice of Dinka parents of sending their children to missionary-run boarding schools to be educated away from their families as reasons why the boys were kept separate (1994, 14). As discussed previously, Human Rights Watch had reason to believe the boys were also kept separate for the purposes of military training (Human Rights Watch 1994, Bixler 2005). While international aid workers were in the camps during the day, according to several sources, the SPLA took over after dark and the boys were made to participate in military training (Bixler 2005, HRW/Africa 1994). The SPLA was able to accomplish this by requiring all aid workers to leave by the late afternoon, using "security concerns" as an excuse to get Westerners out of the camps (Bixler 2005, 62). Between their chores and military training, it should come as no surprise that the Lost Boys received very little formal education in the Ethiopian camps; according to HRW/Africa, a 1989 survey of the Ethiopian camps found that 90 percent of the boys were either illiterate or in grade one (1994, 14).

143

The Lost Boys I interviewed confirmed the highly structured life they had and reliance on the age-set grouping in Ethiopia. Joseph said that the boys were divided into about 15 groups (out of a total population of about 7,000 boys in Panyido camp). Despite the rigor of everyday activities, however, it was not like a military barrack or normal refugee camps and although a "military major" might sometimes come to protect them, they would "apply their own rules" for the most part. Lual also talked about Panyido, saying that initially boys were divided into 12 groups and as more boys trickled in over the years, that number grew to 16 or so (Interview 3-2).

Although the boys were introduced to a warmer, more enriching environment once they got to the UN-run Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, they did not abandon the groups they had formed or the reliance they had on each other. Again the boys had to build their own homes and cook their own food, but were at least afforded the stability of being in a relatively safe, stable country. Of Kakuma, Bixler says "…here, finally, was a place without constant threat of attack, sanctuary from a war that ground up life like a tornado skipping from place to place"(200, 69). In Kakuma, the Lost Boys also experienced consistency in their schooling and had a variety of extracurricular activities to choose from including basketball, soccer, and drama groups (Bixler 2005). The Lost Boys were offered the opportunity to be fostered by families in the camps, but the majority chose to remain in their groups, with only 2,500 of the 10,500 or so Lost Boys joining foster families (HRW/Africa 1994, 20).

The research conducted by Jeppsson and Hjernl with the Lost Boys in Kakuma confirms how much they relied on each other for care and support in the camps: 35

percent of the boys interviewed cited a friend as the person they would go to if they were sad, while only 24 percent said they would go to a caretaker and 20 percent a relative (Jeppsson and Hjernl 2005, 10).

Christian Identity

As discussed in Chapter 2, refugees often begin to question the "utility of beliefs, values, technology, statuses, exchange systems, and all other aspects of society" (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992, 9) as they are in flight. According to Appadurai, they also constantly renegotiate their identity, even as they retain ties to their homeland (1992). For the Lost Boys, much of this questioning and renegotiation surrounded the traditional Dinka religion, something that as described in the last chapter, they knew relatively little about and had largely been barred from participating in as children. As they renegotiated their identity, however, they managed to retain much of the Dinka culture, and in many ways, the pragmatic, egalitarian values of Dinka culture allowed them to more readily accept new beliefs that they found most useful.

None of the Lost Boys I interviewed expressed what extreme despair they must have found themselves in as the realization that they would not be returning home anytime soon sunk in. None told me if they had seen family members killed. None told me what it felt to be cut off from nearly everything (with the exception of their age-sets) they had ever known. In part, this was because, as I described before, this is a topic that has been well-documented and which I have heard the Lost Boys talk about at fundraisers and other events where they are called on to tell their stories. Furthermore, I did not have IRB approval to ask about this. While I have been present when others have asked the

145

Lost Boys what I felt to be callous and invasive questions about their journey, to which the Lost Boys dutifully gave answers, they do not generally volunteer this information. Whether this is due to the much-noted Dinka stoicism or simply because they have told their stories so many times before, I am not sure, but whatever their reasons, I felt it was important to allow them to talk about their separation only when and if they were comfortable.

Although it remained unspoken, what was abundantly clear was that the separated from their homes and families, the Lost Boys were in likely the most liminal position they had ever been in. It is not hard to try, as Appadurai suggests, to "imagine the imagination" of the Lost Boys as they began to construct a new identity for themselves, one that was now devoid of parents, home village and the cattle that in Dinka culture represent such a big part of a young man's identity. In a 1998 report by U.S. advocacy group, Refugees International, arguing for the resettlement of the Lost Boys, it was reported that the Lost Boys did not fit into the normal roles that Dinka and Nuer young men held (Bixler, 2005). According to Bixler, who cited the report in his book, the Lost Boys' "separation from relatives meant they grew up with limited education on cattle herding, the traditional skill that defines men as competent and whole in southern Sudan" (2005, 85). Furthermore, they lacked cattle for dowries, and they hadn't been marked with the scars that identify men as being initiated, and therefore fully adult and male (Bixler 2005). Joseph talked with me about this in an interview about this, stressing the differences between a "normal" Dinka man who was reserved, stayed with his cattle and

other men, and didn't concern himself with women and children. In order to be a Christian, he had to give this stoic attitude up, saying that to act like a Christian:

> I had to give up a lot of things, culture things. A lot of things like, see, there is a great difference between Christians and a 'normal' Dinka man. Because a normal Dinka man, I [he would] have to do what the culture want me [him] to do. I [would] have to be aggressive…exactly, you know yourself you are in position exactly, you are as a man! You stay as a man, every day…you don't want to mess up with kids, you don't want to mess up with the women, you don't talk to women…You follow with a man's side [hang out with men]. (Interview 1-3)

At the same time that they lacked the skills and rites of passage that would make them "Dinka men," in some ways, the Lost Boys' worldviews had become suddenly and unexpectedly broader than what they than those of their families and friends who remained in the insular villages of southern Sudan. In Ethiopia, and particularly in Kenya, they were exposed to not only other tribes from southern Sudan that they rarely would have had contact with, but also refugees and aid workers from other African, European, and Asian countries. In order to construct a new identity that worked in the circumstances the Lost Boys found themselves in, at the same time diminished as they were broadened, the Lost Boys implemented the long held Dinka values of group autonomy, discussed above, and the pragmatism that has been a hallmark for Dinka men.

The pragmatism of the Dinka and other Nilotic tribes is well-documented by Nikkel, Deng, Lienhardt, and others who have worked with the Dinka. Although resistant to change, the Dinka have been known to adopt foreign practices that "work." This utilitarian pragmatism was a theme that ran throughout my interviews with the Lost Boys. When asked about the traditional Dinka religion, which nearly all of their parents and villages actively practiced, the Lost Boys told me two things: 1) that they knew little of this religion, and as children were not involved to any meaningful degree in the traditional religion, and: 2) these old ways "were no longer working" for them due to

147

radically different situation they found themselves in. The conversion experiences of the Lost Boys, briefly reiterated below, are a testament to these two points.

As discussed in the last chapter, Joseph had a distinctly group-centered experience, with one of the older Lost Boys calling him and other young boys to listen to bible stories and sing together at night. What ultimately convinced him to convert, however, was his own pragmatic decision that the people in the Christian group seemed happy and that he himself had no one to protect him. Upon realizing this, he said to himself, "I better join this group." Although Joseph was the most emotional of all the Lost Boys I interviewed when describing his conversion, his reasons were ultimately practical: those in the church group were happy, he was not, they were protected as members of a group, he was lonely, they had each other. It only made sense to convert.

Deng, who said he initially didn't want to be baptized, also eventually gave in to the rational truth that those who went to the church were taught to read and write Dinka. From what was originally a pragmatic understanding that the church could provide him with skills that he desired, his imagination broadened and he began to learn church doctrine and about the "New Light."

For Lual, the decision to convert was based on the wisdom of the group. Seeing that so many other Lost Boys were going to church and were telling him how good it was convinced him that it was worth trying. Much like the egalitarian way that the Dinka make decisions—often through individuals making speeches to persuade the group to one position or another—Lual listened to the evidence that the group provided him and made a decision that their collective wisdom was sound.

148

Depending on the wisdom of the group both for basic matters of survival such as for preparing food and protection, as well as in conversion, was not just based in pragmatism, it was something that the Lost Boys had had instilled in them since childhood. Although the reliance they have on each other has become even more honed as they have endured isolation and separation as a group that is extreme even for the Dinka, the age-set system, particularly for Dinka boys, is something that had been reinforced to them through their separation from their parents as children and the games and trials of their youth spent in cattle camps.

The Lost Boys' relative lack of knowledge about the traditional Dinka religion also lent itself to this pragmatism. As few among them knew much about the traditional religion and had been taught that it was not for kids, they could not easily access this religion; as Peter said, they were "green" in the ways of traditional religion. Practicing the Dinka religion in flight was further complicated by its reliance on cattle sacrifice, something children were not allowed to participate in, and was made impossible by the fact that the Lost Boys no longer had any cattle. Christianity, however, was actively marketed to the boys by elders and older boys among them, and there were plenty of people in the camps who could teach them how to worship. Furthermore, Christianity didn't require cattle or other sacrifice.

One step in the process of conversion, the taking of Christian names, was based on practicality, but also called for a more radical shift in worldview. Although to an outsider, changing one's name may seem like a drastic step, most Lost Boys changed their names, describing it to me with a decidedly practical bent. Joseph said of this

149

process: "the concept was at least to identify the Christian among those who are not Christian. I think that's why Christian leaders came up with these ideas of giving a [Christian] name to people, which mean now, we are Sudanese and we have the name of a white people." However, Joseph (who continues, at least at work and among American friends, to go by his Christian name" said that he now thinks it is a "wrong concept be given a name other rather than the one you have before" (Interview 1-1). Lual, who no longer uses his Christian name, said that "they just give you a list of names, and then you have to pick." When I asked him if it was hard to give up the name his parents gave him he said no, it was not hard, but when he got older he said somewhat wistfully, "oh, I just want to keep my own name."

While taking a Christian name was an important step for Lost Boys just beginning to add Christianity to their identity, it is not an aspect that has necessarily stuck. Of those the Lost Boy community in Denver, about one-third use their Christian name (always in conjunction with their given Dinka last name, as there are too many Johns, Isaacs and Daniels to differentiate without some other kind of identifier attached), another third use their Dinka names exclusively and another third seem to easily switch between their given name and Christian, using their Christian name often with American friends and co-workers and their given name with other Lost Boys. Despite the fact that some Lost Boys have now changed their names back, the fact that so many were willing to give up the names their parents had given them and take on a new, foreign name demonstrates just how important Christianity was to the identity of the Lost Boys.

Beyond names, the method the Lost Boys use, both in the U.S. and Sudan, to get people to convince the unconverted or lapsed members of the church to come to church demonstrates the emphasis they place on Christian identity, and highlights the value they place on group autonomy. This method, which employs what Joseph called an "information committee," or *Lek*, as it's called in the Sudanese Episcopal Church, meets to select the parts of the bible they will preach and where they will go to spread the word. They then inform the people whom they are going to visit that they will be coming and that they should not prepare food as is the usual Dinka custom when receiving visitors. When they get to the house of those they are trying to evangelize, they will sing some songs and tell them what the bible says. When they take their leave, they tell those they have visited "we will leave you, it is *your* choice" if you want to convert. If the person who was visited happens to be related to someone or friends with someone on the committee, they might come to that person and ask for clarification about something in the bible (Interview 1-2). Joseph said he had personally approached other Lost Boys and had talked to them about the bible. These committees, as least by Joseph's account, were highly persuasive: After a visit from the *Lek*, he said, people would convert or begin to attend church again (Interview 1-2).

Another practical function of Christianity was that it brought together boys from all tribes, serving to help them become part of the broader group of Lost Boys, which included the Nuer, Shilluk, Bari, DiDinga and other tribes. Like the young Dinka

converts that Mark Nikkel[35] discusses in an article about the symbolism of Dinka crosses among new converts, Christianity for the Lost Boys has created a surrogate "age-set" that was not bound by the usual parameters of tribe and age, but included the entire Lost Boy group (1997, 92). This age-set allowed boys from disparate areas and tribes, tribes that in southern Sudan may or may not have been warring at that particular moment, to have common ground. To use Appadurai's language, Christianity in this way helped them to broaden their ethnoscapes. Joseph said of the Lost Boys that even though the Lost Boys as a group have:

> a difference of some years here, some have 30 years, some have less than 30 years, but we consider ourselves as we are an age-set group. But from then, we've been living as brothers together, and we're kind of forgetting about age-set, you know like 'you are older or you are younger'…We try to bring everyone together under the same label. So we [the Lost Boys] are considered as an age-set. (Interview-1-4).

The line that the Lost Boys walked between retaining traditional values, like the age-set and the way they tried to break from old traditions was reflected in the response Joseph gave when I asked how this identity as a single age-set came into play in the refugee camps, especially as younger boys were traditionally expected to show deference to older men and boys, he said:

> When we left Sudan and came to Ethiopia, we encountered a lot of change, but we tried to differentiate our society from previous ones. What I mean is, we are not going back the old generation that used to be. If there were old generation criteria, we would use those, but since we move to going to school, that changed our label of who we are—I could be the youngest in the class and still get number one in the class! This will demolish the boundaries [between age-sets]. When we have this attitude, it changes the behavior of 'you are older than me, I am older than you' (Interview 1-4).

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[35] In Nikkel's article "The Cross as a Symbol of Regeneration in Jieng Bor Society," he discusses the age-set concept in terms of southern Sudanese converts, and is not specifically referring to the Lost Boys. I have used his idea of the surrogate age-set and extended it to the Lost Boy group.

Beyond identity, Christianity also gave Lost Boys a practical way to understand the meaning of the dire circumstances they found themselves in. According to Jeppsson and Hjernl, 30 percent of the Lost Boys they interviewed explained the war using a religious framework "where the war was interpreted as an act of God, either as a punishment or with a divine meaning beyond the realm of humans" (2005, 10). Furthermore, over 90 percent of boys believed that God could help them (Jeppsson and Hjernl 2005). Another team of researchers who interviewed Lost Boys resettled in the U.S. also found that religion helped the Lost Boys find meaning in their struggles. One Lost Boy told them, "I cannot say that I was the one taking care of myself. There was Someone taking care of me. And if there was no God, I would not be here today" (Luster and Qin et al. 2009, 207).

Particular passages of the bible resonated with the Lost Boys and seemed to them to foretell the struggles they had been through. Luster and Qin et al. say that passages from Moses that discuss the years-long wanderings of the Israelites in the desert were often preached to the Lost Boys in the refugee camps to teach them the virtues of waiting and give them hope for being reunited with their parents and homes (2009). In my own interviews with the Lost Boys, I asked them what bible passages they found meaningful. Much like Luster and Qin's study, Lual said that he found the passages in the bible that talked about things happening in the past, particularly with the Israelites and the disciples helped him believe in God and convert (Interview 3-2). Lual also said that passages of Isaiah helped give meaning to the war:

> In the part of the bible, I think it is Isaiah something, talk about Sudan and how the war in Sudan will be happening. So it looks like when we read it, a lot of these things have happened, through the war and the way that we have been walking around the country, it gives us the sense that

whatever is written in the bible will happen sometime because it seemed to happen to us (Interview 3-2).

When asked if he thought the passage talked specifically about the Lost Boys, however, Lual said "I think they are not talking about the Lost Boys, but the whole of Sudan" But, he said, if it was about the Lost Boys, he would just "take it" [36] (Interview 3-2). Asked what he thought the Isaiah passage says about the future of Sudan, he said

…it was in the bible, I think Isaiah says, there will be war in Sudan, there were be a lot going on, people will be scared, they will be countries to countries, move from countries to countries. So the war would be happening. So what will be the conclusion of it [the war]? That's what I don't know. But some of the things mentioned in the bible happened before now (Interview 3-2).

Joseph also talked about how Isaiah referred to the plight of Sudan, but not to the Lost Boys specifically. He said:

They don't call Sudan in the bible, but they call Sudan 'Kush.' That Sudan will enter in war sometime, and maybe after that war they will become independent and they will be capable people and they will believe God and God will really help them and nations will be afraid of Sudan sometime (Interview 1-2).

Joseph also said that someday he really hoped that "God would come through for Sudan." He also liked the John 3:16 passage, which says "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." About it, he said:

I love that quotation for sure. Jesus came and died for all of us, those who say that they will be a Christian, and even those who are not believing in God. There is time for everything as bible said…you are not believer today, but maybe tomorrow you will be a believer.

Deng cited an Ecclesiastes passage as a source of guidance because it was filled with advice for young people such as "enjoy your youth, but one day God is gonna judge you." He also mentioned the same passage that Joseph did from the book of John, which

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[36] The Lost Boys often use the word "take" when talking about religion and other experiences in a pragmatic way. For example, a Lost Boy might say about a college course he dislikes "I will take the parts I like and leave the rest," meaning he will get out of it what he can.

talks about there being a time for everything, a passage that seemed to resonate with the Lost Boys and provide the advice and guidance they were seeking.

It was not just to the bible that the Lost Boys looked for guidance; they also found surrogate parents among older boys and men in their group, much like the age-set fathers they would have had in their villages and especially among the priests and members of the church. As Nikkel says, "amidst this tumult church people tried to offer solace, nurture, and education, a supplement to the military discipline provided by the SPLA" (2001, 239). Asked about if the Sudanese priests in the camps acted as parents, Lual referenced Mayol Ajok, a Dinka priest who baptized several of the Denver Lost Boys and scores of other Lost Boys saying "yeah, they can take care of us, sure, they did. Especially those, that guy called Mayol [Ajok] was really taking care of the people" (Interview 3-1). The strong role that the church people played in the lives of the Lost Boys also allowed them to expand their imagined futures—seven percent of the Lost Boys interviewed by Jeppsson and Hjernl mentioned becoming a priest as their goal for the future (2005, 11), a telling assertion given that before their separation, cattle-keeping was the only acceptable occupation for a traditional Dinka man.

In addition to expanding their imagined futures, and providing practical explanations of the war, Christianity also provided the Lost Boys with a way to cope with the reality of post-traumatic stress that nearly all were dealing with and a way to counter the "Lost Boy" identity with which they had been labeled. Jeppsson and Hjernl cited "religious practices" as the most common response Lost Boys gave for how they coped with troubling memories of the attacks on their villages and their flight to the refugee

155

camps: 34 percent of the boys interviewed mentioned practices such as going to talk to a priest, praying or reading the bible as things that helped them cope (2005, 9). This number is in sharp contrast to the seven percent who stated that going to school served the same function (Jeppsson and Hjernl 2005). When I asked Joseph if he had proof that God was working for him, he said:

> Yes, in terms of confusion, in terms of bad dream, in terms of nightmare, I had those when I was traveling on the way walking down to Ethiopia. I can even start at night and cry for no apparent reason and try to run away and I don't even know where I'm running. I think it was maybe something that was related with that I was scared when terrible things would happen. But when I came to Christianity and believed in God, and every time when I go to bed at night I prayed, sing a little song, I went to bed. If I do that, I will sleep nice at night and I wouldn't wake up and I wouldn't have bad dreams and I wouldn't have all this kind [of things] and so I became acquainted to it until I got used to it. Every night if I don't pray and go to bed, I wake up tomorrow with a bad dream, very bad dream, very bad dream (Interview 1-3).

In the many years that the Lost Boys spent on the run and in refugee camps, they retained their identity as a group and as a group, converted to a religion that although radically different than what they had known, filled the void in their lives left by the absence of their parents, a lack of knowledge about the traditional Dinka religion, and cattle. Christianity became for them a way to cope with the extreme trauma and stress they had been subjected to, provided them with surrogate parents through the teachings of the bible and clergy members, and gave them an avenue to explain and identify with the new people and circumstances they found themselves in. Like countless groups of refugees before them, the Lost Boys, faced with radically changed circumstances, began to question what "normal" was and through adopting a Christian identity, broadened their ethnoscapes (Appadurai 1992). Pragmatism and the value placed on decisions made by the group combined with these unique circumstances to facilitate conversion. Without their pragmatic, utilitarian nature that allowed them to adopt a foreign practice that

156

"worked," the Lost Boys may have been bent on learning the traditional religion or rejected Christianity as the majority of their ancestors had done for hundreds of years before. Without the value placed on group autonomy, the Lost Boys would have been on their own, with little guidance as to what might "work" to fill the void left by their separation.

To understand the role that Christianity has continued to play in the lives of the Lost Boys and how they continue to incorporate the values of pragmatism and group autonomy, the Lost Boys' lives in Denver, based on participant observation that I undertook over the course of several years, will be briefly discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8—Lost Boys in Denver

The role that Christianity played in the lives of the Lost Boys in the refugee camps has changed in the U.S., but it is still a defining factor in their lives and their identities as Americans, along with work and school. To learn more about the role it plays, I attended Dinka-language services as a guest at St. P.J.'s with the Lost Boys on a handful of occasions, and attended numerous Sudanese events held at St. P.J.'s and other Episcopal churches throughout the metro including birthday parties, graduation celebrations and SPLM rallies.

Despite how dispersed they are throughout Denver and its suburbs, the church offers a central gathering spot for the Lost Boys. The small amount of literature that I found concerning the Dinka language church services that many Lost Boys in Denver attend left me ill-prepared for my first experience at one of these services. Feeling apprehensive and unsure of the etiquette required of an anthropology student attending a service conducted entirely in Dinka and generally to an all-Sudanese congregation, I initially put off this part of my fieldwork. Although I had asked one of the Lost Boys several times about attending one of the Dinka-language services that a large group of Lost Boys regularly attended at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Denver, his response was somewhat evasive and noncommittal. Although he welcomed me to come to a mass, he mentioned that he had been attending church elsewhere, but did not elaborate. I started to get the feeling that maybe I wasn't welcome, but persisted in asking anyway. Several months later, after asking—more directly this time—if it would

be okay if I attended church at St. John's that very Sunday, I received a more direct

response: The vast majority of the Lost Boys were not attending St. John's anymore, nor

had they been for several months. When I asked why, I was told that there had been

some kind of dispute between the Sudanese priests and the Lost Boys and that through

volunteers at Project Education Sudan (PES), the Lost Boys had secured their own space

at another Episcopal church called St. Phillip and St. James Episcopal Church,[37] where

they were free to conduct their own services. Although my informant would not

elaborate on the problem that had arisen, I had been told a while back by a volunteer at

PES, (which itself was initially was administrated through St. John's), that PES had

decided to seek nonprofit status and separate its organization (although the majority of

American volunteers continue to attend English-language services at St. John's) from the

church after the older Sudanese priests became "jealous" of the attention and resources

that PES was providing to the Lost Boys. I was told by this particular Lost Boy that he

could discuss this issue with me after it was "settled" but he preferred not to talk about it

right now. Another one of the Lost Boys, Peter, did share that there had been problems

between the Lost Boys and the older Sudanese in charge at St. John's, but because of the

sensitivity of the topic, preferred that I did not write about it. Because of the obvious

discord between the Lost Boy group and St. John's, I decided not to attend a service[38]

there, not only because I thought this would jeopardize the trust that I had built with the

Lost Boys, but also because all of the young men I interviewed had already begun

attending St. P.J.'s. In hindsight, I am glad that I made this decision as the services at St.

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[37] As the Lost Boys do, I will refer to St. Phillip and St. James as "St. P.J.'s."

P.J.'s, run independently by the Lost Boys, and not the Sudanese elders, were yet another reflection of the autonomy of the Lost Boy group, who fit the hierarchal nature of the church to their own needs and character.

After reading Boulder anthropologist Laura DeLuca's short account of her trips to the laid back Dinka-Arabic language masses at St. John's, I prepared myself for a similar experience at St. P.J.'s where the Lost Boys were now conducting their own mass. Although St. P.J.'s is a less imposing physical structure than St. John's massive cathedral-like structure off of Colfax Avenue, there was a decidedly more formal air at St. P.J.'s than DeLuca had encountered at St. John's. St. P.J.'s is set a top a small hill in western Denver, close to Lakewood. A modest building, it is flanked by a parking lot and a shaded yard where the Lost Boys usually gather after services. To paint a clearer picture of a St. P.J.'s service, I will briefly recount my experience at one of these services below.

A Sunday at St. P.J.'s

Although I knew ahead of time that it was largely Lost Boys who attended the St. P.J.'s service,[39] I was nevertheless caught off guard when I entered the church to find eight or so young men seated on one side of the church and two young men seated at the altar facing one another. I was given curious but not unfriendly looks by the men whom I did not know and was quickly called to a seat next to Joseph, whom I had been invited by. The service started almost immediately with a hymn sung in Dinka and then readings from the bible. I was prepared for one of the men on stage to ask for someone to translate for me (as happened to DeLuca), but no one did, although my friend whispered English

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[39] Although I attended St. P.J.'s a number of times, this recounting relies on a trip I made in the summer of 2006 that I feel is particularly indicative of a typical St. P.J.'s service.

translations to me of the titles of the hymns and instructed me when to sit and stand, which I found in a Dinka language service—much like the Catholic services I attended as a child—is almost constantly. When it was my friend's turn to do a reading, I was surprised that it was done in English, something I realized after the next reading (done by another young man in Dinka) was most likely for my benefit. During the sermon, my friend translated the entire sermon for me, although it seemed to be basically a retelling of the readings we had just heard in Dinka and that I had read to myself in the English bible from the pew in front of me.

Far from the cell-phone ringing and milling about that DeLuca observed at St. John's, the few men who came in late went quietly and immediately to their seats after being greeted by one of the men on stage. Peter described the fairly structured environment of St. P.J.'s as more like church services in the refugee camps, where people come on time, services are planned in advance and each person has "their own jobs to do" at the service (Interview 4-2). At one point, two older Sudanese women, one with a small child, came in and sat directly behind us, surprising as I had been under the impression that it was only Lost Boys who attended this service.

Having been warned by a friend doing fieldwork among the Sudanese community in Australia that I would probably be required to stand, introduce myself, and provide an explanation for my presence at a Dinka service, I had prepared to explain my thesis in as much detail as was necessary. Despite this, the brisk sermon and more formal nature of this service made me think that only a brief introduction was desired, so I stood, quickly thanked the group for welcoming me and told them my name when I was asked to by my

161

friend to introduce myself. Like all other Dinka events I have attended, everyone was expected to shake hands at the conclusion of the ceremony, women included, and introduce themselves to anyone they had not met. All of the men and women approached me eagerly and shook hands and we all moved outside. Out in the shaded yard of the church, I made small talk with the guys I already knew in English while the rest of the group talked among themselves in Dinka.

As I attended more Dinka services, I began to realize that while a broad swath of the Sudanese community attended the services, the Lost Boys were the anchor, leading the services and filling the room with their presence. While all seemed to be welcome, it was the distinctive, egalitarian character of the Lost Boy group that shaped the services. All services were led by two young men at a time, and while there were two Lost Boys who often got the job, there was a rotating handful of men who filled the role of priest; there was never a solo priest as is common in most American churches. Like many churches, music was performed as a group, but rather than being displayed on the stage or risers as is common to most American services, the musicians were seated in the first several rows of the church, mixed in with other parishioners. While there was no one "lead" singer, several among the group would guide the group in song from their pews, their leadership only obvious by the volume of their voices. Perhaps most notably egalitarian was the content of the services. In particular, there was a total absence of "preaching." Instead of a passage of scripture being interpreted and made to demonstrate a lesson, readings were simply retold by whoever was in charge of the sermon that day,

giving the listener a chance to interpret and take meaning away that fit with his/her own experience.

Much as it did as they fled and in the camps of Ethiopia and Kenya, the church in Denver plays an integral part in the identity of the Lost Boys. As DeLuca also found, it is not just a physical place, but an area that represents comfort, familiarity, and community for all who attend (2005:33). Not only used as a church, St. P.J.'s and other Episcopal churches in metro Denver were the site of many Sudanese gatherings I attended. The sense of ease and familiarity the Lost Boys and Sudanese seemed to feel at their church was strikingly different than the formality and discomfort I remember from my own childhood memories at my parents' Catholic church. I'm sure in large part this had to do with my own unease with the church in general, and also from the more formal and less accessible character of the Catholic church, but regardless, the ease with which the entire Sudanese community uses church space is also a testament to the vast amount of time they spend there, and how ingrained it is in their daily lives and identities, much like it is for the Lost Boy group.

Work

Another defining factor in the Lost Boys identity in the U.S. is their work. In stark contrast to the calm of the church in Denver, the relative freedom that the Lost Boys experienced in the refugee camps has been replaced in the U.S. by an almost frenetic amount of activity. Like most other refugees who land in the United States, the Lost Boys in Denver were given an initial living allowance in the form of Refugee Cash Assistance for at least the first several months after their arrival. As Bixler points out, this money is

usually available for up to eight months, but it is stopped once a refugee finds a job (2005, 106). Most of the Lost Boys in Denver found jobs relatively quickly, and were just as quickly on their own, splitting rent with three or more roommates and socking away money to pay for college and technical school courses. All of the Lost Boys I know in Denver religiously send money back to their families in Kenya and Sudan, often every dime they have left over after paying for rent, food, school, and cars.

It is not just paid work that takes up the Lost Boys' time, but also volunteer work. Of the Lost Boys I interviewed, one was heavily involved in the activities of PES, and the other three were more intermittent volunteers. Many of the Lost Boys also worked with a Louisville-based organization called the Colorado Friends of the Lost Boys, which provides support to the Lost Boys in the form of tutoring and educational assistance. For both of these organizations, the Lost Boys speak at numerous events and at local schools, attend fundraisers, fairs, and political events, and spend countless hours in board, planning, and steering committee meetings. In addition, Joseph and another Denver Lost Boy regularly (for a short time, at least) taught a group of Americans, including me, how to speak Dinka. The Lost Boys did this eagerly, in addition to all of the other constraints they had on their time and it was only because the American students stopped showing up (and possibly our almost complete failure as a group to grasp the nasal, tonal range that is a hallmark of the Dinka language) regularly to the classes that they were discontinued.

The fact that the Lost Boys already come from an Episcopalian background, coupled with the egalitarian nature of Dinka culture, has in many ways made them well-suited to the often interminable nature of nonprofit politics. They are used to the hour-

long meetings that are required and the egalitarian way in which decisions are made. The Episcopalian religion that they share with many members of these organizations also allows them to share common ground and has created an environment, much like the other aspects of their lives, that blurs religion, work, and leisure time, arenas that for most westerners are maintained with much stricter boundaries

In many ways, the Lost Boys' work forms the cornerstone of their lives in the U.S., and perhaps even more than church, colors their daily interactions. It can be said without any exaggeration that the Lost Boys work constantly. Jobs vary, but many Lost Boys work in factories, for the government as bus drivers, and in any number of retail and service occupations. Nearly all the Lost Boys I interviewed worked multiple jobs, often at odd hours, seeing their roommates only in passing. Although all of the Lost Boys knew and understood that most Americans they came into contact with worked nine-to-five type jobs that rarely required weekend or evening work, there seemed to be an understanding that their work situations were the best they could come by, and were generally accepted as a fact of life.

School

School, for the Lost Boys, is a different story, because although most pursue their work dutifully, school for most is imbued with a passion second only to religion. While two of the four Lost Boys I interviewed were not, at least at present, pursuing school at all, this was by far not the norm. Nearly all of the Lost Boys I knew were pursuing some sort of two-year, four-year, or technical degree. The fact that any of the Lost Boys who worked second- and third-shift jobs, took care of families and attended church were even

able to find time to attend class, let alone study, is remarkable. Joseph, whom I tutored in both psychology and math, never ceased to amaze me in his eagerness to retain what he learned and how present he was able to be during tutoring sessions, which often occurred after his long hours at a t-shirt factory or before hours-long nonprofit board meetings. Much like Christianity, education is paramount to the values that were instilled in the Lost Boys in refugee camps, particularly in Kenya, and is a hallmark of both their ascribed and constructed identity. The value placed on education is also a departure from the value placed on cattle keeping, and although the value placed on education, just like Christianity, is increasing exponentially in the new southern Sudan, when the Lost Boys first came into contact with it, being educated was not the norm for anyone in southern Sudan. The importance of education for the Lost Boys was summed up well by Joseph when I asked him if he believed that Christianity would replace cows in Dinka culture. He said no, that if anything would replace cattle-keeping, it would be education. But even while education would force Dinka to question practices like keeping land communal so that all the cattle can graze together, cattle are the "source of life" and will never be totally replaced (Interview 1-1).

Social Life

Although it may seem that with the massive amounts of time the Lost Boys spend in church, school or work that there would be no time for socializing, this is not the case. In some ways, this is because the lines between all three of these arenas are blurred: I attended a number of events held for and by the Lost Boys that were held in the church to celebrate a birth or a graduation, weekend-long retreats for PES that combined nonprofit

166

strategic planning with horseback riding and hiking, and soccer tournaments and events like the Bolder Boulder that served both to bring the Lost Boys together as a group and raise awareness for southern Sudan (and sometimes for Darfur as well). Perhaps most striking about these get-togethers was that what they lacked frequency, they made up for in their marathon-like length and the variety of activities they included. Perhaps the most memorable of these events was a belated wedding celebration for one of the Lost Boys and his new wife, who was one of the Lost Girls. Held at a large event center in Lakewood, the event began in the early afternoon. The building was profusely decorated in pastel balloons and streamers, and one of the rows and rows of tables held a huge sheet cake that had been given as a gift by an American friend of the groom who was a baker. My husband and I arrived around 3:00 or so, feeling guilty for our tardiness. Instead, we found that we were some of the first guests to arrive and were informed that the party was expected to last until at least midnight. What ensued was a protracted day of socializing, eating (at every Sudanese event I attended in Denver, with the exception of everyday church services, massive meals catered by the women in the church were served),[40] and finally dancing. While my husband and I were at the ceremony for what we thought was a lengthy six hours, we heard from others that the dancing did indeed continue on well past midnight.

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[40] This usually included massive amounts of goat, kisra (Sudanese bread very similar to Ethiopian injera), French bread, a sticky pureed okra dip, and salad. Turning down food was futile— for anyone who was in a hurry, or like me, sometimes not hungry at the particular time of the celebration, Styrofoam to-go containers were at the ready to be filled to take on the road. In addition to the food, there was always an array of assorted bottled water, soda and juice (*never* alcohol), usually served to guests on trays by young girls as the celebration took place. At one SPLM rally that I attended in a church basement, the women had thoughtfully premade sandwiches for those of us who had to rush off before the main meal was served, leading to my first (delicious) experience with a peanut butter and eggplant sandwich.

While the length of Sudanese events in the U.S. is reflective of the ways things are done in Sudan, where church services and community events are often day-long events that require the provision of food and drinks to attendees, these extended events are also pragmatic because they allow Lost Boys, with their varied work and school schedules, the guarantee that an event will still be going on when they are free. It is also a way to spend quality time with friends, community elders, and American friends, even if it is infrequent.

The things the Lost Boys learned to value during their childhood and in the refugee camps—school, family, church, and each other—remain the glue of their lives in Denver. Perhaps the only thing that is missing is cattle, but as Joseph pointed out to me, even cattle are not entirely gone. They are visible in the cattle names that all of the Lost Boys have and many still use, and are tangible in the huge sums of money Lost Boys must come up with to purchase cattle for the families of girls they want to marry in Sudan or in the Kakuma refugee camp.

To a greater degree than in the refugee camps, the Lost Boys in Denver are drawn into ethnoscapes that are beyond what even they could have imagined themselves— working in international development as members of nonprofit boards, going to college with students from around the world, working in jobs as far-ranging as the assembly line in meatpacking plants to the offices of Colorado state senators—something with which they have used Christianity to cope. Being Christian has given them a way to both acculturate to and escape American culture, while also reshaping the Episcopal faith to make it more Dinka, as evidenced through the various ways the church is used and the

way Dinka services are conducted according to Dinka traditions of separating men and women, using the church for multiple purposes, and the egalitarian nature of the services. The values that the Lost Boys adopted as a group—Christianity and education—have continued to define both how they see themselves and the identity that Americans ascribe to them in the U.S., and display the way in which they have used and fitted traditional Dinka concepts to acculturate and form a unique group identity.

Chapter 9—Conclusions

This thesis was predicated on the assumption that the Lost Boys, as a group, had a distinct conversion experience. While trying to illuminate this experience, I have also sought to fill a hole that exists in the anthropological and refugee studies bodies of literature about this particular group of young men. Much has been written about how to discuss refugees and the processes that affect them, such as assimilation, acculturation, globalization, construction of nations, and conversion. And, although there is no shortage of studies about Dinka culture, the Sudanese civil war, and the harrowing journey of the Lost Boys, very little literature exists that discusses the distinct conversion experiences of the Lost Boys, either as individuals or as a group. The small amount of literature that does exist on this topic is largely the work of missionaries, which often fails to incorporate an emic understanding of Dinka culture. Because of the dearth of non-Church generated literature on this topic, I have sought to add to the little that is known about the Lost Boys' large-scale conversion to Christianity, using the uniquely anthropological methods of ethnographic interviews and participant observation to provide context and an "insider's" perspective into this radical transformation.

To provide an etic context, I have included an account of Sudanese history, illuminating the processes of colonization and enslavement of southern Sudanese by the British, Turkish, Egyptians, and northern Sudanese, forces that all played into the eventual breakdown of the nascent Sudanese nation-state. The separate identities that the two halves of Sudan have always maintained have been key factors in the ongoing

170

violence and misery of this country and have created a situation where the violent separation of thousands of boys from their homes and families was possible.

I outlined the traditional Dinka religion and discussed the importance of cattle in nearly every aspect of Dinka life in order to highlight the radical shift the Lost Boys experienced when they were separated from their homes and cattle. I provided an overview of conversion among the Dinka who remained within Sudan until the end of the war and the role that losing their cattle to a Nuer raid played in their conversion. Similarly, I discussed the "Khartoum Clubs" of the 1960s, in which men and women displaced from southern Sudan came together in a rapid period of conversion. Much like the Lost Boys, Dinka in both of these situations quickly learned that without cattle and in the midst of chaos, the old ways were no longer working, a belief that lead many to Christianity.

To frame this work, I relied upon the study of refugees to understand the experiences of the Lost Boys on a broad level, as a group that had pre-flight, flight, and post-flight experiences by explaining life in Sudan prior to the war, the Lost Boys' trek to Ethiopia and Kenya, and their lives in the U.S. On an individual level, I detailed the conversion experiences of four of the Lost Boys who live in Denver. I also sought to convey the liminal position that the Lost Boys found themselves in as they transitioned to radically different circumstances and the role this transitional state had on their conversion to Christianity. At the same time, I demonstrated that the Lost Boys, much like Malkki suggests, did not simply check their identities at the door as they fled, but

171

rather held onto the Dinka values of pragmatism and group autonomy that worked for them, itself a pragmatic decision (Malkki 1995:509).

Findings

The answers that I found to the questions that I posed at the beginning of this thesis—why did so many Lost Boys decide to convert to Christianity/what social functions/needs has this conversion met for the Lost Boys, and what role/functions does Christianity play today in their lives in Denver —have been guided by theories laid out in Chapter 2 of identity, the nation-state, globalization/ethnoscapes, and conversion. Borrowing from theories of refugee identity put forth by Harrell-Bond and Voutira and Malkki has given me a way to understand that although refugees are in a liminal position, they do not lose their identity just because they leave their nation or state. In order to survive radical circumstances, the Lost Boys "kept" what was working from their culture—namely the long-held Dinka values of group autonomy and pragmatism, values that played a key role in their conversion to Christianity. At the same time, the Lost Boys as a group developed a unique character that was formed by the unprecedented circumstances in which they found themselves. This new and strange reality left them without their families, knowledge of the traditional religion, or their cattle, the three most important parts of a traditional Dinka man's life. Further, in the process of dispersing and resettlement, they found themselves separated from home villages and country, and among boys from various tribes and areas.

Without parents, the Lost Boys needed stable figures to guide them. While they were quickly introduced to SPLA members who administered the Ethiopian camps, it

172

was the church leaders who they encountered in the refugee camps who were "struggling to keep them alive and to provide a gentler environment alongside the military discipline of the SPLA" (Bixler 2005:58). More than church elders, who were benevolent, but intermittent forces on their lives, however, the Lost Boys called upon the communal values that had been instilled in them in the cattle camps, understanding that in order to survive, they needed to depend on each other. While the Lost Boys depended on the groups into which they had been divided for basic matters of survival—finding food, cooking, building shelter, etc.—they also depended on each other for guidance, emotional support, and a connection to their culture. In the Dinka tradition of relying on the wisdom of the group, they based their decisions on nearly every matter, including religious conversion, on what their peers did.

Without cattle, which typically form the basis of Dinka identity, particularly for adolescents and men, the Lost Boys needed something else to give their lives meaning. As Bixler says, caring for cattle is the one thing that "defines men as competent and whole in southern Sudan" (2005:85). Everything, from their names to their sense of aesthetics had been based on cattle before their separation. A traditional Dinka man's identity was irrevocably bound to his cattle; as Nikkel says, "social standing and self-esteem are, for the Dinka, intimately related to the ownership of cattle" (2001:25). Without cattle, a void was left. Christianity filled this void for the Lost Boys, giving them a place to focus the attention they would have given to their cattle and an avenue to the *dheeng* (dignity) that they would have found in caring for and displaying their oxen.

173

Without religion—both because children were not involved in the traditional Dinka religion and because they lacked cattle to perform the central rite of cattle sacrifice—the Lost Boys lacked all avenues to life after death and had no way to explain the epic journey they had been on. When they began to learn about Christianity, however, they were offered a narrative that they believed explained their circumstances and gave them access to an afterlife. Religion also supplied them with coping mechanisms that were outlined in the studies of PTSD conducted by Jeppsson and Hjernl with the Lost Boys and in my own interviews. Joseph offered a particularly poignant picture of the coping skills he gained from Christianity when he said that:

> When I came to Christianity and believed in God, and every time when I go to bed at night I prayed, sing a little song, I went to bed. If I do that, I will sleep nice at night and I wouldn't wake up and I wouldn't have bad dreams (Interview 1-3).

Religion was not the only thing absent from the Lost Boys' lives—they were also without their homes. Without their villages or country, and thrown in with boys from different tribes and areas of the South, the Lost Boys needed a way to create a cohesive identity. As their imagination broadened (and it became clear that they would not return home anytime soon), Christianity became a way to understand the radical shift their world had undergone—from insular villages in Sudan, to the many different tribes they encountered in Ethiopia, to the international milieu of the Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, to the realization that they would be resettled across the world. Christianity also became a common unifier among the Lost Boy group, regardless of what part of Sudan or tribe they came from. Bereft of the mediating forces of country, parents, religion, and cattle, but still maintaining the time-honored, pragmatic Dinka practice of accepting

174

"what works" and relying on the wisdom of the group, the Lost Boys found themselves in a situation where mass conversion could take place.

To say that the Lost Boys simply converted because they retained the pragmatism they grew up with and used it to adapt to the circumstance around them, however, risks oversimplifying a complex situation. In addition to the key reasons outlined above, conversion was further eased by other factors, such as the fact that English and Christianity were taught hand in hand in the refugee camps, essentially meaning anyone who went to school would come away with at least some knowledge about Christianity. As well, the emerging Christian rhetoric of the SPLA, which facilitated the presence of the Sudanese priests in camp, imbued Christian conversion with a sense of national identity. Furthermore, whereas foreign missionaries in the past had had a hard time connecting with the Dinka, there were a sufficient number of indigenous Dinka converts by the time the Lost Boys were in the camps that they largely had contact with Sudanese Christians who were able to fit western religious concepts to Dinka culture and make them accessible. All of these factors were integral to the conversion of the Lost Boys and had any one of these factors been absent, I cannot say with any certainty that the Lost Boys would have converted, at least not on the scale that they did.

Suggestions for Future Research

While this research contributes to a topic that has received little attention to this point, it also highlights the need for more research. Comparative studies of conversion, in particular, are needed. For example, how did other groups of Lost Boys come to be Christian, such as Lost Boys from other areas of southern Sudan who were Nuer, Shilluk

or other tribes? What about Lost Boys who chose other religions? The Episcopal religion is known for its relatively egalitarian structure, which relies on decisions by committee. Was it harder for Lost Boys to accept the more hierarchical structure of the Catholic church? Did Lost Boys who became Catholic have similar conversion experiences that were guided by the autonomous nature of their Lost Boy groupings? And what about the Lost Girls? While they did not have the cattle camp experiences that instilled a sense of group solidarity like the Lost Boys did, they were still raised in the same communal culture and taught to cook, care for children, and perform other essential skills as a group. Once in the refugee camps, however, they were usually placed with families, meaning they presumably did not have the kind of group autonomy the Lost Boys had. Did this have an effect on how they learned about Christianity or if they remained Christian? Did they become Christians in the same way the Lost Boys did?

Further work that examines the Sudanese Episcopal church in the U.S. and other countries where the Lost Boys have been settled in large numbers, such as Australia, could provide rich information about traditional Dinka practices that have been incorporated into the Episcopal faith that were beyond the scope of this study. Has the Lost Boy group retained their religious beliefs the same way, or have cultural differences between the U.S. and other host countries caused variations in practicing or retaining Christianity?

As well, the individual factors in conversion could each be researched in more depth, for example the role that Christianity played in alleviating PTSD is a topic that could be looked at more closely by someone who has more experience with this disorder.

176

In fact, Joseph, who recently graduated college with a degree in psychology, told me that he would like to collaborate on a paper about PTSD among the Lost Boys. In addition, there is room for more work to be done about Christian conversion among other refugee groups and decolonized nation-states. Have other countries, such as Sierra Leone, that have large numbers of separated, displaced, and military-trained children seen similar conversion? Will Christianity play a role in the reconciliation between North and South Sudan, as it has in other decolonized African countries like Rwanda? What will happen to southern Sudanese Christians if Sudan goes back to civil war in 2011 (when it will vote on whether or not to become independent from the North) as many are predicting? Will religious beliefs waiver, as belief in the traditional religion did in the last phase of the war, or will Christianity continue to "work" for its adherents?

Additionally, a comparative study of conversion and religious practices among the Lost Boys who were repatriated back into Sudan and the Lost Boys who made it to the U.S is needed. These two groups presumably had identical conversion experiences, but now live in radically different worlds. How are the Lost Boys who live in Sudan practicing their religion and does it incorporate more aspects of the traditional religion than the Lost Boys in the U.S.? Did the Lost Boys who returned to Sudan become interested or convert back to the traditional religion after returning home and being exposed to these practices? Does Christianity continue to "work" for them as it has for the Lost Boys in the U.S.?

More could be learned about where the Lost Boys are at today. While they arguably have left behind the liminal position they found themselves in as they fled to

and lived in refugee camps, the Lost Boys remain in a different sort of liminality in the U.S. This liminality is well-expressed in Dave Eggers' book, *What is the What*, where Eggers details the two worlds between which the Lost Boys find themselves. Many are just completing college after almost ten years in the U.S., or finding that because of work schedules, they still do not have the time to complete their degrees. Others have become so disillusioned by the red tape that surrounds getting their GEDs, which are often tied up in proving that they actually attended and graduated high school in Kakuma, or with requirements to transfer community college credits to four-year colleges, that they have simply given up, or at the very least, have had to greatly lower their educational expectations. What have been the effects of this change of what they can imagine for their lives?

Most Lost Boys have also had to continue to endure separation from their families who remain in Sudan, Kenya or Ethiopia. Without family in the U.S., they continue to rely on each other for support, but many have begun to question the utility of remaining here—especially with the delays they have experienced in education—while their family members have been repatriated back to their home villages in Sudan. Even if they have not completed their education here, returning to Sudan with education and a little money brings the promise of elevated status, although none of the Lost Boys I know have yet made a firm decision to permanently move back to Sudan and the uncertainty of the peace between North and South further hampers this option.

Adding to this liminal status is the fact of marriage. While Dinka men traditionally marry much later than women, and even marrying well into one's thirties (at

least for men) is not considered strange in Sudan, the Lost Boys face pressure from their families to marry. Several of the Lost Boys told me that the pressure was further increased by the expectation that an older brother must marry before his younger brothers can do the same. Because many of the Lost Boys' parents who were not killed in the war had more children after they were separated from their sons, the Lost Boys are feeling pressure from both parents and siblings to hurry up and marry so that their younger brothers can do so as well. As a group however, the Lost Boys have again shown their pragmatism in the matter of marriage at the same time that they are willing to assert new values. While some of the Lost Boys have married, many maintain that they do not want to do so until they have finished their education, reflecting their willingness to adopt cultural practices from other cultures that "work" for them. Even for those who are ready to marry, marriage is further complicated by the lack of single Sudanese women in the U.S. and pressure that most Lost Boys feel to marry within their culture. This pressure is strong: Of the ten or so married Lost Boys I know, all have Sudanese wives. Rather than marry outside of their culture (or find a Sudanese women who already lives in the U.S., which is not only hard to find, but also requires a dowry), many of the Lost Boys have raised the needed dowry (sometimes up to 100 cows, or close to a year's salary) and been married to a woman who still lives in Sudan, with the hopes that they can eventually bring her here to live in the U.S. The liminal status created by lacking access to family and marriage, is a rich topic that could provide a wealth of insight into the lives of the Lost Boys and further elucidate how religion has come to fill these voids.

A further topic for research—and another area where the Lost Boys face a degree of liminality—is their identity as black men. The Lost Boys frequently lament the perceived hostility they encounter from African Americans. One of the Lost Boys related to me his experiences of being verbally harassed, and in one case chased down and hit with rocks by African American women who made fun of his appearance and accent. Numerous other Lost Boys expressed their frustration with black Americans who they encountered and the misunderstandings, on both sides, which occurred. The Lost Boys, for their part, arrived in the U.S. with a certain level of fear of mistrust of African Americans after being warned by elders in Kakuma that they should stay away from black Americans. The unfortunate result of these misunderstandings is a continued, mutual distrust between the two groups that has persisted to this day. Further solutions-oriented research needs to be done on this issue.

While much further research on the topic of Lost Boys and Christianity remains to be conducted, I hope that this small contribution elucidates the path and reasons behind Christian conversion for one group of Lost Boys living in Denver. In adding to the work that has been done among the Lost Boys by missionaries, I have attempted to add a perspective grounded in anthropological and refugee studies theories of identity, acculturation , nation-states, and globalization, rather than one that is grounded in religion. In doing so, I hope to have added to a more complete understanding of the Lost Boys and their decision to adopt a religion once so foreign to them.

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