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Region-craft: An Ethnography of South Sudan's Transnational Intelligentsia

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Zachary Mondesire

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Region-craft: An Ethnography of South Sudan's Transnational Intelligentsia

by

Zachary Mondesire

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Hannah Appel, Chair

This dissertation argues that in the wake of South Sudan's 2011 independence from Sudan, region has been remade through and around the world's newest country. This project interrogates ideas about race, territory, and belonging as they have rendered synonymous two processes that seem affectively divergent: independence and partition. The ethnographic point of departure for the project is the insufficient liberation of political independence, the state violence, and suppression that has followed the initial euphoria of independence, and the border-crossing networks that South Sudan's transnational intelligentsia have produced to navigate their disappointment in the government of South Sudan. Collective disappointment in the South Sudanese state is a primary site for the production of expansive ideas about home, belonging, and family. As dissident intellectuals continue to move and maintain social connections between cities in Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya, these expansive attachments also reshape a broader

regional space from which emerge political perspectives otherwise suppressed within the territorial borders of the nation-state. Following these dissident intellectuals in their region-making itinerancy, I trace the region that has been remade in the aftermath of South Sudan's independence. The dissertation emphasizes how new geopolitical relationships come to be articulated as transnational ideas about home, border-crossing intimacies, and experiences of family that traverse national boundaries.

The question of where South Sudan belongs—regionally, racially, and politically—has become increasingly relevant since its secession from Sudan in 2011. While the formerly unified Sudan generated decades of debate about identity at the African/Arab axis, the place of independent South Sudan has generated new questions about what it means to be *East African*. The geopolitical perspective of this dissertation extends in two directions to follow how race and space have been re-articulated in the aftermath of political independence. It extends northward to confront what I call the *counterlinearity of liberation* that has brought South Sudanese citizens back to the site of oppression after decades of war for self-determination. It also extends southward to address *East Africa* as a keyword containing the aspirations for South Sudan's future as the state reorients itself seeking ethnic, religious, and economic alignment. This bifocality enables the interrogation of forms of difference in the Global South that take shape as not only derivative of European colonialism but also produced by intra-African logics of being, reason, and morality. To accomplish this multi-sited project, I have deployed what I call *region-craft* as a method and an analytic that combines the significance of regional economic and political unions, claims to border-crossing ethnic belonging, and the emotional attachments to home that exceed the boundaries of contemporary nation-states.

The dissertation of Zachary Mondesire is approved.

Aomar Boum

Jemima Pierre

Kamari Clarke

Edmond Keller

Hannah Appel, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

To my Mother, Pamela Ann Gallimore

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement

EAC - East African Community

EACJ - East African Court of Justice

EALA - East African Legislative Assembly

EU - European Union

GoSS - Government of South Sudan

IGAD - Intergovernmental Authority on Development

ICGLR - International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

NCP - National Congress Party

NMG - Nation Media Group

RCM - Red Card Movement

RSS - Republic of South Sudan

SPLM/A- Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

SPLM/A-IO - Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army- In Opposition

SSP - South Sudanese Pound

SSRA - South Sudan Referendum Act

SSRC - South Sudan Referendum Commission

UNHCR - United Nations High Commission for Refugees

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Preface

The trajectory of this dissertation began in 2010. I left for Cairo after graduating from Columbia University in New York. I had traveled there in 2009 with the goal of spending time in Anglican churches that had welcomed refugees and displaced persons from what would become South Sudan. Folks would gather for both worship and programming geared towards financial independence. Men and women wove baskets and textiles to sell in fair trade artisan markets. I landed in Cairo as I had in Morocco and Jordan in the years prior. I was eager to touch, see, and make real what I had read. The texts and history that had captivated me then—the works of Frantz Fanon, the autobiography and recorded speeches of Malcolm X, and the 1955 Bandung conference—did not feel like matters of the past. At the time, I thought that if Fanon had been intimately connected to Algeria then by studying Arabic in Morocco, Algeria's next-door neighbor, I might meet locals who could talk with me about Fanon's understanding of anti-colonial violence. What I knew then of the anti-colonial revolutionary past seemed very much alive in the present. When I entered Columbia in 2006, the Veritas Forum hosted the former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. His presence on campus sparked intense protests from multiple conservative and Jewish groups on campus. I was inspired by the leadership of this forum who was committed to hosting such difficult conversations. When they were asked whether they would have invited Adolf Hitler himself to engage in dialogue, the Forum's leadership boldly said yes, of course. This cultivated in me a commitment to confronting the uncomfortable that spoke to the core skepticism that I had felt since witnessing the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center.

Since September 11, 2001, the Arabic language had appeared like a language of resistance. I was dissatisfied with the narrative of the heroic U.S. and villainous Middle East and

thus engaged with the events of that date with skepticism. I read Osama bin Laden himself explain that if he had indeed intended to target *freedom,* he would have staged an attack on Switzerland, and not the United States. I started at University with the desire to meet and speak to an international community which was dedicated to criticizing the United States. This became real in a number of ways. My study of the Arabic language as an undergraduate opened the door to travel. In Morocco, I studied Arabic at Al-Akhawayn University. The language program took us to a southern town for a cliché camel ride at the edge of the Sahara. I decided to sleep on the sand with the friends I had made to avoid the stifling heat of the hotel. The noise we made drew the local young men who worked as tour guides during the day. When they saw us gathered together on the sand at the edge of the desert, they were eager to join and to share with U.S. citizens their more sympathetic image of Osama bin Laden. For them, they recounted, the figure of bin Laden was a sage religious leader who not only shared a compelling worldview but provided a tangible means to reshape a disappointing world. I reflected on my own attitudes and how easily I might have been compelled by the same iconized masculine wisdom as these young men had been. The following year, while in Jordan for the semester, I spent a week with a family in a rural area outside of Amman. When the local religious leaders learned that there was not only an *American* in town but one that spoke Arabic, they did not waste the opportunity to arrive at my host's house with an audience to ask me why George W. Bush was attacking the Middle East. As I repeatedly left and returned to the U.S., I was subject to regular hours-long airport interrogations where I was able to reflect on the material reality of U.S. empire around the world. My understanding of moments of intense violence such as September 11th and subsequent attacks throughout the Global North drew from Malcolm X's infamous analysis; the chickens had come home to roost. To be sure, no interpretation should eclipse the tragedy of the loss of

life. We can also insist that such acts of violence are mirror of the global effects of U.S. empire, wherein the underdeveloped world explodes, from exhaustion and desperation, into the overdeveloped world of manufactured comfort and safety.

At the same time, I was watching and re-watching satirical television shows like Dave Chappelle's *Chappelle's Show* and Aaron Mcgruder's *The Boondocks*. Both of these writers represented how a cynical and creative Black voice had fashioned a vision for the world and had not conceded its truth to assuage the discomfort of his audience. Discomfort was perhaps the goal in both cases. Each writer, Chappelle and Mcgruder, in their own way, took aim squarely at the global violence initiated by the administration of George W. Bush and linked it to processes of racialization in which alleged opponents of U.S. national security became individuals "of terrorist descent" such that the figure of the Arab/Muslim/Terrorist took on racialized meaning and that knowledge of Arabic or having an Islamic name indexed a categorical threat.[1] I understood my choice to study the Arabic language, therefore, as a militant act. It became the means by which one might combat the vicious racism that had appeared in the wake of the September 11th attacks and the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan that followed. Language study was a means of escape from a world where the English language, Western Christianity, and the United States overdetermined the realm of what was thinkable in terms of a global struggle for justice. The Arabic language was in this sense a conduit for international solidarity with oppressed people's elsewhere in the world. At the time, it seemed to be the language in which the very struggle against imperialism was being articulated. This political awakening rendered languages like English and French as unsuitable to articulate a struggle for justice that took shape through an ideology like Pan-Africanism, for example.

Yet my time in Cairo in 2010 and 2011 dashed my expectation that the Arabic language or the *Middle East* as the language's geography served as discursive media through which one could categorically affirm, and, perhaps, attain the revolutionary vision of Pan-Africanism. There were two phenomena that demonstrated that there seemed to be no facile vehicle for a vision of a world without state violence and the brutality of racism. The first was the vitriolic anti-Black racism in the Arabic-speaking world. The second was the civil protest against military control of state power that has shaped politics in the much of the formerly colonized world since 2010. I will tackle both here and describe how they came to shape this project.

Having grown up in the United states as a Black American, I was of course familiar and well aware of the visceral reality of anti-Black racism. Since I had attended predominantly white institutions for my entire educational career, the racism I was accustomed to was self-conscious, awkward, and often silent. The liberal tendencies towards polite society had transformed my experiences of racism into occasions in which one could not discern whether someone believed you were intellectually or spiritually deficient because of the color of your skin, or whether they were *just being nice*.[2] That is to say, I do not carry the physical memory of Jim Crow laws or *de facto* segregation that my parents and grandparents carry and have carried. This is not to say that racism—nor its material and immaterial violence—have vanished in the contemporary United States but that public opinion and civil protest have compelled it to shape-shift into more palatable formations. With this in mind, I was not prepared for the level of overt, vocal, and fearless racism that I witnessed in Cairo, particularly when I would spend time with Sudanese friends and colleagues. At times, we would be heckled by passersby yelling *chokolata* (chocolate) or the uniquely Sudanese expression *ya zol* (hey man). At others, I would be approached by an Egyptian man and, due to my complexion, asked, with a mix of confusion and

worry, why I was spending so much time with Black people. While in Cairo, an Egyptian storeowner I met who had hired me to tutor his son in English asked if I had ever traveled to Africa and when I told them that I had, choosing not to remind him that we were currently in Africa, he told me he would love to one day travel there and then asked me concernedly, whether they still eat people there, *biyakulu bashar hinak?* In part, I believe that there is little public outcry about this unrepentant racism because the graying hope of transnational anti-colonial solidarity still circumscribes the vocabulary we use to articulate experiences of and resistance to oppression. Wishful thinking holds desperately to the revolutionary decades of the 1960s and 1970s, looking backward for still undiscovered tools rather than looking squarely at the present and the terrifying future. Yet, As Cedric Johnson has said in his warning against revolutionary nostalgia, *The Panthers Can't Save Us Now*. Nostalgia leads us to insist that the *real* and *more fundamental* enemy is the West. Why, asks the ideologically rigid anti-imperialist scholar and activist, waste our time and energy emphasizing divisions between the underdeveloped and colonized peoples of the world when this only exacerbates our vulnerability in the face of our true enemy? Since our vocabulary limits answers to this question to descent into what appear to be liberal apologist narratives for western imperialism, there is therefore little broad-based pressure to either highlight or combat the incessant mockery of Blackface in Arabic-language media, the disbelief that Sudanese (and South Sudanese by extension) speak and write Arabic, and the forms of super-exploitative labor that characterize so much of the experience of dark-skinned and non-Arab peoples in the Arabic-speaking world.

There were many moments when I would encounter Egyptian men along with my Sudanese and South Sudanese counterparts and, instead of addressing them directly since they were the fluent Arabic speakers, Egyptians would address me. I had seen, for example, an

Egyptian television journalist react with disbelief that their guests from Sudan or Mauritania, spoke Arabic rather than *Sudanese* or *Mauritanian*, as if these were languages themselves or the names of their indigenous languages. Walking with Sudanese colleagues and friends rendered such moments real in a tangible and quotidian way. It became clear that people were deploying racialized language ideologies that associated knowledge of the Arabic language with phenotypically fair-skinned people. This ideology has therefore rendered Sudanese, and other phenotypically dark-skinned Arabic speakers into undesirable visitors throughout the Arabic-speaking world. This form of racism is particularly acute if the undesirable outsiders were unable or unwilling to be flexible in how they communicated and to speak in a normative (read urban) dialect of Egypt, the Levant, or the Gulf. The expectation for this kind of flexibility was laden with power and usually one-sided, Arab-identifying Arabic speakers would not have to embody the multiple dialects of Arabic associated with the southern peripheries of northern Africa.

These observations led me to develop questions about Blackness that at that point, I did yet have the vocabulary to articulate. Does Blackness travel with you, attaching itself to your U.S. passport or does it remain at home? Is Blackness a thing to hold, a relation to be in, or an act to be performed? Does Blackness explain anything or can it only describe? I was drawn to my South Sudanese friends and colleagues because I felt that we shared a longing for how we might use Blackness as a life-preserving jacket as we navigated daily racialized antagonisms. In addition to frequenting the southern Sudanese community at an Anglican Church in the Zamalek neighborhood of Cairo, I also began working for an after-school program called the Youth LEAD project, a small initiative under the umbrella of a larger UNHCR grant. Our task was to maintain several youth centers in the main neighborhoods of Cairo, where families from what is now South Sudan lived and worked. What our goal addressed was the U.S.-styled Black American

gangsterism that had appeared amongst southern Sudanese youth communities throughout the city. The organization described the young men as "at-risk youth," language that was necessary to make sense of their situation to the UNHCR and to the Egyptian government. Gangs had formed, clad in red and blue handkerchiefs that were styled after images these young men had consumed of street gangs in Los Angeles and New York City, made globally familiar by the globetrotting images of the late Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G.[3] Myself and my colleagues used their desire for knowledge of song lyrics and the biography of Tupac, for example, to draw them into English language instruction or conversations about violence they had enacted or might enact against their friends and peers. We organized lifeskill trainings for the youth who had had unplanned pregnancies for which they were not prepared and soccer games to attempt to resolve inter-gang conflicts without the use of weapons. As I was the only project participant who identified as a man, I was tasked with overseeing the youth centers at the furthest edges of the city that boasted the notoriously most challenging boys. There were nights when I would wake up to a phone call in the middle of the night to resolve a conflict between two boys before it escalated into group violence.

The more time I spent with them, the more estranged from mainstream Cairene society I became. It began to feel as racially alienating as what I had escaped in the United States. Although there I blended in as Egyptian, my commitment was to what felt, sounded, and looked like a Black community at the margins of city life. At first, I only interacted with these young men at night. It was as though I was surviving the daytime within a bewildering domain of familiar racial antagonism articulated in a foreign language, only to be relieved at night when I could reflect, along with friends and colleagues, about what episode of unabashed racism I had witnessed on a given day. I latched onto the dialectics which Blackness produced and

appropriated in this context as they were grafted onto different signs, symbols and geographies. Although the young men I spent time with were appropriating the rhythms of Blackness that they had seen and heard, they were also the victims of the structural administrative violence of trans-regional migration and refugee intake along with the brutality of anti-African sentiment in Cairo.

It was that familiar feel and frustration of Blackness that drew me to them and to eventually ask the group of young men with whom I had grown the closest whether the school that they attended during the day needed teachers. They said yes and agreed to allow me to walk to school with them the following morning and speak with their principal. I quickly moved to their neighborhood at the edge of Cairo in a neighborhood called *'Arba wa Nus* (four and a half). I began teaching shortly thereafter. My conversations with the school's about my background and how I might be able to help fill their needs at the school led to a broader conversation about the political situation in Sudan at the time. It was the relationship I built with the principal of the school that provided the pathway for me to go to South Sudan.

I built this friendship in early 2011, during the lead up to the referendum vote for whether South Sudan would remain connected to or be partitioned from Sudan and become completely independent. If his people voted for secession, he told me, he would travel to independent South Sudan as soon as he was able. I was struck by the idea of witnessing the birth of a new state in Africa and by the fact that I would be working and living alongside the very people affected by this process as it unfolded. The social and political life of Cairo faded further into the background. Although, at times, the turmoil of Cairo's 2011 uprisings would burst back into both of our lives and interweave our trajectories in profound ways; it was our path together to Juba that came to define our relationship. In 2013, we flew together from Cairo to Juba, to his family's house in the capital of South Sudan.

Living and working with South Sudanese communities in Cairo during the uprisings that ousted Hosni Mubarak was an opportunity to address how significant political events in a particular context transform in gravity depending on one's perspective. For my South Sudanese colleagues, they felt that the violence unfolding in Tahrir Square paled in comparison to the two civil wars they have lived through and that had brought them to Cairo at all. Yet, the news of the uprisings in Cairo saturated local and global media. As the protests grew in intensity such that once energetic city streets became empty and even the silences resonated loudly, my friends and colleagues laughed off my anxiety as a naive American who had never experienced real political unrest. They reassured me that since they had seen real war, they could tell me that what was going on in Cairo at that time was playful in comparison.

This view from Cairo in 2011 has profoundly shaped my attention to moments of poly-vocal civil transformation in which multiple communities were articulating political grievances both far and near, from the same place. Black thinkers and scholars of an earlier generation have described the global attention to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa as their entry into African and therefore global politics. If the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 was my watershed moment of understanding the material reality of U.S. Empire, the South Sudan independence referendum in 2011 and the simultaneous civil unrest in Cairo compelled me to grapple with something else. There were elements of political life in the underdeveloped world that did not fit into an anti-imperial analytical frame. I say this to ask, how might we understand protest and civil disobedience against governments in the Global South or towards governments that are at least nominally antagonistic with the United States? Attention to this excess that seems to spill over the edges of our proverbial measuring cup has also served as the point of departure for this dissertation.

A significant portion of my fieldwork was undertaken in Khartoum during 2019-2020, the year immediately following the civil demand to end the thirty-year reign of Omar Al-Bashir. Invisible clouds of tear gas would consume the streets of downtown Khartoum. At first, when chatting with interlocutors, we could tolerate the stinging that brought tears to our eyes. We sought refuge indoors once the stinging became unbearable. Everywhere there were people pulling into reach the branches of the *neem* trees that lined the streets. They would strip a handful of leaves to hold to their noses and eyes to protect from the *bomban* (tear gas). Yet, even this chaotic scene would fade into the background with a quick joke from an interlocutor: "the Sudanese were lucky because the government in South Sudan would respond to protest with bullets because they could not yet afford tear gas." Humor like this was used to index both comparatively more brutal anti-dissident behavior of the government in South Sudan and how Sudanese citizens seemed more sensitive to state violence in the capital than they had been to past violence in southern Sudan or to ongoing violence in Darfur. Again, as in Cairo, urban uprisings against a multi-decade regime, now Al-Bashir rather than Mubarak, became a backdrop to how South Sudanese residents reflected on political developments in South Sudan. With self-determination achieved, the objectives of political grievances had changed. What has risen to the forefront since independence is how South Sudanese thinkers throughout the region have articulated their disappointment in and opposition to the rule of the SPLM, the political party that led the second Sudanese civil war against the federal government and marshaled self-determination in the South.

Before I arrived in Juba for the first time in 2013, South Sudan had come to represent a genre of what Samiha Rahman's 2020 dissertation has called *Black Muslim Freedom Dreams*. While her study focused on the hopes for robust religious education that African-American

families hold as they enroll their children in Islamic school in rural Senegal, their decisions were nevertheless indexical of the broader imagination of a life of freedom and escape from U.S. racism that motivates African-American travel to and long-term residence on the African continent. My arrival in Juba therefore contained all of my Pan-African dreams. This city was free of the anti-Black racism of Cairo and the religious and racial persecution my friends and colleagues had experienced in Khartoum as well. I felt that witnessing an African nation-state at the dawn of its independence was as close as anyone living could get to experiencing the ephemeral euphoria of decolonization in Africa that occurred over half a century ago.

Pan-Africanism has been and can be many things: a political program, an economic framework, a worldview, an attitude, a pedagogical commitment, and, among many other forms, a site of nostalgia for a past that has lost its way and a future yet to come. Its multiple permutations also render it elusive. It does not substantively exist in any singular place or at any one time. In large part, Pan-Africanism only becomes tangible at Pan-African festivals and events that feature the cultural aesthetics of multiple continental communities or at African Universities that attract students from throughout the continent. The problem is that these sites of Pan-African association are ephemeral. They do not often lead to the formation of institutions. Cultural festivals end as quickly and abruptly as they began. University students graduate and faculty move on. Yet, my time in Juba illuminated possibilities of a Pan-African world and how the conglomeration of multiple African nationalities can shape the character of the city itself. In the wake of South Sudan's independence, migrants have arrived in Juba from Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Eritrea in addition to the return of South Sudanese nationals who have spent large portions of their lives in Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. As such, national identity, national territory, and the broader regional geography in which identity and territory fit—*East*

Africa—have come to be ubiquitous elements of everyday conversation in Juba. *East Africa* became more significant than a geographic reference, it became an index of cultural histories shared with Uganda and Kenya and those that diverged from Sudan and the Arabic-speaking world.

The secession from Sudan not only articulated political autonomy but also made available new geographic, cultural, and linguistic attachments as politics and politicians, news media, and bank institutions affectively turned southward toward the English, Christian and Swahili-speaking context of Kenya, Uganda, and elsewhere to the south of what is now South Sudan. One's knowledge of Arabic as a South Sudanese citizen has become strategic rather than identitarian. The capacity to speak in the normative Arabic language dialect of Cairo, for example, indexes the capacity to code-switch through race, class, and religion and to navigate the spaces in which the concept of Arab identify still determines the relations of power and property. Knowledge of the local dialect, Juba Arabic, demonstrated a willingness to relinquish the veneer of expertise in the language, so often linked to intellectual capacity as such. The typical emphasis on normative sounds such as the *'ayn* or *kh* fade away in South Sudan and among South Sudanese Arabic speakers as one plays and experiments with the language in ways that would be policed and mocked in the Arabic-speaking world. What began as an escape from U.S. racism to Cairo therefore grew into multi-focal attention to the lived forms of transnational belonging and interconnection, with their attendant joys and disappointments, that extend from Juba northward to Sudan and southward to Kenya and Uganda.

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[1] There is now much scholarship on this process. See Junaid Rana (2011)

[2] See Langston Hughes' *The Ways of White Folks* for a penetrating short story about the insidious *nice* racism of polite society.

[3] I draw the term *globally familiar* from Gabrial Dattatreyan's (2020) work.

Introduction: A Region Remade around the Newest Nation in the World

In July 2011, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan as the world's newest nation-state. An overwhelming majority of registered southern Sudanese voters chose independence over unity with Sudan in a referendum administered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). A half century of armed, political, and ideological conflict culminated in a single referendum vote. Popular attachments to political independence were narrated as an investment in South Sudan's political economic autonomy, free from the oppressive civilizing project of the Arab-identifying Islamic government based in Khartoum. The marginalization of southerners has characterized Sudan since its independence from Britain in 1956, principally in the shape of two civil wars. The first was fought by the Anyanya rebels from 1955 until the signing of the Addis Ababa peace agreement with then Sudanese President Jafaar Nimeiri in 1972. The second was fought by the SPLM/A under Dr. John Garang from 1983 erupting when Nimeiri reneged on the peace agreement, until 2005 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed by Omar Al-Bashir whose conservative Islamist regime had come to power via coup in 1989. For many Sudanese citizens of what is now Sudan, the animosity between the two Sudans is rooted in Britain's 1922 closed district policy which barred northern economic activity from encroaching into the south. The goal of this policy was to rule the south by customary tribal authority with the stated purpose of protecting the south from the northern-led trade in slaves. Yet, for southerners, the colonial government did not cease in 1956, it merely changed hands. This project's interlocutors took a critical stance towards the promise of political independence (that of Sudan as well as South Sudan) which has generated an axis of hope and disappointment that has taken on regional proportions.

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Two years after South Sudan's secession in 2011, an ethnically-charged internal war erupted in 2013. Situated in the aftermath of independence and war, this dissertation argues that region has been transformed through the multiple processes of *region*-craft. This dissertation defines region-craft as the forging of supranational connections that appear both in varying emotional attachments to border-crossing geographies and through self-conscious projects which seek to institutionalize and connect a transnational regional community. While important, the nation is neither the exclusive domain of state power, nor the only container of imagined community. This project follows how citizens of the world's newest nation narrate new and shifting connections to the nation from which South Sudan seceded, Sudan, and the domain in which it seeks membership in East Africa, namely, Kenya and Uganda. The chapters that follow trace the formation of region through multiple registers: family, the interplay of journalism and rumor, political memoir, regional political and economic unions, and the disappointments of political independence. An additional aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the growing anthropological analysis of race in Africa. The project holds a bifocal emphasis on linkages that extend from Juba—the capital of South Sudan—northward to Khartoum and southward to Kampala and Nairobi. Holding both trajectories in view highlights the multi-layered quality of the racialization of South Sudan and its citizens throughout the region. My conceptualization of race follows how my interlocutors reflect on their insufficient liberation from second-class citizenship in Sudan. It juxtaposes this with their resentment for what appear to be new relations of inequality, immanent in regional integration efforts which orient the new country towards the influence and power of Kenya and Uganda.

Throughout this protracted war, there have been multiple iterations of resistance movements expressive of the desire for political change emanating from what is now South

Sudan, namely the Anyanya movement and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). These groups have opposed the successive regimes based in Khartoum on different platforms. The first, Anyanya, was characterized as more explicitly in favor of self-determination. The second the SPLM/A, was, in its foundation, interested in a national transformation to inaugurate an inclusive and secular state in Sudan. At the heart of the persistent question of southern Sudan (and other peripheral areas) has been identity formation, whether religious, racial or ethnic, and the identitarian violence premised on those categories (Deng 1995, Mamdani 2009). Dr. John Garang was the military and intellectual leader of the rebel SPLM/A that fought the second Sudanese civil war with the government of Sudan. He was a member of the Dinka ethnic community, the largest ethnic tribe in South Sudan. The man understood to be his successor in the leadership of the SPLM/A, President Salva Kiir Mayardit, is a member of the same tribal community. A principal driver of the disappointment and frustration for many citizens of the newly independent South Sudan is the continued dominance of the political apparatus by a single ethnic community. The primary opposition, the SPLM-IO, is identified with Riak Machar who is an ethnic Nuer, the second largest ethnic community after the Dinka.

The politicization of ethnic difference has been at the heart of the armed violence that has characterized much of South Sudan's short history as an independent nation. This ethnic violence is primarily narrated as the struggle between the two largest ethnic groups, Dinka and Nuer. The former is largely in control of the government and the latter is associated with the primary opposition. There is also significant discourse in which the other smaller ethnic groups such as the Shilluk, Bari and the many others articulate their struggle for the cessation of violence. At times, leaders and civilians from smaller ethnic groups stand alongside prominent Nuer political leaders against the Dinka ruling elites. At others, they stand against both leaders from both large

ethnic groups as representative of competing ruling elites who appear to simply vie for control of the country rather than to build and maintain peaceful stability.

The consonance between government repression and the geographic periphery has rendered synonymous two processes that seem affectively divergent: independence and partition. The geographic partition of the formerly peripheral southern Sudan from the federal Sudanese government became synonymous with self-determination, independence, and the freedom to choose their own religious and political destiny. The aftermath of this independence-cum-partition has been characterized by further displacement and ongoing violence in the South rather than the burgeoning autonomous nation-state that was imagined.

There are deeply-rooted popular understandings of how the experience of war and displacement has shaped national identity in South Sudan. The trajectories of South Sudanese southward to Kenya and Uganda and northward to Khartoum has given rise to two conventions of South Sudanese nationals. On the one hand, there are the *Khartoumers,* those who lived, worked, and went to school in Khartoum throughout the civil wars. On the other, there are the *nas East Africa* (East Africa people) those whose familial ties, education and career trajectories drew them to Kampala and to Nairobi. Despite this pervasive popular binary, South Sudan's transnational relationships have principally been visible in one direction, towards Khartoum and Sudan (Manoeli 2019, Kindersley 2016, Tounsel 2020). South Sudan's ongoing relationship with Sudan remains ideologically and materially substantive. Significant peace negotiations in 2021 which comprised political actors in Khartoum, Darfur, and Juba relied on diplomatic cooperation between the two Sudans. The oil economy of both nations is still one of mutual dependence in which the investing corporations have offices and facilities in both countries. South Sudan contains the oil reserves and Sudan contains the infrastructure to move and sell the oil.

Yet, alongside these lasting relationships, the regional geography in which the government in South Sudan has oriented itself is linked to East Africa via Kenya and Nairobi. While South Sudan's ongoing relationships with Khartoum draw on the distant and more recent past, new and strengthened relationships with East Africa shape imaginations of the future. This study sits at this intersection, where past and future overlap in an imaginative geography that extends northward to Khartoum and southward to Nairobi.[1] The aftermath of partition has provided an opportunity to reflect on both the past *and* the future of South Sudan as these two temporal imaginations take shape geographically. State ideology interpellates South Sudan into the English and Swahili-speaking, Christian, and non-Arab domain of East Africa.[2]

This dissertation argues that in the wake of South Sudan's political independence in 2011, the domain of region—the connections between contiguous nation-states—has been remade. The geopolitical perspective of this dissertation extends in two directions to follow how race and space have been rearticulated in the aftermath of political independence. This dissertation therefore extends northward to confront what I call the *counterlinearity of liberation* that has brought South Sudanese citizens back to the site of oppression after decades of war for self-determination. It also extends southward to address *East Africa* as a keyword containing the aspirations for South Sudan's future as the state reorients itself seeking ethnic, religious, and economic alignment. A network of South Sudanese intelligentsia has emerged more visibly amidst the state violence that has characterized the aftermath of independence in South Sudan. Ethnographically, this dissertation traces the goals, challenges, and catalyzing forces of the associational lives of politically engaged South Sudanese thinkers in exile in Sudan and Kenya. The networks that this intelligentsia maintain, the information they exchange, and the visions they debate and share demonstrate that the ongoing wars have not only destroyed but have also

produced. In this project, the constellations of region obtain profound intimacy as they take shape both through conceptualizations of home as family histories and ideations of home that traverse borders as well as through the evasion of a South Sudanese state security apparatus that seems to follow dissidents throughout the surrounding region.

The central questions that led to this argument took into account the myriad South Sudanese communities that, despite independence, continue to reside in the countries that surround South Sudan. This study addresses South Sudanese networks, ideas, and experiences of mobility that span the geography of *East Africa*.[3] It asks how modes of South Sudanese political engagement animate processes of differentiation—geographic, racial, religious—in East Africa today? More specifically, what does the regional mobility of a transnational South Sudanese intelligentsia reveal about the contours of dissidence, political power, and belonging beyond the nation-state?

What undergirds the lingering attachments to Khartoum that have persisted through partition may seem self-evident as this new arrangement is barely a decade old. Yet, given the overwhelming majority vote for secession, one is nevertheless compelled to ask *why* there might be lingering attachments for South Sudanese to Khartoum. As people's lives and families continue to traverse this new border, it seems incumbent to ask what partition has meant for everyday lives and understandings of family and broader kinship networks. The project of identifying eligible voters for the referendum was ultimately a project of officially identifying South Sudanese citizens away from Sudanese. Given long histories of intermarriage and other intimate connections, this posed a challenge that required identifying and circumscribing patrilineal history; who fathered who and, importantly, where and when those fathers did their fathering.

When it comes to South Sudan's attachment to East Africa, the *why* is equally related to the question of Sudan's repression of South Sudan. One of the first decisions made by the independent government of South Sudan was to become a full member of the East African Community (EAC) in 2016. State officials, journalists, and many others celebrated this decision as symbolic of South Sudan's long-awaited political unity with its (non-Arab) Black East African neighbors. These affective attachments were directly tied to the fact that many of my interlocutors had lived, worked, and studied in both Kampala and Nairobi throughout the decades of South Sudan's independence struggle, and they continued to move between Juba and these cities after independence. For many of my interlocutors, the pre-colonial ethnic ties that traverse South Sudan's borders with Uganda and Kenya render these connections intelligible and, in some cases, preferable to maintaining linkages with Sudan. Yet, even with cultural history as a precedent for regional forms of mobility and ideas of belonging, this does not offer a sufficient explanation for why South Sudan has turned to East Africa after independence. I argue that membership in the EAC highlights the significance of *East Africa* as a keyword for civilizational modernity which has become a powerful icon for how South Sudanese state leaders envision national development.

The significance of *East Africa* compels reflection on the binary understandings of identity that characterized Sudan before 2011—Arab/African, Muslim/Christian, southern/ northern. Over the course of field work, reflections on the experience of oppression often appeared in ways that insisted on reckoning with how Sudan's independence from Britain did not translate into the liberation of southerners. An interlocutor would claim, from his experience working at a Khartoum-based newspaper, that all northern Sudanese doubt the intelligence and knowledge of Arabic from a southern writer, irrespective of whether he or she was born, raised,

an educated in Khartoum, an essentially monolingual Arabic-speaking city. Later in the same conversation, they would introduce me to a northern friend of theirs, who grew up around southerners and who therefore had an anomalous respect for and familiarity with them in comparison to other Sudanese residents of Khartoum. In another instance, my interlocutors might hear a northern Sudanese person claim that had it not been for the British closed district policy of 1922 which barred connection between the two cartographic halves, contemporary northerners and southerners would be closer and unity, rather than partition, would have been attractive in 2011. Their response to the northern Sudanese who made this claim would often be, cynically: "The British left in 1956. What have you northerners done since?"

While, historically, South Sudanese political thinkers have drawn an analogy with, for example, apartheid South Africa to communicate their predicament to the rest of the world; the reality on the ground did not always fit this ready-made binary.[4] Yet, the simplicity of binary frames also provides an effective vocabulary to articulate political grievances. Highlighting the complexities of day-to-day reality tends to muddle political morality. Salomon (2016) observed that a religious idiom had saturated public political life under Sudan's Islamic state, rather than appearing as an explicit tactic of the federal government. The dominance of this religious idiom as the only viable means to participate in the public sphere provides more clarity than the frame of postcolonial racial difference for understanding how southerners themselves describe their experience as Sudanese. The ideas, practices, and categories that align with this religious idiom became invisible and acceptable parts of public life, whereas those that do not became hyper-visible, marked, and policed.[5]

The idea of escape from this all-encompassing idiom produced the euphoria of independence. The collective hopefulness compelled many to return to South Sudan to exercise

their newfound autonomy from Omar Al-Bashir and the religious homogenization project of the National Islamic Front (NIF). Yet, the project of return was not simply a negative one. As will be discussed later, Christianity and the Bible have served as powerful technologies to articulate both a nation-building project and as solutions to the spiritual problem of motivating the return of a population in exile. These tools animate what Noah Salomon has termed "South Sudan's secular project," which strives to offer religious neutrality and utility as a technology to rectify the painful past of forced Islamization (Salomon 2014, 4). The failure of the state to attain its goals is not an index of its failure but of the intractability of secularism itself as it politicizes religion in the attempt to elide it (Asad 2003, Agramma 2012). There is therefore a spiritual and emotional significance in orienting the new nation toward another available idiom of public space in East Africa that can affirm the commitment to tolerant secularism that was espoused by the SPLM/A and the late Dr. John Garang and that continues to circulate within South Sudanese communities today.

Many of my interlocutors left South Sudan shortly after the civil war erupted in 2013, frustrated with the ongoing violence which had been exacerbated by the lack of professional opportunities and public infrastructure. They left South Sudan to re-locate, to establish families, or to return to city-centers in Sudan, Uganda, or Kenya. In some cases, they left not simply disappointed in the state of the nation but also fearful of South Sudan's surveillance apparatus which had targeted them for their public dissent. East Africa represented the secular embrace of African and Christian identity that could nevertheless tolerate the Muslim Other (as long as he does not drift towards extremism).[6] Although Salomon (2014) has argued that partition had little effect on trans-border linkages other than to "[reorganize] them under new political arrangements" this analysis overlooks the intimate and interpersonal relationships, imaginations

of and attachments to home and family that traverse borders and recast broad geopolitical relationships within profoundly intimate domains (4).

Theoretical Framework

The questions this dissertation asks align with a related study of South Sudanese intellectuals in Khartoum between 1972 and 2005 (Kindersley 2016). While Kindersley's work addresses communities in Khartoum that may become intelligible as such through their connection to rural South Sudan, my work traces constellations of individuals whose connection to rural towns has gone out of focus in relation to their personal and career trajectories in the region's major cities. Yet, in the project of how one might situate the study of South Sudan within the broader study of postcolonial Africa, Kindersley's study draws attention to the dissonance between an analysis of South Sudanese political thought and understandings of earlier expressions of the desire for self-determination in Africa. One important question that Kindersley asks, on which my study builds is how might one analyze contemporary African political independence when the spirit of anti-colonial resistance from the 1960s is no longer available. Moreover, if the project of African liberation remains unfinished, how might we understand the ideological and moral imperatives of past and ongoing movements for secession on the African continent? Do they diverge from or converge with the anti-colonial resistance movements of the past?

In an age where technocratic expertise has largely eclipsed the discourse of revolutionary anti-colonial nationalism, the broader question at work for this dissertation is: in a context where political independence was the product of an electoral referendum, are referenda an insufficient

media through which to attain the promise of self-determination?[7] One contribution of this project is therefore a reflection on the limitations of a technocratic referendum as a vehicle for self-determination.

Basil Davidson (1992) reminds us that Kwame Nkrumah's famous quote from the New Testament book of Mathew (6:33): "seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added unto you" represented an overdetermination of political sovereignty in the quest for anti-colonial emancipation. This contention with the primacy of the *political kingdom* is reflected in more recent anthropological scholarship of non-independent Caribbean states that has provided an understanding of sovereignty other than exclusively as political independence (Bonilla 2015). Bonilla challenges the idea that non-independent societies in the late 20th century have failed to participate in the anti-colonial struggle for non Euro-centric modernities. Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2004), Bonilla has argued that sovereignty is one of many *North Atlantic Universals*, or seductive normative ideals, that do little to better the lives of former colonial subjects (cf. Grovogui 1996). Instead, Bonilla draws our attention to *non-sovereign politics*. In showing us a postcolonial political project in Martinique & Guadeloupe where political independence was neither the outcome nor the primary goal, Bonilla provides a powerful lens with which to distinguish the interests of anti-colonial nationalists as one set of interests among competitors rather than as symbolic of the entire spectrum of resistance. Bonilla's interlocutors are labor activists in Guadeloupe who are thinking through the "conflicting norms and attendant desires" that emerge from decolonization (2015:3). She thus provides a lens to maintain attention to the various non-state imaginaries that were available before the wave of political independence through the late 1950s and early 1960s in order to identify how the decolonial moment marked the ascendance of one political formation and the elision of its alternatives.

The promise of technical solutions has engendered the popular support for referenda and transitional governance as viable pathways to peace and democracy. The dominance of technicism as a tool for protecting or attaining self-determination has appeared as the foil to the religious political extremism that regional negotiation efforts understand as an infectious plague as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs appear throughout East Africa. As bastions of large-scale technocracy, regional political and economic unions have become increasingly relevant in global politics and popular understandings of national policy on immigration, trade, surveillance, and militarism. Popular expressions of hope and disappointment in the actions of these unions also highlight understandings of community and Other. Popular analyses of IGAD, the EAC, or ECOWAS, for example take on significance as indexical of particular characteristics of *East* or *West* African diplomatic tactics.

To pay attention to this supra-national and inter-state domain within continental Africa, I develop the term *region-craft*. I offer this term as both a method and a socio-political process. It positions region as a constellation of urban centers through which my interlocutors exchanged ideas, narrated their personal and professional lives, and reflected on their ideas about self, community and Other. My analytical goals in developing this term are multiple. First, it emphasizes how past colonial spatial imaginaries come to shape and inform contemporary conceptualizations of transnational space. Organizations such as the East African Community (EAC), which is a supra-national organization that figures heavily in this project, chronicles its own territorial coherence through the administrative genealogy of British East Africa. Second, it addresses how this spatial conception of region comes to life through the EAC's institutional culture. Racialized ideologies of professionalism have rendered South Sudan into a delinquent actor that is unable to uphold EAC standards at either the organizational or interpersonal level.

Third, region-craft traces the production and exchange of information (through official media and unofficial rumor) as processes through which thinkers craft, experience, and narrate transnational regional networks. Lastly, there is an ambivalence in crafting—as the intention act of construction and forming something new out of disparate pieces—that highlights the predictable and unpredictable ways in which people make sense of region as it becomes the object of everyday conversation in urban settings as important sites of confluence from multiple national geographies.

I draw my understanding of region-craft as an analytical method from Mamdani's (2001) work on the historical and political context of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Mamdani insisted that the conflict in Rwanda could only be substantively understood and addressed as the epicenter of a regional crisis, rather than the container of a national one. This regional crisis therefore necessitated a regional solution. In this case, he used *region* to index a supranational political area constituted by multiple nation-states rather than a subnational space *within* one. The term region slips easily between these two territorial conceptions, a region *within* a nation and a region constituted by multiple nations. He explains three advantages to the regional approach and why it is the most relevant analytical frame (2001, 36-39). The first is that a regional lens allows us to contrast identity formation in neighboring Congo and Uganda such that we can see how processes of ethnicization are shared across contexts and how they appear with unique features and tendencies in particular places. Second, a regional approach allows for a comparative analysis of the initiatives, both the grassroots and state-sponsored, that emerged to address the regional crisis. Third, it allows for a robust understanding of the regional consequences, particularly when the territorial boundaries of neighboring nation-states have

profound implications on the processes of identity formation—racialization and ethnicization—that are at stake.

Taking a regional approach is an occasion to revisit the debate on methodological nationalism and the "field" of ethnography (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). While there has been important research on the regional scale, these analyses do not seem to have consolidated region as constituting an ethnographically intelligible domain that is alternative both to the national and the global. The fix to methodological nationalism appears to have connected the local to the global and has subordinated the regional scale of exchange and association to broader formations. The influence and significance of the Global North as a cultural hegemon and political economic superpower often eclipses all other relationships such that connections within the Global South only become intelligible or worthy of analysis once they come into contact with the overdeveloped world. There are many administrative projects throughout the Global South that take shape through region which mirror, cooperate with, or are partially funded by the more well-known regional institutions of the Global North (The EU, NAFTA, and NATO). Region nevertheless exists as a generative pathway for individuals, particularly in the formerly colonized and underdeveloped world, to narrate connection with and belonging to communities of ethnic and religious affinity or political goals that span multiple borders.

Moreover, in the spirit of a reinventing and decolonizing anthropology, a regional approach also affords a means by which we might develop robust understandings of the expansive gaze of Empire (Hymes 1974, Harrison 1991). That is to say, if we are to engage in an anti-imperial anthropology, the scale of region provides a way to pull back the curtain and expose the gaze of empire to provincialize and shrink it, rather than to deploy the very nationalist

prisms it left behind. A world divided into nationalisms, either through political action or social scientific analysis, is not a world liberated from empire. Classical anthropological work on the broader East African region that functioned as the so-called handmaiden of colonialism is often thought of as scrupulously 'local,' and yet Evans-Pritchard moved regionally between Belgian Congo (Azande), Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (Nuer), and British East Africa (Luo). It is decolonization that has constrained the anthropological *field* to national borders even as Global North neo-imperialism continues to operate well beyond them (drawing from Gupta & Ferguson 1997).

I draw from recent contemporary and historical anthropology to develop an ethnographic understanding of how regions take shape and why certain entities within them become interpellated as delinquent to established norms (Navaro 2002, Ben-Yehoyeda 2017, Babül 2017).[8] This research also holds at its center geographies that Navaro (2012) would call *make-believe* spaces which have emerged in postwar contexts that culminated in partition as the product of affective and material process of crafting new geographic units. Building on this work, my project emphasizes the forms of exchange and normalization that govern relationships between and across global south entities. This dissertation contributes to understanding national state power as it exceeds the territorial boundaries of the state alongside inter-scalar processes of differentiation and political economic marginalization.

Ben-Yahoyeda's (2017) historical anthropology of region formation across the Mediterranean offers a generative frame for understanding the processes by which communities produce and maintain transnational linkages such that seemingly disparate geographies become interpolated as an interconnected region that elicits profound emotional attachments. Ben-Yahoyeda distinguishes processes of region-making from other available conceptualizations of

scale, such as globalism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism. Ben-Yahoyeda observes that if we understand how regional constellations align on their own terms rather than as epiphenomenal to those more familiar frames of transnationalism, then we can more clearly see the work of the two connected processes: *projects of region making* and *processes of region formation*. In this project, I use this dichotomy to make sense of analogous distinctions I observed. On the one hand, I address a regional newspaper and a regional political economic union and the pursuit of membership within it. On the other, I address processes of region formation that capture how people narrate home and family through connection to a broader region and how fleeing political repression by the South Sudanese government throughout the region, for example, generates intense narratives of fear and surveillance that take on regional proportions.

I draw from political anthropology of Turkey's relationship to the European Union in order to make sense of South Sudan's ambivalent relationship to East Africa. The conditions that under which a particular nation-state desires to join or to leave a particular transnational community produce and are produced by ideologies of race, gender, and history. Bringing literature on Turkey to bear on South Sudan highlights the global phenomenon of how transnational unions produce and come to rely on technocratic standards that they articulate as apolitical in principle even as they become conduits for policing the behavior, culture, and aesthetics of political being and belonging (Shore 2000, Navaro-Yashin 2002, Babül 2017, also Ferguson 1994 and Mitchell 2002). Specifically, I use this literature to develop my conceptualization of the regional *Black Sheep*. In Chapter 3, I argue that upon its secession from Sudan and subsequent accession to the East African Community, South Sudan has become a regional *Black Sheep*. The spectacle of the Black Sheep, as depicted in political cartoons, for example, marshals a racialized aesthetics that shapes representations of South Sudan. This

representation captures the substantive relationship of financial and political delinquency that has come to characterize representatives of the new state as they come into contact with their East African counterparts. Blackness, in this instance, takes on meaning that exceeds the visual field of how we might see who is Black and how Blackness operates.[9] In order to understand how and why racial ideologies continue to be relevant between political entities in Africa, one must address the multiple sources of racial thought that have come to shape processes of racial meaning-making in Africa.

This dissertation takes race as an expression of relations to property, labor, and governance and not as an ascriptive attribute that can be measured sociologically. This approach emphasizes anthropology's role in identifying and analyzing race by tracing racial formation ethnographically in quotidian relationships and popular understandings. The goal of approaching race in this way is to render racial formation intelligible in this context—East Africa and the two Sudans—wherein the familiar binary scaffolding of the study of race (i.e. whiteness and Blackness) are not available due to the significance of religious difference, popular understandings of ethnicity and geographic belonging, and governmental political ideology beholden to the formation of *Arab* rather than *European* identity. In this way, this project seeks to contribute an anthropological study to the growing Africanist history at the forefront of developing approaches to racial formation in Africa that provide the means to understand in conjunction multiple processes of racialization (Troutt-Powell 2003, Glassman 2011, Brennan 2012, Weitzberg 2017, Hall 2011, El-Hamel 2013).

These histories have chronicled how multiple sets of actors (including indigenous African intellectuals) have developed modes of racial thought with lasting consequences for the political economic conditions of our contemporary world. As germinal scholarship on race has shown, it

is only by addressing the formation of racial thought, as has been the case with studies that trace the formation of European racial science, that race can be decoupled from spurious biological essence and analyzed as a relationship constructed and shaped to manage and police (Omi and Winant 1986, Mills 1997). Glassman (2004) takes issue with narratives in which Europeans are the only intellectual actors capable of devising ideological schema that get taken up as forms of racial difference.[10] His goal is to make sense of the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar, in which African-identifying revolutionaries overthrew an Arab-identifying Sultanate. In doing so, Glassman addresses indigenous sources of racial thought in which local intellectuals mapped ideas about civilizational hierarchy onto local identities. This represented an intellectual genealogy of racial thought that pre-existed and came to co-exist with ideas imported from Europe.

What Glassman and similar historians offer is the material to understand how race operates—and what it looks like—when the visual field does not conform to the familiar domain of racialized antagonism. This historical work can inform an embodied ethnographic method in which one prioritizes other senses to identify the consequences of race such that one's hearing, for example, offers alternative ways of experiencing and apprehending the contours of racialized space (cf. Rosa 2018). Audra Simpson (2007) has insisted that we address the ethnographic refusal of indigenous communities to be intelligible to anthropological analyses that privileged the "exceedingly ritualistic and procedural" such that these portraits elided the profound opposition to and struggle against state power from indigenous peoples (2007, 68). If, as she observes, we can and should address North American native refusal to intelligibility with settler legal and intellectual frameworks, how might we also attend the refusal of continental Africans

to be made legible to the universalistic tendencies of North American analyses of race and racialization?

Recent texts that provide histories of political thought in what is now South Sudan help to address this question. The first is Sebabatso Manoeli's (2019) study of the geopolitical rhetoric taken up by the leaders of the former rebel party, the SPLM/A and the former government led by the now deposed Omar Al-Bashir in Sudan. The second is Christopher Tounsel's (2021) history of the salience of the Bible and Christianity as political technologies to narrate understandings of struggle, identity, and destiny in what is now South Sudan. The third is Nikki Kindersley's (2016) dissertation, which chronicles the intellectual history of South Sudanese communities in Khartoum through the latter half of the 20th century until the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In contrast, this study offers a contemporary ethnographic accounting of a transnational South Sudanese intelligentsia as they reflect on the disappointments of independence from beyond the territorial borders of the new state.

The first, Manoeli's (2019) text, parallels a major historical shift that has resuscitated the question of Sudan's "Africanness." Manoeli chronicles the three decades of political developments after Sudan's independence from Britain in 1956—both the local ideological debates as well as the knowledge production that emerged to house them (booklets, quarterly journals, international conferences, etc). In doing so, Manoeli highlights the particularities of Sudan's insufficiently postcolonial political landscape, in which the Arab/African dyad reconfigured and sustained the binaries of British colonialism without the presence of a European settler population. In an archival method consistent with how Glassman constructs the history of racial thought in colonial Zanzibar, Manoeli takes a microscope to the vast array of thinkers in the now two Sudans who have thought through Sudan's "Southern Problem," i.e., the question of

secession, racial difference within an African context, and the extent to which the borders of British decolonization are effective vehicles for political community.

The second text is Tounsel's (2019) chronicle of religious thought as a political technology in South Sudan. Tounsel argues that Christianity and the Bible have been central to the contours of historical and contemporary political imagination in South Sudan. As such, he provides a response to a central question that has occupied political scientific analysis of South Sudan. South Sudanese scholars in particular have asked what is the shape and genealogy, if any at all, of political consciousness in South Sudan that is autonomous from its opposition to a northern Sudanese government and public sphere (Nyaba 1996, Jok 2011, Madut-Arop 2012, Yoh 2018). Many South Sudanese thinkers have argued that a unitary consciousness in South Sudan that transcends ethnic groups is not necessarily an endemic phenomenon. The partition from Sudan therefore presented a crisis of political identity that has informed the war that followed independence. Tounsel, however, traces the genealogy of what he calls a "liberatory, nationalist Christian thought" which was aimed at "non-Christian co-citizens (2019, 4)." In this way, Christianity, even if one understands it cynically as a strategic tool in the hands of the ruling elite, produces a particular sociopolitical vision of self and Other. Christianity was the central tool in defining the terms of grievance and struggle against the Arab/Muslim other whose elite oppressed the Black/African/Christian.

Nikki Kindersley's (2016) dissertation highlighted the limitations of standard analyses of the brief political history of an independent state in South Sudan. Journalistic political histories tend to offer an account of negative nationalism in which the overwhelming vote for partition has become little more than a foil for what was actually an expression of conflicts internal to the political elites at the helm of governmental authority. Kindersley takes issue with accounts such

as Jok Madut Jok's (2005) study which seeks to center, by contrast, his experiences and ideas of South Sudan's rural masses or what Jok has called, "ordinary people (Jok 2005, 35-6)." As Jok observes, such ordinary people do not engage in debates about the causes and consequences of geopolitical conflict. Yet, what Kindersley highlights historically as "vernacular political thought" is very much at work in the quotidian conversations of South Sudanese thinkers, irrespective of their formal or informal relationship to governmental authority (2016, 15). What is crucial for this project from Kindersley's study is that Khartoum has remained meaningful for South Sudanese individuals and communities. Highlighting Khartoum is necessary because it has had occupied a "complicated place in the imagination of the people" that have lived in the marginalized regions that surround it: Darfur, South Sudan, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan (2016, 16). Khartoum's complexity comprises its role as the "seat of oppression, as well as a place of opportunity, refuge, and education (Kindersley 2016, 16)." This project draws from Kindersley's attention to the emotional upheavals of the experience of urban life in Khartoum and extends it to Nairobi in order to reflect on the multi-directional pathways of networks of South Sudanese thinkers.[11]

Methodology

This dissertation is the product of 18 months of fieldwork in South Sudan, Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania. The central questions that led to this study took into account the myriad South Sudanese communities that, despite the achievement of national independence from Sudan, continue to reside in the countries that surround the territory of the new state. This study addresses South Sudanese networks, ideas, and experiences of mobility that span the geography

of *East Africa*. My interlocutors constituted a group of intelligentsia from South Sudan who were living, working, and maintaining communication with one another between the capital cities of Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan.

For my fieldwork in Kenya and Sudan, I drew on existing contacts from South Sudan.All of the given names of interlocutors included in this dissertation are pseudonyms unless I refer to a well-known public figure such as Mabior Garang. I established my initial contacts in South Sudan from two sources. The first was the community I came to know through the time I spent in Cairo described in the preface. The second source was a Sudanese visual artist I met in Los Angeles at the Ethiopian Cultural Center during an Amharic course. He introduced me to a fellow visual artist who had graduated with him from the University of Khartoum. His colleague, Kuong, was now a citizen of South Sudan and the two of them had engaged in student activism on campus around the time of the crisis in Darfur in 2004 and the 2005 signing of the CPA. I met Kuong in Juba and as he introduced me to his friends and colleagues I learned that he was a member of a vast network of politically engaged South Sudanese intellectuals who have studied, lived and worked in Nairobi and Khartoum as journalists, for local NGOs, as state officials, and as university professors and students. The time I spent with this network was not so much participant observation as it was *deep hanging out* (Rosaldo 1998). Hanging out with them became a method for me to both engage their ideas about the racial and cultural geopolitics of regional linkage and to discern the expansiveness of their network. A question about one's experience in a particular city, for example, would be accompanied by who my interlocutors knew there, what collective projects they may have recently engaged in, where that person may go next and why. Our conversations were almost always outside, drinking tea or coffee on the side of the road at the stands of the *sita shai,* tea ladies. There was an openness to these

conversations that would draw in the colleagues and friends that surrounded us. Deep hanging out was therefore a method of data collection, but also of expanding my community of interlocutors.

The more structured conversations I had were the result of my work with a research assistant through the CEDEJ research institute in Khartoum, with whom I had a formal affiliation. The research assistant I worked with, who I will call Samuel, had deep connections with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) party based in Khartoum. This party's chairman, the infamous Riak Machar, is often blamed for the eruption of armed hostilities in South Sudan after independence.[12] As Machar, the vast majority of the constituents of his party, and the research assistant I worked with, identify as Nuer, the research participants we recruited also largely identified as Nuer. In contrast to the above set of interlocutors, these conversations often took place in restaurants or hotel lobbies rather than outside sitting on stools outside with a *sita shai*. The network of interlocutors that I drew upon from Juba, however were largely from the Shilluk and Dinka communities as well as the smaller ethnic groups of Central Equatoria. As such, my work with Samuel helped to fill out the representation of multiple ethnic communities among my interlocutors. In both cases, my conversations were often with more than one person, such that questions and answers moved in multiple directions.

Following Kuus (2008), I understand my interlocutors as *professionals of geopolitics* whose ideas and experiences of South Sudan come to life in news media, conferences, universities, parliamentary floors, and peace-talk negotiations, even as they live their daily lives outside of that country. My interlocutors can be divided into two broad categories of South Sudanese intellectual and political elites: those whose personal, political, and professional

journeys lead them northward to Khartoum and those who circulate southward to Nairobi. They represent multiple generations, including those who have personal memories of the political upheavals of early 1970s in Sudan as well as a generation younger than this who maintain that they benefitted from postsecondary educational opportunities in Khartoum under Omar Al-Bashir in the early 1990s. Many of my interlocutors represent an even younger generation who were born outside of South Sudan. This generation first visited their family homelands in Malakal and elsewhere as young children in the 1990s or encountered Juba Arabic as an unfamiliar dialect upon their first visits to Juba in 2005 after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, or as recently as in 2011 after national independence. My conversations with this network have spanned Nairobi, Juba, and Khartoum in an effort to follow the trajectory of their mobility and their exchange of ideas.

The interlocutors for this dissertation compel reflection on the questions posed by the project of *studying up* as well as *studying sideways* (Nader 1972, Hannerz 1998). In the prompt to reinvent anthropology, Laura Nader asked whether anthropology's subject might shift towards those who hold "the power of life and death over so many" rather than persistently focus on the impoverished and the disadvantaged (1972, 1). While she reflected on what we might learn from reinventing studies in the United States such that they might address the financial institutions and landlords, for example, who produce the poverty social scientists observe and measure; at the heart of the project of studying up is a focus on the culture of power that deepens our understandings of the practices and decisions that structurally reproduce powerlessness. Hannerz (1998) takes up Nader's call in a different direction, compelling anthropologists to reflect on studying horizontally towards *other transnationals*. Such interlocutors are "like anthropologists, in a transnational contact zone, engaged in managing meaning across distances (Hannerz 1998,

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109)." Hannerz deploys this frame to bring attention to the intellectual work of missionaries and, relevant for this dissertation, the journalistic practices of foreign correspondents. Yet what seems to distinguish interlocutors who identify as intellectual professionals from others who also find themselves in such border-crossing zones of contact, such as refugees with little or no education, is their status as knowledge producers. Even while many of the interlocutors of this dissertation hold higher education degrees they nevertheless reflect on personal experiences of refugee flight, on residence in a refugee camp in the past, or on intimate relations with family and friends who remain in them.

This project builds on trends in the anthropological study of the cultural and political mechanisms that define and sustain elite status (Nugent and Shore 2003, Abbink and Salverda 2012). The project of studying up or sideways depends on the presumption of power and the sovereignty of the political-legal subject. Is this articulation of the researcher-subject relation relevant in African contexts where even the holders of the greatest political and economic influence are only quasi-sovereign within the global capitalist order (Grovogui 1996)?[13] Yet, one must not use this paradigm to dismiss or ignore the analytic value of elite or educated informants. Such a dismissal results in the same error that Bonilla (2015) observed in the failed attempt of classical anthropology to make sense of native reflections on the anthropologist's *culture*. The anthropologists' interlocutors "end up on the losing end of a debate to which they were never privy (Bonilla 2015, xv)." This dissertation builds on Bonilla's project of *theorizing with* one's interlocutors. She draws on Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003) to make the case for why anthropology must not simply incorporate the voices of our interlocutors but engage with their arguments and analytical contributions and whole interlocutors (xv-xvi).

The status of my interlocutors as scholars, students, journalists, and activists compelled this level of engagement because they were producing their own knowledge in the near-present future as I collected data to produce knowledge in a much more distant future. My commitment to *theorizing with* therefore grew into a commitment to *reading with* my interlocutors as an intentional practice of engaging people fully as knowledge producers rather than as passive victims of suffering nor as containers of experiences to be later fleshed out through my ethnographic writing. This practice took multiple forms. At times, it would entail bringing a newspaper article, often written by my interlocutors or their colleagues, to a roadside tea stand and observing how the conversation blossomed as the newspaper was passed from hand to hand amongst the men sitting with us. It also has included reading the books (novels, memoir, and political history) written by my interlocutors. This methodology not only deeply affected the writing and practice of this ethnography but also had the substantive effect of supporting knowledge production from the African continent and the publishing houses that support them, such as those within Africa such as Mkuki Wa Nyota, U.K.-based African Books Collective, and within the U.S. such as Africa World Press. My knowledge of and openness to texts that my interlocutors had written also signaled the extent to which I took them seriously as actors within a transnational intellectual community in which I was a guest.

This practice is also directly linked to how I used language throughout this project and how that affected the way I initiated conversations with new interlocutors, particularly journalists or other professionals residing in Nairobi. Most of my conversations with South Sudanese people in Sudan or Kenya contained a mix of Arabic and English. In Juba, I gained familiarity with *Juba Arabic,* the principal dialect of Arabic spoken in Juba, as well as other less localized registers of Arabic spoken by people from what is now South Sudan. A familiarity and willingness (it felt

like a necessity) to be flexible with the multiple *Arabics* I encountered helped me to be sensitive to how the partition between Sudan/South Sudan came to life through language. My own political commitments and travel history could be discerned by my pronunciation of certain vowels, whether I could properly gender my verb tenses, or through my use of the complicated plurals of the Arabic language. The flexibility I developed in Arabic also extended to the way I spoke English. On a phone call with the late Alfred Taban, a high-profile journalist and politician in South Sudan, he admonished me for my incomprehensible "American English." As I slowed down my speech and annunciated my pronunciation of the letter "t" in particular, I realized I had developed a new communicative tool that humbled my English-speaking Americanness to the multi-lingual world of my interlocutors. It goes without saying that this context, as many others on the African continent, contain multiple ethnic tribal languages, yet in this context there were also a number of *lingua francas* from which one might choose. Knowledge only of Arabic therefore limited my ethnographic sensitivity exclusively to how South Sudan remained linked to the Arabic-speaking world through Khartoum. This one-sidedness eclipsed the role of Swahili in expressing the ideological significance of, for example, the alignment between a Swahili-speaking vision of Pan-African collectivity and an Arabic-speaking refusal of Pan-Arabism. Swahili has also played a substantively significant role as a point of contact for the enduring role of Kenya, Uganda, and East Africa broadly in the life histories of my interlocutors.

Positionality

In Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania where I have conducted fieldwork, I have been variously identified nationally, in descending order of frequency, as Egyptian, Syrian, Ethiopian, Turkish and Indian. All of these national identifications were contingent principally on

the language I spoke and how I spoke it and embodied in the length of the hair on my head and the hair on my face. My light-brown complexion is an ambiguous signifier of national identity that is capable of blending in at the multiple sites at which my fieldwork took place. These semiotic markers have been linked to particular contextual circumstances such as the massive population of Syrian refugees in Sudan, the Arabic vowels I pronounce that betray to Sudanese and South Sudanese nationals how much time I have spent in Egypt, or the Swahili speaking Indian population of Tanzania from which taxi drivers in Arusha concluded I must hail. The most jarring and destabilizing identification I have received in the field is with whiteness itself. These instances in particular have provided the opportunity to reflect on the symbols through which whiteness becomes intelligible, such as U.S. citizenship and wealth, whether understood as constitutive of my identity or as a detachable attribute. The lack of recognition as Black has destabilized the primacy of complexion as an anchor in racial meaning-making. While U.S. scholarly academic treatments have surely demonstrated the broader political economic and ideological structures of Blackness, there nevertheless remains a commonsensical understanding that conveniently delimits Blackness to the visual field and effaces the vast array of identity formation in contemporary Africa such that U.S. understandings of Blackness remain intact. With this in mind, I have tried to remain cognizant of the influence of what Marc Perry (2004) has called the *North-American attuned, black-seeing eye*, which commits the analytical sin of which so many African-American scholars of Blackness beyond the U.S. have been accused, imposing a U.S. racial schema universally around the globe without sufficient attention to contextual detail.[14] Through an embodied process, this project therefore takes a critical approach to the embodiment of race to ask: Who is Black when everyone is Black?

Many of the people I interviewed for this dissertation were men. At the start of the ethnographic research for this project I was determined not to end up with a group of interlocutors about whom I would have to explain that I, as a man, could only really develop ethnographic intimacy with other men. To this end, I made deliberate efforts to include women in this study. Nevertheless, the majority of my interlocutors were men. The gendered quality of my research participants changed throughout the difference sites this research took place: Juba, Khartoum, Arusha, Nairobi. While I will offer an explanation for this, the overdetermination of people who identify as men in this context begs the question of why these transnational worlds are so often built by men. Whether the subject is the Pan-African vision of a United States of Africa or the broad vision of diasporic connectivity, those who are at the forefront of imagining and building these transnational worlds are often men. In part, I think this gendered vision has to do with material conditions and gendered performances wherein men can and are encouraged to travel while leaving their wives and families behind. There is also a militaristic quality of the transnational expansiveness of masculine global visions that takes shape as an ever-increasing domain of influence and control. I think this vision often eclipses its feminine counterpart as either the precious progenitor of the national family to be secluded and protected or as constrained by the responsibilities of blood, home, and land.

The ease with which I was able to meet and have conversations with women depended greatly on the setting. In Khartoum, much of my ethnographic data was gathered outside in open-air tea-drinking downtown areas. The sexually conservative social norms of Khartoum, while changing quickly since the fall of Omar Al-Bashir, do not lend themselves to people looking kindly on women who frequent these areas where the majority of tea drinkers are men. The only women around are usually the tea-sellers themselves, a labor category which has its own

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historical associations with prostitution and licentiousness. When women would occasionally sit for a few moments to greet my interlocutors on their way elsewhere in the downtown area, the stop was brief and the exchanges almost always flirtatious on the part of the men. Many of the social norms that were in place in Khartoum were in place in Juba as well. The way that I moved around both Sudanese cities with my interlocutors—on various forms of public transportation, walking long distances, hours at outdoor cafes—indexed an everyday intimacy between same-sex friendships, that, between men and women, indexed the conventional behavior one engages in on the path to marriage. Long days outside of the home needed an explanation. Such days also required a certain flexibility from the expectations of one's family (parents and children) that women in these contexts did not necessarily enjoy. It was not impossible to meet women but when I was able to we would meet at cafes with indoor seating that was not visible from the street so as to avoid the unpredictable public gaze. In Arusha and Nairobi, I was often in extremely professionalized settings such as the EAC headquarters or the Nation Media Centre. In these contexts, there was little difference in the extent to which my interlocutors represented one gender or another. The women that I was able to speak with were often in positions relatively high up in the organizational hierarchy who managed and navigated a male-dominated field.

Scope of Chapters

The dissertation breaks down into the following chapters:

chapter one provides a contemporary history of the present. It focused on three moments of recent history: the death of Dr. John Garang in 2005, the 2011 referendum, and the 2019 arrest

of South Sudanese youth activists in Kenya. By focusing on these three events, this chapter identifies the terrain of region-craft as it takes shape through intense interpersonal relationships that articulate with profound geopolitical events. Highlighting these three events also emphasizes some of the principal intellectual and political currents that shape South Sudan's transnational intelligentsia. The chapter attends to the significance of the 2005 death of Dr. John Garang through ethnographic attention to his eldest son, Mabior. Dr. John's death disappointed much of the hope attached to the CPA agreement but his death has also shaped how his son has navigated the transnational gaze of his father's political rivals as Mabior manages his own political career and relationships to the federal government. I highlight the structure of the 2011 referendum ballot utilized in the referendum for political independence. I argue that its binary structure foreclosed a third arrangement alternative to unity with or separation from Sudan; it thereby produced a regionally shared commitment to that very alternative. I pay ethnographic attention to the 2019 arrest of South Sudanese activists in Nairobi to highlight the regional reach of South Sudan's National Security Service and how Nairobi-based activists understand their emplacement beyond the borders of the state as an integral element of their political imagination. Furthermore, these three points of recent history also illustrate the interpersonal connections that span these transnational borders as all of the interlocutors in this chapter exchange information and strategies for activism on digital platforms.

The second chapter centers gender and masculinity through an analysis of the memoirs and reflective texts of South Sudanese religious and political leaders. The chapter takes aim at the iconic image of the idealized, self-sufficient masculine African first head of state. I argued that the edited volume of Dr. John Garang's speeches characterizes a genre of reflective writing in which multiple subsequent South Sudanese political leaders have sought to embody the

position of the military-intellectual who has survived a protracted war for self-determination and become a master of national governance and international diplomacy. The chapter reads these reflective texts ethnographically with the goal of recuperating the consensual and relational components of their contribution from the otherwise idealized hyper-masculinity of national and continental political leaders. The chapter unpacks these relational qualities in order to highlight regional connections as they are articulated through Christianity, the family, and ideas about home and belonging.

Chapter 3 argues that *East Africa* as a regional index is not simply a geographical reference but a keyword in which important social and political processes take shape. The chapter focuses on South Sudan's accession to the East African Community (EAC) and the racialized ideas that have emerged to make sense of the South Sudan's inability to meet the institutional standards of the EAC. It addresses the work of the EAC as a demonstration of intentional projects of region formation, one crucial component of the process of *region-craft*. This chapter offers an ethnographic snapshot of the EAC headquarters in Arusha in order to highlight how the professional standards of this institutions take on racial and classed qualities as South Sudan is rendered into a delinquent *Black Sheep*. The chapter also analyzes aesthetic representations of South Sudan as they appear in political cartoons reflecting on South Sudan's insufficient integration into East Africa.

This chapter is driven by the following questions: What does juxtaposing South Sudan's *secession* from Sudan with its *accession* to East Africa tell us about the intersection of religion, race, and class in the formation of asymmetries in the Global South? To answer these questions, this chapter offers an analysis of the semiotic qualities of *East Africa* that exceed the reference to geographic specificity. It then attends to South Sudan's membership in the EAC as an instance of

apprenticeship in liberal ideologies of responsible behavior that has rendered South Sudan as the *Black Sheep* of East Africa. It chronicles some of the bureaucratic hurdles that have affirmed South Sudan's status as the regional delinquent.

Chapter four argues that the exchange of information has been a crucial register of region-craft. It parses out this process into two forms of exchange. On the one hand, there are the predictable forms of the spread and consumption of information that occur through newspapers and other forms of digital media. On the other, there are the unpredictable and phantom forms of communication that occur through gossip and rumor that traverses national borders. The chapter accomplishes the first objective by highlighting my interlocutors' experiences as writers and journalists as they navigate everyday life as they become targets of South Sudanese state surveillance. It accomplishes the second by reckoning with the pervasive rumors about the influence of Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda, over the independent government in South Sudan.

The chapter thinks through the politicization of regional news diffusion as a key site for the formation of an East African region. First, this chapter contextualizes the domain of media production in Africa through addressing the emergence of the vigilant whistleblower as a claim of contemporary independent journalism. It then attends ethnographically to four media sources, *Al-Mawgif, Radio Tamazuj, The EastAfrican, and Wajuma News* to discuss how the conditions under which South Sudanese and Kenyan writers produce and circulate knowledge configure a broader region in which these writers develop projects and pursue their goals. Lastly, it draws on Kris Peterson's (2009) *phantom epistemologies* to demonstrate how the whistleblower position has been decoupled from the practice of journalism and been appropriated by South Sudanese thinkers broadly as they circulate the pervasive rumors about the influence of Museveni on South

Sudan and its president in particular and on the region broadly. The rumors that uphold this idea constitute an epistemological practice that has contributed to the broader region configuration.

Chapter five addresses the persistence of Khartoum as a significant historical and contemporary site at which South Sudanese individuals and communities continue to gather. The chapter argues that Khartoum is a generative empirical setting in which to unpack racial formation in Africa as linked to specific material and state-driven practices. This chapter draws attention to the shattered expectations of social change (Ferguson 1999) and the city as a signifier of racial identity and national belonging (Nassy Brown 2005). It draws on James Ferguson's (1999) work to formulate a *counterlinearity of liberation* that has driven South Sudanese political thinkers back to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan and the site of the oppressive government that animated the two civil wars. This chapter has two goals. The first is to unpack some of the cultural styles that have emerged among this community of southerners as they navigate life in Khartoum. The second draws from Nassy-Brown's (2005) study of Black Liverpool to highlight the significance of race through attention to the city of Khartoum as a signifier of racialized belonging. Independence has altered the criteria for citizenship in Sudan such that it is unavailable to people determined to be southerners through paternal lineage, irrespective of their contemporary relationship to either country. The chapter brings these two points together in order to demonstrate processes of racial meaning-making that draw from a range of sources in excess of a Black/white or African/European binary.

In the conclusion, I attend to the broader implications of some of the principal themes that have emerged from this dissertation. The first section grapples with what is at stake for region-craft as a method for the study of South Sudan and elsewhere. The second reflects on the consequences of drawing attention to what is produced in the wake of war, in contrast to what is

destroyed. The third section highlights possibilities for the study of race at the juncture of anthropology and history. The fourth addresses the context for this dissertation, the ongoing civil uprisings in Sudan. Specifically, it addresses the relevance of the concept of civil society for how my interlocutors articulate their dissident stance against this broader backdrop in Sudan. This conclusion will end with a brief reflection on the relevance of *The Black Atlantic* and *Black Internationalism* as germinal concepts for the study of transnational connection within Africa.

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[1] I draw on Edward Said's (1993) notion of imaginative geography, a discursive conceptualization of space that both produces and is produced by images and texts.

[2] Here, I use ideology in the Althusserian (1970) sense to highlight the discourses, material institutions, and rituals that produce ideas with historically specific and practical consequence. The decision made by the government of South Sudan to, for example, join the East African Community, will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

[3] This geographic signifier itself slips between multiple areas indexed by language, ethnicity, and concepts of culture. The two contrasting imaginative geographies of *East Africa* are arguably centered at competing air traffic hubs, one in Nairobi and the other in Addis Ababa. *East Africa* can index the KiSwahili language-speaking communities of the Indian Ocean-oriented domain of Kenya and Tanzania. It can also refer to the so-called *Horn of Africa* and the legacy of the Ethiopian Empire's geographic ambitions, its extensive orthodox Christian history, and its ancient written Semitic languages. This study follows the notion of *East Africa* as conceptualized by the East African Community, the regional political union in which South Sudan has become a member.

[4] There is rhetorical and substantive imperative behind the deployment of this analogy that will be discussed below through Manoeli (2019) and elsewhere in this dissertation.

[5] Here I am drawing on Jane Hill's (1998) conception of *white public space*.

[6] I am thinking with *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (Mamdani 2004) as well as the reverberations of the U.S. War on Terror and its alignment with anti-Somalia sentiment in Kenya (Al-Bulushi 2019)

[7] This question is deeply indebted to the work of Yarimar Bonilla (2015).

[8] I am also indebted to Camille Frazier and Caroline Merrifield for organizing and to my fellow participants who took part in the virtual roundtable discussion for the 2021 meeting of the AAA titled "Neither 'Global' Nor 'Local': Regional Methods in a Time of Climate Crisis."

[9] Drawing on Walcott (2003[1997]) and Laclau (2005), I deploy both B*lackness* and *whiteness* here as floating signifiers that exceed phenotype and shared ethnocultural practice or tradition. I think of both terms as mutually constituted discourses of enunciation that draw from multiple histories and geographies embedded in relations of resistance and domination. The contemporary structures and functions of these relations ironically depend on and exceed contemporary attempts to reconstruct an imagined original sin of encounter those who would be variously blackened or whitened.

[10] In his first book, *Prophesy Deliverance!*, Cornel West (1982) asserted that an understanding of modern racialization which emphasizes the legacies of race science in fact depends on the conceit of scientific knowledge itself, that it has displaced all other epistemologies (namely the religious) and owes its existence to European thought.

[11] Within this constellation, both the city of Kampala particularly and the nation of Uganda more broadly figure as important nodes in this transnational network. The COVID-19 crisis hindered research for this dissertation taking place in Uganda.

[12] In early 2013, Machar announced his intention to run for president as a challenge to the appointed party leader and president Salva Kiir Mayardit. Months later, Machar and his followers were dismissed from the party. Machar's armed retaliation on the president and his followers at the Nyakuron cultural center in Juba ignited the civil war in South Sudan. As the two leaders hail from the two largest ethnic groups in the country (Salva Kiir is Dinka and Riak Machar Nuer) the violence quickly became articulated through ethnic divisions. In particular, the government's ethnicized targeting of Nuer civilians believed to be supporters of Machar has come to be understood in many South Sudanese communities as a delayed retaliation for the 1991 Bor Massacre of Dinka civilians led by Riak Machar. Some of my interlocutors have also claimed that the mass killing was an electoral strategy to reduce the number of potential voters and Machar supporters. After an agreement for a re-unified government was signed in early 2021, Machar was appointed First Vice President.

[13] This understanding of sovereignty draws fro what anthropologist Brenda Chalfin (2008) has described as the "fiction of the supremacy of sovereignty's rational-legal face (519)." Commitments to and desires for sovereignty nevertheless remain relevant and ethnographically intelligible as the subject of everyday life and in relationships between human actors and their material environment (Aretxaga 2003, Navaro-Yashin 2002, 2012).

[14] This term occurs in Marc Perry's (2004) study of Hip-hop in Cuba, a field of study which seems to be wrestling with questions of racial identification that destabilize the presumption of what Blackness is. Within this field, Geoffrey Baker (2011) asks a series of questions relevant for an anthropological project that interrogates the recognizability of Blackness and the spaces it occupies: "Is a black space defined by the presence of dark-skinned people? By the presence of people who self-identify as black? By the circulation of discourses of negritude? By light-skinned people in wider society who may know next to nothing about hip hop but who regard it as *una cosa de negros* (a black thing)? By intellectuals who want to incorporate it into the academic field of race studies? Is the blackness of black space a visible fact or a political aim? Is black something that one ascribes to oneself, or is it something one ascribes to others (whether they like it or not) (Baker 2011, 285)?"

Chapter 1: A Contemporary History of Region Formation

This project as a whole will tread lightly over the terrain of the two wars that led to the partition of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011 and the war *within* South Sudan that has characterized much of its decade of self-determination. It foregrounds the formation and transformation of region since the independence of South Sudan. The goal of this chapter is to provide the principal historical precedents of region-craft. The objective of this contemporary history is to ground the transnational lives of the South Sudanese intelligentsia highlighted in this project as they remake regional assemblages in the aftermath of South Sudan's independence. As region is remade in this moment, region-craft includes both the hopes and disappointments for South Sudan's self-determination and the cross-border activities of its security state.

Much has been written about the violence and destruction of the wars in the now two Sudans. Several western journalistic pieces have covered the seemingly endless rivalry between President Salva Kiir Mayardit and his current First Vice President, Riak Machar. The two men are from the two largest ethnic groups, Dinka and Nuer respectively. The ethnically-charged armed violence between the two and their followers was instigated by Machar's declaration in 2013 of his intention to run for SPLM party chairman and Salva Kiir's subsequent dismissal of Machar from the party leadership. Professional analytical understandings of South Sudan have been informed by journalistic investigations into the brutality of ethnic war (Turse 2016, Martell 2018), evaluations of the influence of multiple diplomatic actors (LeRiche & Arnold 2013, Vertin 2020) and the memoirs of Global North diplomats deeply involved in peace negotiations (Johnson 2011 & 2016, Coghlan 2017). Rather than rehash the history of war or retell the story of the formation and splintering of the primary political party in South Sudan, the SPLM/A, this

dissertation is grounded in three elements of South Sudan's contemporary history which I will discuss in this chapter.[1]

The first historical event is the 2011 referendum vote itself, i.e the form and function of the ballot. This chapter argues that its form rendered impossible any other political formation other than facile unity or partition. I argue that the binary form of the referendum—unity or separation—foreclosed the desires of South Sudanese residents of what is now Sudan (that is, the northern half of the country). The preparation for the referendum vote also had profound consequences for ideas about race, difference, and belonging since only *southerners* were eligible to vote. The question of *who* was southern and how to determine this difference continues to have profound racializing effects which will be discussed at length in Chapter 5. This functional foreclosure helped to give shape to an intelligentsia frustrated with both the new government in Juba and the challenges they have faced as they continue to reside in and circulate through Khartoum. This intelligentsia that spans both Sudan and Kenya envisioned a more complex form of confederation. Their disappointment in the limited options has exacerbated their already existing frustration and has led to various forms of activism and attendant evasion of South Sudanese state surveillance. Their activism, their frustrations, and their strategies to evade surveillance takes shape regionally.

The second event is the emergence of the Red Card Movement in 2019 inspired by the civil uprisings in Sudan against the thirty-year regime of Omar Al-Bashir. The RCM is a South Sudanese youth activist network that traverses South Sudan's borders with Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan. Their activities have attracted the attention of South Sudan's National Security Service (NSS) committed to silencing dissidence at home and abroad. It is also a multi-generational

organization in that they take guidance from dissident South Sudanese intelligentsia in Sudan whose principal moment of politicization was the 2011 referendum vote.

The third moment is the untimely death of Dr. John Garang in 2005 that nearly coincided with the landmark sighing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the SPLM and the federal government in Sudan. In popular understandings of this tragic moment, what often rises to the fore is the heroic character of Dr. John Garang as South Sudan's Pan-Africanist visionary keeper of the national ideology who sits alongside other continental first heads of state such as Kwame Nkrumah or Julius Nyerere. Nationalist ideologies—both revolutionary and conservative—are often conceived as the product of a purely masculine domain, in which men and their ideas confront one another in a homosocial act of political reproduction (Gilroy 1991, Carby 1997). Instead, I will focus on the transnational family that Dr. John Garang left behind, namely his son, Mabior Garang. As a Pan-African freedom fighter, supported principally by the former socialist regime of Ethiopia and by the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro, Dr. John Garang's transnational family also conjured regional journalistic attention that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

All of the interlocutors who appear in these moments of contemporary political history were connected to one another. It was the willingness of one person to vouch for my trustworthiness to another that made my multi-sited ethnography possible. Interlocutors in Khartoum connected me to their comrades, colleagues, and friends in Nairobi. In Nairobi, my interlocutors reflected on the significance of their continued connection to people in Khartoum. All of these interlocutors shared a fear of South Sudan's National Security Service (NSS) and its capacity to surveil and arrest them abroad. It was therefore both their intimate connections *and* their shared criticism of the ruling elites in power in Juba that have rendered them into an

effective regional intelligentsia who share information, guidance, maintain friendships, and evade state security across national borders.

Drawing on these three historical moments, this chapter draws attention to the transnational connections *produced* in the wake of protracted war and the disappointments of political independence. The massive displacement of southern Sudanese communities and families throughout the protracted wars with Sudan has rendered refugee flight nearly synonymous with the transnational geographies through which South Sudanese citizens move. Whether or not they are recognized as refugees or displaced persons, my interlocutors do not permanently reside in South Sudan because of the ongoing instability. The flight of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons has also eclipsed the multiple forms that border-crossing mobility can take. As Goyal (2014) has observed, public understandings of mobility from South Sudan has largely been informed by bestselling novels of escape by minors from forced military conscription or slavery (Bok 2004, Eggers 2007). Many of my interlocutors have sought the protections and support of international refugee status, successfully and unsuccessfully. In one sense, the border-crossing trajectories captured in this history and the chapters to come could be read as the result of individuals who have either failed to acquire or not sought international recognition as refugees. My objective in drawing on these historical moments is to consolidate the recent history of South Sudan and to foreground the forms of regional interconnection that take shape in multiple registers—memoir, political and economic unions, the exchange of information, and the *counterlinearity of liberation*—which will be discussed in the chapters to come.

The Specter of a Third Way

This section will emphasize the form and function of the referendum vote. It will reflect on the options the ballot made available and the options it foreclosed. In catering to the mass majority of South Sudanese voters, the ballot had to be legible to the illiterate. Hand gestures were therefore utilized as a third communicative register, alongside the Arabic and English languages. Multiple registers of communication were therefore used to express the choice between unity and secession. This section argues that the foreclosure of a more complex option that may have not been intelligible through hand gestures, has contributed to the rise of the disappointed and dissident South Sudanese intelligentsia that continues to reside in Khartoum. All of the conversations that appear in this chapter occurred in either Khartoum or Nairobi. For many of them, my interlocutors chose meeting places where our conversations might not be overheard, where they could see who was coming and going, where they already knew or quickly developed a relationship with the doorman or waitstaff. This intimacy was an insurance policy should someone—presumably a member of the national security forces of South Sudan— come searching for them. If we sat in cafes, my interlocutors would often choose seats not immediately visible from the front door. As my interlocutors' assessed passersby or described their own hard decisions about where and with whom they chose to socialize, it felt as though South Sudanese state surveillance took a seat at our table. The production of dissidence was palpable even in the nature and location of our conversations about their political disappointments.

This section will also reflect on voter eligibility and the bureaucratic debris from the process by which the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) determined who was South Sudanese and therefore eligible to vote. This process continues to have profound effects on race-making in Sudan today. For South Sudanese who continue to reside in Khartoum, their ancestry was defined rigidly during the lead up to the referendum and this category of citizenship now determines the availability of dual citizenship within Sudan.

The 2011 partition of South Sudan from Sudan was the immediate result of an IGAD-led referendum vote on unity with or separation from Sudan. The vote was part of the negotiated settlement reached between the former SPLM rebels and the central government in Sudan in 2005. Headquartered in Khartoum with a bureau in Juba, the SSRC administered the vote. The SSRC was an independent *ad hoc* body created under the South Referendum Act of 2009 in accordance with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).[2] There were multiple national and international actors involved in the negotiation of peace, including the infamous *Troika*, a trilateral diplomatic team comprising diplomats from the U.S., the U.K., Norway, Kenyan politicians such as General Lazaro Sumbeiywo, African negotiators from IGAD, as well as leadership from both Sudan's National Congress Party (NCP) and the southern leadership of the SPLM/A (H. Johnson 2011, 43-45).[3] Hilde Johnson, the primary Norwegian diplomat within the *Troika*, described the agreement of 2005 as a "watershed moment," resulting from the equally unexpected and historic meeting in which Dr. John Garang, chairman of the SPLM/A, became the first rebel leader to sit down with the then president of Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir (Johnson 2011, 55; see also Waihenya 2013 & Salomon 2016). Included in this agreement, was the guarantee of self-determination for the South along with a six-year interim period in which the centralized government was to cooperate on more equal footing with the semi-autonomous

government in power in Juba. During this interim period, the task for the Sudanese government was to "make unity attractive" (CPA text). For many southerners, however, this goal was never achieved. There were neither sufficient large scale development projects nor efforts at an interpersonal level to articulate a new relationship between Sudan and what would become South Sudan.

Southerners in Sudan had, since independence, felt like second-class citizens. South Sudanese anthropologist Jok Madut Jok has written urgently about the structure of historical and contemporary slavery in the formerly unified Sudan (2001) that have long informed southern grievances with how they were incorporated into independent Sudan after the 1956 exit of the British. The axis of difference in the now two Sudans has conjoined ideologies of differences linked simultaneously to both race and religion. Southerners have articulated their grievances as the non-Muslim Christian Africans persecuted, enslaved, or neglected by the Arab-identifying Islamic regime in Khartoum. Put as directly as my interlocutors have explained it, southerners have narrated their desire for independence as one grounded in the refusal to be Arabized or Islamized by what they have considered as the ethnocentric and religious civilizing mission of the federal government in Khartoum. The gravity of injustices claimed by southerners has led to emphasis on what seems, in retrospect, an almost predictable outcome for the referendum vote, the overwhelming support for secession and state self-determination.

While much attention has been paid to the massive southern support for self-determination—nearly 99% of eligible voters voted in favor of a new independent state, as well as the demarcation of the North-South border and the distribution of oil resources—the structure of the ballot itself and the management of the voting process has garnered attention primarily from scholarly practitioners who work as independent contractors and analysts. They have drawn

attention to how the SSRC *defined* what it meant to be South Sudanese in order to clarify voter eligibility (Verjee 2010, Marzatico 2011). Eligible voters had to meet several criteria including administrative and personal standards such as being over the age of 17, of sound mind, and officially registered. More importantly, there were multiple criteria developed in response to vague census data, the lack of clarity in the Interim Constitution, and the inutility of *southerner* as an administratively valid category of identity. According to the SSRA, an eligible voter must:

1. Be born to parents both or either of whom belongs to any of the indigenous communities residing in Southern Sudan on or before the 1st of January 1956, or whose ancestry is traceable to one of the ethnic communities in Southern Sudan

Or

2. Be permanently residing without interruption, or whose parents or grandparents are residing permanently, without interruption, in Southern Sudan since the 1st of January 1956.

Marzatico (2011) described the multiple statements and responses issued by the SSRC in its scramble to codify *ethnic* groups and define them in relation to *indigenous* ones (a quality appeared in related documents) and to establish clear criteria for the definition of residency and of measurement for residency "without interruption." The SSRC refused to provide a list of relevant southern ethnic groups to avoid the potentially unpredictable effects of the politicization of ethnicity by conflating it with a process of identity formation that could, and did, become the grounds for citizenship in a new state (Verjee 2010). The SSRC decided that the definition of residence without interruption, however, did not necessarily correspond to any length of time but

rather to the intention of an individual to establish "one's centre of interest" in a particular place (Marzatico 2011, 12). This emphasis on an abstract understanding of where one's residential *interest* lay would come to have profound effects on how the 2011 *Sudanese* citizenship law (enacted alongside partition) would evacuate the possibility of dual citizenship purely on the grounds of paternal heritage in historical Southern Sudan rather than on the active pursuit of South Sudanese citizenship. The implications of this nationality law will be discussed below in Chapter 5.

The referendum was at the core of the 2005 CPA for the leadership of the SPLM/A (H. Johnson 2011, 215). As is the case in scholarly and popular understandings of already materialized or potential partitions in the postcolonial world (Western Sahara, Somaliland, Mali, Cameroon and others), there were fears then of a domino-effect that might lead to the partition of other marginalized parts of Sudan, namely Darfur and South Kordofan. Central to the administration of the referendum was a census. Only *southern* Sudanese people were eligible to vote as had been stipulated in the negotiations between then Sudan foreign minister Ali Osman Taha and former SPLM/A leader Dr. John Garang. Had the entire electoral base of Sudan been eligible, the outcome would surely have been different. The enumeration of eligibility therefore raised difficult questions about identity, residence, and belonging for the many potential South Sudanese citizens throughout Sudan. Given long histories of inter-communal marriage and kinship relations, who would the Sudanese state consider to be *South* Sudanese? Would they be forced to leave upon partition? If not, what would be their future in Sudan? Where would Muslim southerners belong between two states ostensibly divided along religious lines (Salomon 2014)? Many North of the new border traveled to South Sudan to register and to vote. The bureaucratic mechanisms that appeared to identify eligible southern voters did not evaporate

after the vote for partition. Ethno-geographic idea about difference took on tangible bureaucratic reality in addition to the protean ideological understandings of who was southern and where they belonged. The Sudanese Nationality Act enacted the same year of the referendum rendered dual citizenship an impossibility for everyone except those residents in the contested border region of Abyei. Southern Sudanese, aside from those who could claim heritage from Abyei, who were working in Khartoum in various professional capacities and as civil servants, would be dismissed from their positions presumably as an incentive to *return* to a country where they may have spent very little time.

The ballot itself catered to the multi-lingual and illiterate voting constituency throughout rural South Sudan. It expressed the two options, unity or secession, in three modes: the Arabic language, English, and hand gestures. According to the 2002 Machakos protocol, the two options were to "confirm the unity of Sudan" according to the governmental power-sharing protocols of the peace agreement or to "vote for secession" (CPA).[4] Voters expressed their decision by providing their unique thumb print on the ballot to demonstrate their choice, unity or secession. In figure 1, it is clear how the two hand gestures that are presented provide a relatively straightforward interpretation of the two political arrangements at stake. Two clasping hands that seem to reach out from two different individuals represented unity with Sudan, indexing community between different parties. A single hand with fingers outstretched seems to gesture *stop,* providing a simulacra of the platform for South Sudanese to say collectively that they have had enough of unity and that it was time for something new. How might a more complex confederate option have been expressed through hand gestures? The answer to this seemingly impossible task also begs the question of how a more complex political arrangement may have been offered to illiterate South Sudanese voters un-initiated (or uninterested) in the technocratic

measures of referenda votes and diplomatic negotiations. The structure of the ballot therefore effectively reduced the choice to a simple "yes" or "no." The phrase at the bottom "Your Choice — Your Future!" seems at once to be a message of empowerment and foreboding, as if to say: you alone will bear the consequences of your decision. The message seem to communicate that if you choose to leave, you can no longer direct your grievances to the government in Sudan.

In both Nairobi and Khartoum, my interlocutors reflected on a foreclosed third option that might have more closely expressed the desires of those who are now South Sudanese citizens. The specter of the impossible third option of confederation persists in the commonsensical analysis of the separation in Khartoum and in the imagination of many South Sudanese thinkers in Khartoum. It is this disappointed desire for the two states to maintain a unique relationship that has, in part, given shape to the contemporary South Sudanese intelligentsia residing in Sudan. There is a longer history of critical journalism and dissident activism of southerners in Khartoum that also contributes to the shape of the intelligentsia. This will be discussed at length in Chapter 4. Yet, their responses to the referendum vote have largely been eclipsed by the emphasis on the one component of South Sudan's independence that met the expectations of this momentous political development, the overwhelming vote for secession. Their collective disappointment continues to influence the contours of their criticism of the South Sudanese government and what their lives in Sudan could have been.

Figure 1. The South Sudan referendum ballot
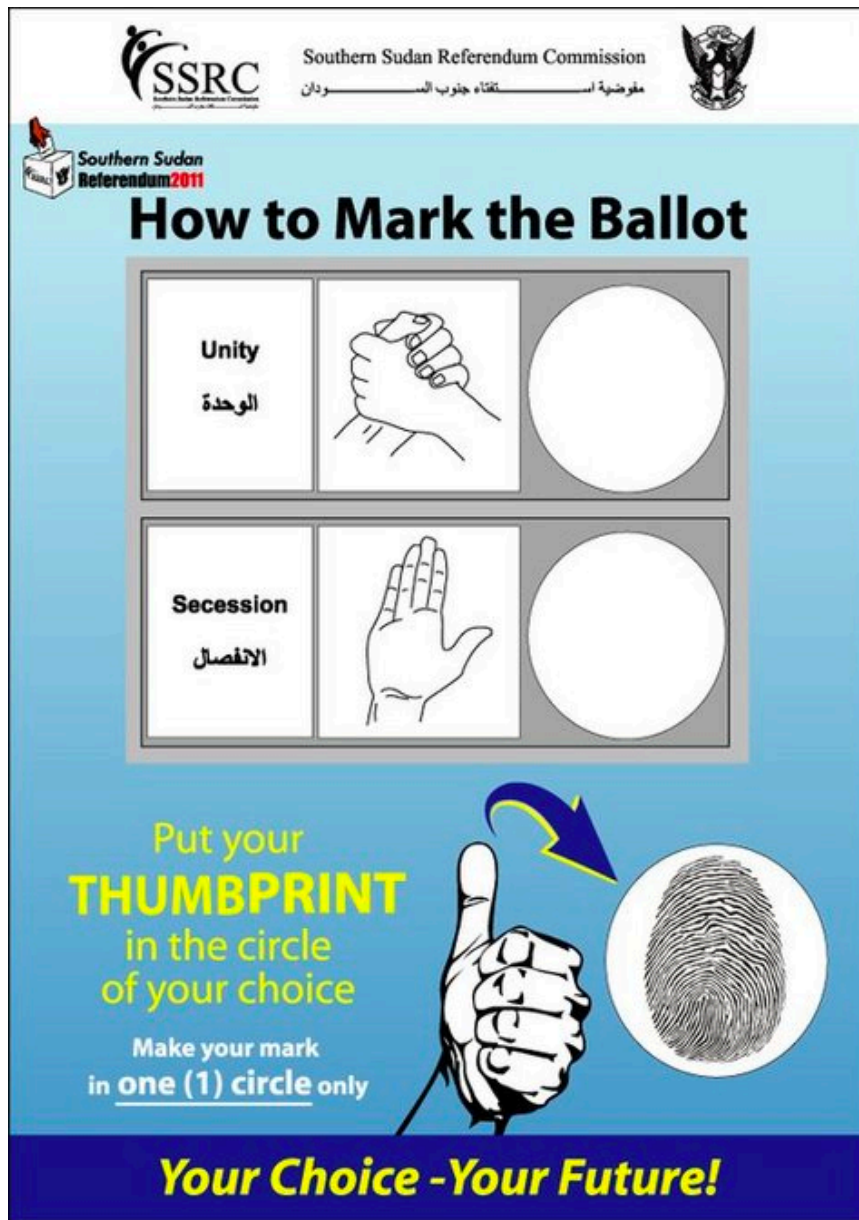
The space in between the two options has produced parallel dissident voices emerging from multiple geographies. On the one hand, there are voices from Khartoum who claim to have not voted at all in an act of participatory refusal. On the other, there are voices from Nairobi who, guided by their elders in Khartoum, organize demonstrations in opposition to the activities of the

government in South Sudan that owes its autonomy to the empty space between the two options. The following represents a snapshot of these voices as they took shape from Khartoum and Nairobi.

Ruth worked as a freelance consultant for local humanitarian NGOs in Khartoum. During periods of unemployment, she is supported by her adult children who are employed as medical and legal professionals in Cairo. She declared confidently, as we sat in Ozone, the primary luxurious expatriate cafe of Khartoum, that neither she nor her family voted in the referendum. She declared that she thought separation was a mistake and that she would have preferred a different form of confederation. Her choice to meet in Ozone was deliberate, as very few South Sudanese people—from any elite group—frequent this particular cafe. Although situated inside of a traffic circle, Ozone is surrounded by bushes that render its patrons invisible from the street. She felt targeted as she described the government's fears of the increased social power of intellectuals from smaller ethnic groups (i.e, neither Dinka nor Nuer) such as the Fertit community to which she belongs. Her opinion on the referendum vote was foundational to her broader dissident position in which she finds herself aligned with Riak Machar and the SPLM-IO. Yet, as a member of the Fertit ethnic group, she claimed that the SPLM in power wants to suppress her and other intellectuals from this community in an effort to disempower them and claim their territory for members of the president's ethnic group.

James confided in me quietly in the halls of Comboni College in downtown Khartoum. He explained that neither he nor his family had voted. James was a professor at Comboni College, a private technical school linked to the historical primary and secondary schools founded by the Comboni Catholic missionaries and historically a refuge for southerners in Khartoum. It was important for him to register to vote but he remembered that "there was a fear

that they [the Sudanese government] were monitoring us. Monitoring who was voting and not voting. We decided as a family not to give in and to avoid this." As if to keep me from questioning his patriotism, he added in a self-assured voice, "I'm proud that my people voted for secession" and yet added solemnly "we cannot and should not abandon Khartoum." This ambivalence was at the heart of the position that cohered this transnational intelligentsia. They were simultaneously in support of self-determination in South Sudan and yet committed to maintaining a relationship to Sudan for cultural, political, and economic purposes. For James it seemed that were was little in the way of a vision for independent governance and how the idea of liberation for the South could survive under the material conditions that have appeared in the aftermath of partition. In the vernacular geopolitics of South Sudanese intellectuals, James would likely be labeled as a *Khartoumer*, or as those who have betrayed the cause of South Sudanese autonomy due to their accommodation to the demands of the former Sudanese government.[5]

Both Ruth and James are from a generation of South Sudanese educated professionals who acquired professional training or terminal degrees in the 1990's during the massive expansion of University education in Sudan. This is a generational quality of many of my interlocutors that will be discussed later. Their perspective on Sudanese political history, after having lived much of their lives under the regime of Omar Al-Bashir, benefits from firsthand experience that far exceeds the referendum vote and extends in the 1990's under the caviling mission of the conservative religious movement that brought Al-Bashir to power. Yet, in both instances, their choice not to vote was a pivotal component in their political positioning vis-a-vis both the government in Sudan and the newly independent government in South Sudan. Their disappointment in the inability to achieve a form of governance that more closely aligned with how they narrate their relationship to Sudan continues to have profound effects on their world-

view. Their emphasis on their refusal to vote pointed to issues fundamental to the form and function of the nation-state itself rather than what any one politician succeeds or fails to accomplish. As my interlocutors in Khartoum narrate their family lives, food preferences, music tastes and the very language they use to articulate their dissidence—as intimately linked to Sudan, they nevertheless find themselves building and maintaining linkages to Nairobi and Kampala through a network of youth activists who were not yet of voting age at the time of the referendum.

The Red Card Movement

This section moves from Khartoum to a neighborhood in Nairobi called Lavington. One significant way that my interlocutors in the section above expressed disappointment across regional borders is through their participation as mentors in a transnational youth network of activists, the RCM network. The dissident voices mentioned above that emerged from within the space of the evacuated third ballot option come to life inter-generationally through their mentorship of the RCM leadership. A meaningful socio-historical precedent for the formation of region takes shape through the residence of the RCM leadership in Nairobi, their commitment to political change in Juba, their connection to elder intelligentsia in Khartoum, their cooperation with Kenyan lawyers, and their own interpretation of what kinds of political activism become possible beyond the territorial borders of South Sudan. In thinking through the activity and ideology of the RCM, this chapter centers the arrest of the movement's leadership in 2019 by Kenyan police in cooperation with South Sudanese state security operating out of their national embassy in Lavington.

The RCM is a youth activist movement that emerged in 2019. Much of their communication and organizing efforts that span Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan occur virtually through multiple social media platforms. The connection of my interlocutors in Khartoum to these youth activists in Nairobi demonstrates transnational regional proportions of their shared political imagination. This connection also demonstrates the bifocal quality of this broader regional constellation that stretches both northward to Sudan and southward to Kenya.

Lavington has historically housed the resident South Sudanese intelligentsia along with South Sudan's pre-independence embassy that has since become an officially recognized entity. This neighborhood is a historically important neighborhood for the South Sudanese intelligentsia and will remain important for the following section on the death of Dr. John Garang. It is from Lavington that an interlocutor articulated an analogous criticism of the referendum vote as what I had heard in Khartoum. Lavington is home to both the dissident voices of youth activists and the foreign representation of the state they militate against. On the one hand, one will see gatherings of large white Toyota Land Cruisers with tinted windows and South Sudanese number plates presumably carrying government officials who have struck silent deals to drive cars unregistered in Kenya. On the other, one will see a demonstration of youth activists protesting outside of the embassy of South Sudan where these Land Cruisers are parked. This neighborhood therefore continues to be important for South Sudanese in Nairobi as both the site of extra-territorial governance (based in the embassy) and dissident critics of the very foundations of the independent government.

In Lavington, as elsewhere in the comparatively affluent areas of Nairobi, cafes and restaurants in appealing malls house the social life of the city's aspirant classes, Kenyan and non-Kenyan alike. Andrew, a high-ranking spokesman of the SPLM-IO, insisted with hushed

indignation that the referendum may have been "free and fair" but it was certainly not "credible or verifiable." As he mocked the technocratic language used by foreign and domestic diplomatic actors to praise the referendum, he also called the results into question. He made eye contact with me as if speaking to me provided a moment in which he could say what he would have liked to say directly to his government. He fired a barrage of rhetorical questions at me: "Can you verify that the number of registered voters was the total number of voters? Was there no rigging or intimidation? How can you be sure? Did we allow a third party to share their views?" Here, Andrew's criticism paralleled his counterparts in Khartoum who were also unsatisfied with how the SSRC had administered the referendum. By articulating his questions through the technical vocabulary of electoral legitimacy, he directed his polemic precisely at the developmental technicism that is at the core of the process that brought into power the independent government of South Sudan. His attention to the problem of voter registration spoke directly to the problems related to the census and the definition of an eligible South Sudanese voter that made the referendum possible.

Frustrated by the brutality of their government, South Sudanese youth in Nairobi were guided ideologically by individuals like Andrew, Ruth and James. They were inspired by the 2018 civil uprisings in Khartoum and, unlike their counterparts in Khartoum, feel secure enough in their immigration status that they are able to organize public demonstrations and protest the activities of their government. The precarious citizenship status of South Sudanese in Khartoum has impeded their willingness to protest in front of their embassy in the Sudanese capital. The contentious legal status of South Sudanese in Khartoum in particular and Sudan in general will be have its own space of reflection in Chapter 5. What is relevant here is that the inability for South Sudanese residents of Khartoum to attain any legitimate legal standing renders public

political activity into a liability that many cannot afford. Yet, as I will show, permanent resident or refugee status in Kenya does not necessarily offer legal protections either.

In July 2019, Kenyan police arrested several leaders of the RCM for demonstrating outside of the South Sudanese embassy in Lavington. The story appeared in local newspapers and named the Kenyan lawyer representing them, Richard. I contacted Richard on Twitter and eventually met him in Nairobi. After several conversations, he agreed to give my contact information to the RCM leadership who he was representing and if they decided to contact me, they would.

One of their principal slogans was "Kiir Must Go." This simple slogan captured their larger criticism of the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, his cabinet and the state leaders loyal to him. One of the leaders of the RCM, Madut, contacted me and became an interlocutor. Madut was a law student in Nairobi and was happy not only to be represented by Richard but also to be mentored in how to legally advocate for a client against his own government. Madut was well aware that the problems of South Sudan will not disappear with the absence of the current president. "If Kiir goes, what will happen to the state?" He asked me rhetorically, referring to the vast leadership of the federal government that would undoubtedly behave as Kiir has, if they were in power. With this question in mind, Madut and his comrades are committed to removing the political ruling class rather than limiting their analysis to a single individual. When I met with Madut, he relayed the story of his arrest in Lavington. Despite he and his compatriots having secured the necessary permissions from the city administration for a lawful public gathering, the Kenyan police arrested the RCM demonstrators on these very grounds. In court, Madut and others faced a host of grave charges that included: illegal residence in Kenya, attempted kidnapping of the South Sudanese ambassador, conspiracy to destroy the

South Sudanese embassy, and engaging in seditious activity meant to overthrow the South Sudanese government. Once the Kenyan magistrate learned of their status as University students, the court quickly awarded bail and dropped all charges except for the charge of unlawful gathering.

Their legal representation in Kenya had been called by Amnesty International who had learned of the arrest of the RCM leadership through their own channels. When I spoke with Richard, he relayed his confusion about the objects of the South Sudanese government. They had failed to produce either witnesses or evidence to support their claims. For the RCM leadership, Richard insisted, this case was no more than a tool of political administration deployed to suppress dissent. Madut insisted that the government of South Sudan wanted the Kenyan government to deport them as it had done previously with other dissidents residing in Kenya. In Madut's estimation, cooperation between the two governments and their security apparatuses was the only explanation for their arrest and court trial.

This moment was a pivotal one for Madut who was already committed to effecting change in South Sudan through his pursuit of a law degree. This instance solidified for him that his disappointment of South Sudanese ruling elites required an analysis of their entanglements with other regional elites in Kenya and elsewhere. Due to the failure of the GoSS to produce evidence of their claims after months of postponements, the court released the RCM leadership under an ordinance which allowed the prosecution to renew their accusation if they presented evidence.

This episode revealed the brutal face of region-craft that is enacted through the National Security State of South Sudan, the surveillant gaze of which exceeds the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. Madut took solace in his analysis that the ruling elites of South Sudan and their

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NSS agents felt wronged when the Kenyan government refused to deport them. He insisted that their ruling elites felt that the Kenyan government owed them a debt. They received *carte blanche* to drive unregistered vehicles and surveil their citizens abroad in return for what Madut described as "their contribution to the Kenyan economy in buying real estate, building hotels, and laundering money." In his estimation, Madut and his comrades were victims of handshake deals between ruling elites invested in the suppression of dissent in the name of national stability. The proportions of this deal were only visible on a regional scale as the Kenyan economy and Nairobi in particular provided the means for South Sudanese ruling elites to lead lavish lifestyles of impunity. Madut's own clarity on this regional relationship was critical to his political position which was constituted by his firsthand experience of the transnational extent of the national security state. There has been much critical journalistic attention, from regional and western writers, on how South Sudanese elite have used the profits of war to invest in real estate and other ventures in Nairobi. Kenyan journalist John Allan Namu's (2018) documentary T*he Profiteers* is a primary example.

Madut described his relationship to a geopolitical space with transnational regional proportions with an analogy. He described himself and his comrades as analogue to young chickens that cannot or are afraid to "make noise" in front of the rooster. Instead, they find somewhere, out of sight, to develop their voice. As youth activists, Madut and others feel that their displacement in Kenya was crucial to the development of their political practice. Wearing both the beaded bracelets of the South Sudanese and Kenyan flag on his wrists, residing in Kenya was a genre of exile that was an element of the broader geography in which his hopefulness for change took place.

The Death of John Garang

The Lavington neighborhood of Nairobi is also central to the family of Dr. John Garang and it is where I first met his eldest son, Mabior. Lavington had operated as the headquarters for Dr. John and his comrades during their rebellion against the government in Khartoum. It remains a site of homecoming for the family he left behind. Along with Ruth, James, and Andrew mentioned above, Mabior is also intimately connected with the leadership of the RCM. It was with their recommendation along with that of another interlocutor discussed below, Sana, that Mabior agreed to meet with me. This section attends to the transnational life of Mabior along with his and his family's emplacement in Kenya as products of the life and death of his father. Through following Mabior's experience of travel and life in Kenya alongside his anxieties towards transnational government surveillance, this section attends to how the death of Dr. John Garang was not only a pivotal moment in South Sudanese political imagination but also been a site for how region has been remade through the intimate relationships of home and family.

The unexpected death of Dr. John Garang in a 2005 helicopter crash was a significant moment in shaping political imagination in South Sudan. The figure of Dr. Garang has become synonymous with the right of southerners to self-determination. At the time of his death, only months after signing the 2005 CPA protocol, he had been sworn in as the first Vice President of Sudan. His appointment to this position was symbolic of how a new Sudan might be defined by a broader sociopolitical identity not rigidly defined as Muslim or Arab. The narrative of his death and its aftermath has been the primary platform through which public discourse has deployed Biblical imagery to make sense of the brutal disappointments that have characterized South Sudan's independent history. As with the loss of many independence leaders in Africa, his death could only fit into the narrative of South Sudanese self-determination as the inevitable fate of a

Moses-like figure who was never destined to accompany his people to enjoy the promises of liberation. Instead it would be his disciple, Salva Kiir, who was transmuted into the figure of Joshua and therefore destined to lead the march into the future. The death of Dr. Garang was marked by intense protests by southern Sudanese in Khartoum, Juba, and elsewhere throughout the region. His posthumous image has become the source of nostalgia for a united Sudan that *could have been* and for the movement for South Sudanese autonomy to have been an exemplary African revolution (Akol 2018). The reflections of high-profile political thinkers like Lam Akol embed the idealized image of the self-sufficient masculine military revolutionary who inspired so many. Akol reflects that it was John Garang and the SPLA's political organization of southerners to "wage a revolutionary armed struggle" that motivated him to join their ranks (Akol 2018, 21).

This image of John Garang, however, elides the intimate family relations that continue to come to bear on politics in South Sudan. Two close relatives of Garang remain at the forefront of shaping the new nation. The first, his wife, Rebecca Garang, has served as one of the Vice Presidents of South Sudan since the 2020 formation of the Unity government. The second, who I spent considerable time with in Nairobi is his eldest son, Mabior Garang. Mabior's self-presentation is itself consonant with a gendered tension to be discussed in the next chapter between the iconic idealized masculine image and its living, relational source material (Stephens 2014). He often dresses in typically U.S. Black American urban style, drawing particularly from an early decades of hip-hop in the 1990s—a matching sweatsuit, crowned with a matching fitted baseball cap atop a complementarily colored durag protecting his hair underneath. He wrestles with how this image has garnered popular criticism from the South Sudanese ruling elite who feel that this image is unbecoming of the son of South Sudan's national hero. He has been blamed by Members of Parliament and others in government for the *niggerization* of the youth.

In his rendition of the criticism that he has received, the peers of his father ask how could the son of African political nobility dress in the styles that even, in the U.S., index poverty and lacking education? His sense of self is derived from the transnational childhood he had as the son of a contemporary African revolutionary, a journey that started in Cuba, moved to Washington D.C. and ended in Nairobi.[6] For him, Kenya has become like a home. "It has a beautiful history" he says, "of resistance and growth. It offers the best chances for life of any of its regional neighbors." For Mabior, Nairobi in particular and Kenya generally were integral elements of a broader regional vision in which he and others reflected on the future of South Sudan. As such, Kenya was a model for political and economic development, a vision of one potential future if political leadership in South Sudan made the right decisions. Kenya has also been the birthplace of Mabior's children, home to his life-long friends and favorite late-night hang out spots, and the headquarters of his agricultural campaigns for the transformation of South Sudanese society.

When we met for the first time, he was walking with a cane, wincing in pain as he stepped down from his vehicle. He had nearly lost his vision and struggled to read anything without assistance from a member of his entourage or through a thick pair of glasses. Over the course of my time with Mabior, his health gradually improved. The state of his vision and his ability to walk were important elements of our conversation. He believed that his ailments were the result of being targeted by the same ruling elites who he believed had targeted his father. For him, as for many others, Dr. John Garang's death was no accident. Ethnographic attention to Mabior therefore helps to recover the relational qualities of the controversy surrounding Dr. John Garang's death. Nearly all of my interlocutors throughout the region believe that Yoweri Museveni, the long-time president of Uganda, orchestrated the helicopter crash that killed South Sudan's national hero. As the rumor goes, a topic that I will return to in Chapter 4, Museveni

considered John Garang his only intellectual rival in the region. The two men overlapped at Dar es Salaam University around 1968 and many believe, erroneously, that this was the start of a friendship that turned into competition over time. Mabior, however, insisted vehemently that Museveni did not play a role in his father's death. His argument is not based in erudite geopolitical knowledge but because Museveni had been a long-time intimate family friend, a man who helped to pay the school fees for Mabior and his siblings after their father's passing. In this instance, family and friendship became important sites at which regional relationships were forged in the wake of Dr. John Garang's death.

Yet, as with the RCM, ethnographic attention to Mabior also reveals the more brutal face of region-craft. During a trip to Addis Ababa to attend an IGAD conference, he was alerted that his name was on a government blacklist. He decided to leave Addis immediately and seek refuge in Tanzania where his health quickly deteriorated. The doctors he visited could not explain why he suddenly was unable to see or walk. As he relayed the story to me, he shared that after weeks of inconclusive tests, a doctor finally said that "we can never rule out the possibility of poison." When he was no longer bed-ridden, he decided to return home to Kenya but only entered the country after acquiring assurance from current Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta that he could enter Kenya safely and remain safe in country. Mabior believed that the attention he garnered from his political activities had rendered him a target of NSS agents deployed by the enemies of his father.

He had served as the former Minister of Water Affairs and Irrigation in 2016 and later briefly as Deputy Minister of the Interior in 2020. After leaving this position, he chose to leave the government entirely, to leave the ruling SPLM/A party and to join Riak Machar and the SPLM-IO. Mabior is a member of the Dinka ethnic community and was particularly sensitive to

how he believed the ruling Dinka elite were dangerously politicizing ethnicity. Mabior explained the decision to join the SPLM-IO as one that afforded him a broad-based and organized platform from which to articulate a critique of the government. What I want to emphasize with this episode is the historical significance of John Garang's death in 2005, not simply as an important date in South Sudan's political history but as an index of broader regional formations that have emerged in its wake.

For Mabior, the death of his father includes the care work of Yoweri Museveni, regional president who contributed to the family's ability to pay the school fees for his siblings. His political career led him to Cuba, through the U.S. and finally to Kenya where his eldest son envisioned an alternative future for South Sudan modeled after what, to him, is a comparatively prosperous nation. John Garang's death has also been an element in a broader political context in which his son believes he has been the target of transnational state violence that stretched from Juba to Addis Ababa and forced him to flee to Tanzania and land, once again, at home in Kenya. The political career of this son has also led him to opposition to the government Dr. Garang left behind and to act as a mentor to the youth activists of the RCM. Dr. John Garang's death is therefore historically significant for this project because it has catalyzed a contemporary political history with regional proportions.

In addition to Mabior, there are many political thinkers from Dr. John Garang's generation who not only share intimate memories of friendship with Dr. Garang but also have first-hand memories of difficult years such as 1971 when Gaafar Nimeiri, then prime minster of Sudan, ordered the execution of members of the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) for their role in a coup attempt on his regime. A member of the SCP himself, Peter Nyaba (2019) cites the executions of communists in 1972 as a turning point in southern political discourse that

foreclosed the space for democratic and revolutionary commitments. When I met Nyaba in a mall cafe in Lavington, he was briefly in Nairobi for invasive medical care that he could not receive in Juba. Although, he did not care for Nairobi, nor for learning KiSwahili, he had decided to use the opportunity to visit his immediate family who have established families and professional careers there. For him, the transnational violence of NSS is a function of political elites in government who have failed to build democratic institutions. Nyaba was appointed Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2005 in the interim semi-autonomous government before the referendum in 2011. When South Sudan seceded, he was again appointed Minister of Higher Education. He was dismissed from office in 2013, following the violence against supporters of Riak Machar. Nyaba was arrested in Juba and put under house arrest for 6 months. He escaped by flying from Rumbek, a town in South Sudan, to Nairobi and eventually joined Riak in his opposition party until as he put it, he "found that [Riak] too (like Salva) treats political struggle like a personal project." When I asked him how he saw himself in relation to the political elites he castigates he described himself as a member of an intelligentsia in conflict with the political elite in government.[7] As with many prominent intelligentsia of his generation, the image of Peter Nyaba precedes the man, his health, and his family. Yet, attention to these elements demonstrates the regionally transnational proportions of his political trajectory and his personal ties to geographies that exceed the borders of the nation-state.

Summmary

This chapter has offered a contemporary political history. It has shown how transnational lives, professional careers, and family structures came to have regional proportions. It has drawn historical and ethnographic attention to the 2011 referendum vote, the 2019 emergence and

targeting of the RCM youth activists, and the 2005 death of Dr. John Garang. In doing so, this chapter has emphasized the conditions under which region-craft takes place. These three events provide a lens to understand region-craft as both a hopeful and imaginative geography in which people reflect on alternative political futures and as a terrorizing effect of a national security apparatus based in Juba that exceeds the territorial borders of the nation-state. The history outlined here is itself an alternative to the normative political histories that seek the root causes of the successive civil wars, the causes of factionalism within the SPLM/A, or the complex diplomatic negotiations that ultimately led to the 2005 CPA and the referendum vote six years later. This contemporary history also serves as an introduction to South Sudan's National Security Service through an exploration of its politicizing effects through the fears and anxieties it induces in a regional intelligentsia that coheres around opposition to its activities and the efforts of the government in Juba to suppress dissent.

This chapter has also drawn attention to the regional elements of these three events that are often narrated in popular understandings as relevant primarily to political apparatuses and decision-making within the borders of what is now South Sudan. This chapter has shown how criticism of the referendum vote has taken shape across borders, congealing a regional network of ambivalence and dissent. It highlighted how South Sudanese political thinkers throughout the region express their ambivalence towards the outcome of the referendum. This network is multi-generational and those who continue to maintain criticism of how the SSRC administered the referendum and defined what it means to be South Sudanese now help to mentor a younger generation who foment public demonstrations against the newly independent government. The surveillance of these youth activists sheds light on the transnational proportions of the cooperation of South Sudan's security apparatus with its regional counterparts. As a significant

event of contemporary political history, the determination of voter eligibility will continue to have profound effects on understandings of difference and the contours of the two national communities transformed in the aftermath of the vote. These racializing effects will be explored in Chapter 5.

This chapter has also highlighted the components of the disappointment that has helped to shape a network of South Sudanese intelligentsia that populate the following chapters. Hushed and heated conversations about how one engaged with the referendum vote became one conduit through which old anxiety was transformed. Frustrations that had formerly been directed at the government in Sudan now came to be directed at the newly independent government of South Sudan. Their disappointment is nevertheless productive of intense reflection, debate, and political action that holds onto the original hopes for an independent South Sudan emerging from decades of war and racialized underdevelopment. The disappointment shared by my interlocutors has also been an important point of connection for how I have engaged their narratives of exile and political engagement from abroad as I participated in discussions of how political independence did not provide the liberation that was expected.

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[1] The SPLM/A emerged in 1983 after the government in Sudan, under the leadership of Gaffer Nimeiry, abandoned a peace agreement it had signed with the SPLM's ideological predecessor in southern Sudan, the Anyanya movement led by Joseph Lagu. The SPLM became the primary voice of the grievances of southerners and other marginalized communities in Sudan who castigated the government in Sudan for its underdevelopment of the peripheral areas and the use of or complicity in ethnic violence as a strategy of political administration. Since 1991, the SPLM has suffered from successive moments of splintering often articulated as ethnic antagonism and appearing as antagonism between the party's leading men and the factions loyal to them.

[2] Within CPA, the Machakos protocol included a stipulation for a referendum.

[3] Critics of secession in postcolonial Africa in particular and in Sudan specifically point to the role of the U.S. government and the U.S. evangelical movement during the presidency of George W. Bush in supporting secessionism as a Neo-colonial divide-and-rule strategy. A more specific and robust understanding of why the story of South Sudan was so alluring to U.S. politicians is the projection onto other geographies of its own triumphalist story of flight from religio-political persecution. Mamdani makes this claim to understand the allure of both Israel and Liberia to the U.S. political establishment. While the South Sudanese SPLM fighters were not settlers, there is nevertheless a strong correlation with the idea that they were representatives of a more enlightened and inclusive christian-cum-secular political community under the heel of an intransigent and conservative Islamic government.

[4] Machakos protocol was the agreement that led to the 2005 CPA

[5] Kindersley (2016) offers a somewhat alternative definition of this term "accused of being uneducated, over-serious, and snobbish by people who lived in eastern Africa during the wars (p. 245)." In my research, the term signified the stereotype developed by people who had spent considerable time in East Africa during the wars for people who were aloof, overly-intellectual and snobbish because of their degrees in social science and humanities rather than the professional degrees, in law or medicine, that have drawn people to Nairobi.

[6] They were welcomed in Cuba as state guests and left after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Mabior is still able to converse comfortably in Cuban Spanish. Garang, unlike so many other African independence leaders before his time, refused military aid from Cuba. This perhaps contributes to why this relationship is not common knowledge. It was in Washington D.C. where Mabior was first exposed to the intellectual and creative currents of Black politics. He proudly claims to be a product of the generation of so-called *conscious* rap from that era.

[7] He shares the same observation in his 2019 analysis of elite political power in South Sudan.

Chapter 2: The Gender of Memoir and the Transnational Masculine

This chapter provides a response to the question posed in the introduction: why are these transnational worlds so often built by men? A point of departure for the discussion of this question in the context of South Sudanese political thinkers is that the nation's most notable political and intellectual leader, the late Dr. John Garang, left his erudite analysis behind only in the form of speeches, as is the case with the pantheon of other analogous first male heads of state in the postcolonial African world. His speeches have been collected into two edited volumes. The most well-known one of which is called *John Garang Speaks*. The other is titled, *The Genius of Dr. John Garang*, edited by a well-known South Sudanese blogger, PaanLuel Wel. These two titles suggestive of Garang's powerful charisma and intellect as well as the seeming unanimous popular insistence on referring to Dr. John Garang as "Doctor John," demonstrate what Michelle Ann Stephens (2014) has called the *iconic image* of the autonomous, self-sufficient, hardened Black masculinity. Stephens highlights the work of these images as they are so often performed by Black male artists throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. I argue that this process is neither limited to the domain of musical performance nor to the western hemisphere, and is as relevant for how the icon of the African male first Head of State often eclipses what Stephens (2014) calls the *live act*, or the relational and communal qualities that undergird the power of the image. The edited volumes listed above are characteristic of a genre of political writing by other notable South Sudanese men who seek to offer their analysis of the recent past and offer an explanation for the disappointing conditions of the present. This genre includes Francis Deng's *Invisible Bridge*, Lam Akol's *SPLM/A: Inside an African Revolution*, Joseph Lagu's *Sudan:*

Odyssey through a State, Stephen Wöndu's *From Bush to Bush*, and, most recently, Bona Malwal's *No Future without the Past*. These texts seem to represent the idealized image of the African political intellectual whose embodied political authority appears to emanate from their masculine autonomy, often represented, in the cases of these memoirs, by cover art depicting them alone at work at a desk or gazing contemplatively into a distant horizon. Yet, if these texts are read together and read ethnographically, as I argue they should be, one can begin to take account of the relational quality of these reflections and what one might learn by evacuating the image of self-sufficient manhood, hardened by anti-colonial war and the struggle for self-determination. The chapter therefore unpacks how transnational attachments and geopolitical thinking takes shape through intimate relationships, at an interpersonal level, and through the vulnerabilities that break through when one pays attention to the relationships left out of the image (Brickell 2012).

Stephens' work has helped me to ask what is revealed when one peels away the hardened layers of the masculine soldier-intellectual who is legible in the discourses of sovereignty, freedom, and self-determination (drawing from Stephens 2014). In this chapter, I argue that what comes into view through the lens of interpersonal relationships are transnational regional attachments and Christian spirituality as a significant discursive tool to make sense of political change and, at times, a vehicle for those regional imaginations. I paused at the title of Dr. John Garang's edited speeches because it has reverberated through time, his son, and as such, it is a powerful conduit to begin recuperating the relational dimensions of his *iconic image*. Dr. John Garang's son, Mabior, mentioned in the previous chapter has created a blog for his political vision, *Mabior Garang Speaks*. At face value, this seems to simply be an echo of the memorialization of his father and a reproduction of what Stephens (2014) calls *phallic discourse,*

the discourse that produces and reproduces the logic of the hyper-masculine iconic image. Yet, Mabior often has to wrestle with his status as the son of Dr. John Garang and a leader in the Dinka community as he has decided to criticize the sitting government and to build relationships with its political and ethnic opposition, namely Riak Machar and the Nuer-associated SPLM-IO. Mabior struggled with the decision to forge a relationship like this one, between two powerful icons, that might cause or exacerbate tribal animosity. For Mabior, the relationship he built with Riak Machar was a powerful element in his vision of a South Sudan in which tribal communities no longer represent opposing political camps. He also maintained his right to withdraw consent to that relationship when Riak Machar no longer expressed a vision for peace and reform with which Mabior aligned. What follows in this chapter is an analysis of memoir and reflective texts that amplifies the vulnerability and relationality of the *live act* often muffled by the power of the iconic image.

Region as Home

In Khartoum, when I asked Abu Obeida, a Muslim South Sudanese professor born in Juba, where he was from he laughingly responded "this is my country." The creation of the new state had not eliminated his capacity to feel at home in Sudan or in Khartoum. His feeling of belonging exceeded the new political boundaries that had been just recently redrawn. He, and many other South Sudanese who worked or studied in Khartoum, reminded me that Bahri University in Khartoum, where Abu Obeida taught, was formerly the University of Juba and some still insist on referring to it as such. The university of Juba was relocated to Khartoum from 1988 to 2010 due to the instabilities of the second civil war. Upon the secession of South Sudan, the Khartoum campus of the University of Juba became the University of Bahri, named after the

northernmost city comprising the greater Khartoum area. The insistence on continuing to refer to this institution as the University of Juba was therefore a political position, one that demanded, at least rhetorically, a continued connection between the new two Sudans.

A material and sometimes painful nostalgia haunted his daydreams about the Sudan of the past, "we had it better than the Nubians in Egypt, at least you could find southerners in northern government positions. Egypt acts as though Nubians…do not exist."[1] *Nubian* is a multivalent term. Abu Obeida drew a comparison between South Sudanese and Nubians in a cafe in one of Khartoum's two large malls. He drew these two communities into one frame to emphasize the parallels between South Sudanese and other marginalized groups elsewhere in northern Africa who are also relegated to geographic and economic peripheries. In both cases, their peripheral status is contingent on their their inability, or refusal, to be interpellated as Arab. In this instance, Abu Obeida contrasted the invisibility of the Nubians as they struggle for recognition and rights in Upper Egypt since tens of thousands were displaced in 1963-4, submerged by the new flood patterns of the Nile after the filling of the Aswan Dam. Abu Obeida referenced the Nubians without explanation, assuming that I could (or should be able to) see the parallels between *Nubians* in Upper Egypt and South Sudanese in Sudan. Both communities had been racialized as Black and, due to their insufficient or unfinished Arabization, excluded from the collective imagination of the national community. Yet, despite the pain that this reference conjured, both the knowledge of this history and the clarity with which Abu Obeida saw the analogy, anchored his sense of belonging. Abu Obeida maintained that with family in Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan, "the entire Nile Valley is my home." Having completed post-graduate work in Cairo and Khartoum as a young adult, when fighting erupted in South Sudan a few years after his return post-independence, the route back to Khartoum was already

well-trodden. As he described leaving Juba in 2016 in the midst of the second round of hostilities, Abu Obeida's mind seemed to wander off with his eyes to a distant point over my shoulder as if there was a specific memory appearing in front of him. "Life became impossible there," he said with a heavy sigh. Disappointment with life in Juba has taken shape in many ways including the maintenance of border-crossing lives that provided both distance and proximity as my interlocutors navigated their relationship to the new state.

The massive displacement of southern Sudanese communities and families throughout the protracted wars with Sudan has rendered the category of refugee nearly synonymous with the mobility and the transnational geographies through which South Sudanese citizens move. It seems that one can hardly mention *South Sudan* in an academic context without the assumption that one's focus is on refugee flight.   Over 2 million South Sudanese refugees live outside of the political borders of South Sudan, the vast majority of whom reside in (in descending order of magnitude) Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, the DRC, and Kenya (UNCHR data). Bearing this in mind, it is not unreasonable that the humanitarian perspective has dominated thinking on South Sudan.

This chapter takes the ethnographic vignette offered above as a metonym for the intimate and personal currents at work in the formation of region. The first goal of this chapter is to take seriously how imaginations like Abu Obeida's of an expansive regional geography as "home" took shape because of the daily challenges that have emerged in the aftermath of war and independence. This chapter accomplishes this by centering stories analogue to Abu Obeida's that appear in the memoirs and reflective texts of South Sudanese political thinkers. This chapter reads these texts as sources of ethnographic data which demonstrate the deeply personal nature of transnational imaginings. A second, related goal in this chapter is an analysis of memoir to deconstruct the form and function of the idealized masculinity of   South Sudanese political

leaders. Following the discussion initiated in the previous chapter's discussion of the death of Dr. John Garang, this chapter thinks with Michelle Ann Stephens (2014) to recuperate the relational quality of male political thinkers who *appear* to exist in a vacuum as they reflect on South Sudan's past, present, and future. It builds on Stephens project to construct an *anti-Great Men* theory that emphasizes the relational and consensual voice of geopolitical meaning-making so often eclipsed by what Stephens (2014) has called, *phallic discourse*. In this context, the phallic discourse of South Sudanese revolutionary men is constructed by stories of self-sufficient, masculine, heroic soldiers simultaneously mastering rebel life in the bush and global diplomatic complexities in international arenas. This chapter reads several of these reflective texts together to piece together the communal context in which they were written, in dialogue with one another and with broader audiences. In tracing the ideology that undergirds these texts, this chapter accomplishes a third goal, to emphasize the centrality of Christianity and the Hebrew Bible as a source of political technology to make sense of and engage profound social change in and through South Sudan (Tounsel 2020). Metaphors and stories from the Hebrew Bible in particular have provided meaningful vocabulary not only for the intra-regional diplomatic negotiations that managed the partition but also for the decades that led up to partition and the years that followed. My interlocutors' understandings of difference, at times, refracted through racial idea. Yet, what they often reminded me was the principal antagonism that governed their former lives as Sudanese were hegemonic ideas about religion and religious difference. They narrated their experience of domination as Christians under a Muslim government who now seek refuge in a secular East African political space.

I turned to memoirs in my research because of the dearth of political ethnographies on contemporary Sudan and South Sudan. There is significantly more anthropological scholarship

on the now two Sudans in the European and British academy. The scarcity of U.S.-based anthropology is the result of a structural and political problem. Long-term ethnographic analysis was difficult and often impossible during the decades of the tense relationship between the U.S. and Sudan after the rise of Omar Al-Bashir in 1989 and the first Islamist regime in the contemporary world of Sunni Islam. Ethnographies of Sudan published in the U.S. since the mid-1990s have largely been written by people with Sudanese nationality or otherwise intimately connected to someone with it. Memoirs of political leaders thus became a partial fix to the lack of ethnographic material to draw from that could both thicken my ethnographic practice, by, for example, providing the vocabulary for more detailed interview questions or for historical knowledge that signaled to my interlocutors the depth of my investment in their intellectual community. The reading of memoirs has also contributed to the writing process in helping to pay ethnographic attention to the deeply intimate relationships and moments at the heart of how people narrate and reflect on broader transnational political change.

This chapter therefore traces the interlinking fields of memoir, masculinity, and religion. In linking these three themes, this chapter argues that regional formation does not simply happen at the level of diplomatic negotiations between ruling elites and, when and if it does, those elites must also be understood as constituted by the emotional depth of their own intimate relationships and personal journeys. As such, this chapter is a contribution to the field of feminist geopolitics, the branch of critical geopolitics which seeks to address the interconnections between multiple scales of power, resistance, and visions of the political future (Massaro and Williams, 2013).

Transnational Faith

This section contextualizes the significance of Christianity in the political imagination of South Sudan broadly because Christianity appears as a powerful political technology in the analysis of memoir in the following section. Religion is often relegated to its own parochial silo of social studies, leaving readers of anthropological studies without explicit attention to religion to presume that religion is as unimportant in the lives of our interlocutors as it may be for the lives of the Global North anthropologists themselves. Prevailing studies of racial difference often present an evolutionary teleology of ideological differentiation in which religious difference precedes the understandings of self and Other inaugurated by scientific racism. Yet, for my interlocutors, and, arguably, much of the globe, religion prevails as a powerful epistemology of community and difference.

To help make sense of the powerful valence of Christianity in the reflective texts of South Sudanese writers, I draw from Christopher Tounsel's (2021) work which has provided a history and analysis of the centrality of Christianity and the Bible to political imagination in South Sudan. Tounsel demonstrates how Biblical scripture and Christian theology became crucial source material for the *political technologies* that shaped the ideological superstructure of independent South Sudan.

The event that has become the source for the founding myth of the southern Sudanese campaign for self-determination is the mutiny of Southern Sudanese soldiers from the Sudanese army on August 18th 1955. The political movement that emerged at this time was known as *Anyanya* and, as the first civil war crystallized in the beginning of the 1960s, came to include contemporary South Sudanese political who were in their teenage years at the time. 65 years later on August 18th 2020, I asked my interlocutors in Khartoum why there was so much more energy

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shaping the celebration of this day in contrast to July 9th, South Sudan's independence day. One of the most striking responses was that for them, July 9th was like Christmas, an important day in the Christian calendar but August 18th was like Easter, a day to celebrate the event which offered proof of the spirit. The spirit that energized the original mutineers and which continued to guide my interlocutors today. While attending to the reality that so many South Sudanese thinkers have pointed out, that unitary political consciousness in South Sudan is not necessarily an endemic phenomenon, Tounsel traces the genealogy of what he calls a "liberatory, nationalist Christian thought" which was aimed at "non-Christian co-citizens (Tounsel 2021, 4)." In this way, Christianity, even if one understands it cynically as a strategic tool in the hands of the ruling elite, produces a prismatic lens through which one articulates social and political challenges and how one might overcome them.

Christianity is an indispensable ethnographic threshold through which one might analyze or participate in debates about political formations in South Sudan and South Sudanese communities throughout the region. Christianity is significant because it operates as a commonsensical substratum, which provides a source of vocabulary to reflect on a range of social and political phenomena affecting South Sudanese communities. In Juba, for example, the wave of Prosperity Gospel sweeping over contemporary Africa has taken deep root in Pentecostal and Anglican churches such that everyday understandings of success or failure are often mediated through the efficacy of prayer, often in the form of ecstatic speaking-in-tongues. Pentecostal churches have become sites where the bodily movement and sound of prayer is a conduit for both potential financial gain as "God's blessing" and for training a new set of behavioral norms suited for the expectations of modern urban life rather than the unrefined conduct of village and rural life.

In South Sudan and in contemporary Africa more broadly, the practice of Pentecostalism has allowed subjects to reconcile ambivalent stances towards modernity and tradition (Meyer 1998, Marshall 2009). The Pentecostal aversion to the reverence of the past, Meyer claims, derives from the notion that the "past" is an impediment to a modern subjectivity in which the individual is in full control of oneself in the present (1998, 339). Pastors in Juba admonish members of their congregation for a number of behaviors they deem unfitting of a modern urban subject: snapping one's fingers at an acquaintance to get their attention rather than asking their name, spitting and urinating in public, or blowing one's nose without a tissue. The church therefore becomes a powerful training ground on which South Sudan's new, modern behaviors will take shape and the sites at which the old uncivilized behaviors will be washed away.

This vision of conversion also takes on regional proportions through the churches themselves. Christ Embassy Church in particular expands transnationally on multiple scales. The Church imports leadership from Uganda who understand a significant element of their mission to show the light of civilization to their otherwise blind South Sudanese congregation. They also have divided their transnational ministry throughout Africa into multiple regional zones. South Sudan is part of East Africa Virtual Zone 3, the membership of which corresponds with the membership of other transnational institutions such as the East African Community to be discussed in Chapter 3. While these geographical zones facilitate fund-raising for various churches, they also provide the platform to imagine connective ligaments across a shared cultural and spiritual space with seemingly limitless possibilities for the future. Members of that same congregation will memorialize the late Dr. John Garang as the Biblical Moses who led them out of Pharoah's bondage and toward the promised land but was not able to partake in it alongside them.[2] Still others will regret their past association of Dr. John's protégé, President Salva Kiir

Mayardit, with the Biblical Joshua who took over after Moses. For many, instead of the utopian promised land, President Kiir has led the country further into violence and instability.

Ecstatic prayer, interpretations of Biblical texts, or Churches themselves can become sites at which people reflect on the events of the recent past, on behaviors associated with rural life, and on possibilities of a future in and led by East Africa—its political leaders and spiritual and cultural space. The texts and sites of Christianity are therefore elements in a complex discourse and practice. As Christianity provides the vocabulary to make sense of political genealogy and history, the often unarticulated subtext is that the embrace of Christianity is an expression of the rejection of the version of Islam imposed on South Sudanese by the government in Khartoum. Christian ideals and principles can therefore provide healing for the trauma of the unfinished religious civilizing mission of Sudan's government. In the eyes of regular church-goers, Christianity can render the parochial villagers and undisciplined male youth returning from militarized lives as rebels in the bush into proper citizens with broad cosmopolitan sensibilities tethered morally to their connection to the Church. Religion therefore provides the means to reckon with the (traditional, rural, and political) past and the cosmopolitan future by providing effective ways to address the potential gap between one's aspirations and one's circumstances (Meyer 1998, 340).

The 2011 referendum for the self-determination of South Sudan was undoubtedly the subject of prayer for many. Although the referendum was the centerpiece of the CPA signed in Naivasha, Kenya in 2005, the hope attached to it exceeded the realm of technocracy and extended into the domain of spiritual destiny. In the aftermath of the vote for independence, technocratic expertise (or lack thereof) has been understood as a significant driver of the successful implementation of the provisions of the CPA. The lack of spiritual discourse in

making sense of the disappointment of independence is perhaps why for so many, political independence has felt like an insufficient liberation. While the narrative of this independence movement is often articulated by the Global North within familiar binaries, between Christians and Muslims or between Black Africans and Arabs, the racial consciousness on the ground in Juba and elsewhere in Sudan's peripheries has always been more complex.[3] In the absence of a racial consciousness, there has long been a religious and Christian consciousness at the heart of the desire for self-determination.

Memoir as Archive

This section provides and ethnographic reading of several memoirs and reflective texts written by South Sudanese writers. I draw from Yogita Goyal's (2014) analysis of South Sudanese narratives of escape from contemporary slavery to help make sense of this genre of memoir writing. Goyal provides interrogation of how the modern slave narrative and the child soldier novel as literary genres have come to mediate the role of slavery in U.S.-based understandings of contemporary violence and *atrocity* in Africa. Goyal highlights a crucial segment of literature emanating from the now two Sudans as she focuses on two texts, Francis Bok's (2003) memoir, *Escape from Slavery* and Dave Eggers' (2006) novel, *What is the What*. Goyal uses these two texts as a foil to both reanimate Binyavanga Wainaina's (2005) satirical guide to analysis of African literature "How to Write about Africa," and also to push our thinking about race, Blackness, transnationalism, narratives of human rights and how the specter of Trans-Atlantic slavery gets used and misused by contemporary imaginations of atrocity. Goyal reads these two texts through the antebellum slave narratives from which, she argues, the texts borrow. Goyal also utilizes Mahmood Mamdani's (2009) work on the writing of race into Sudanese

history and the misguided racial politics of the Save Darfur movement to render the central antagonism between *African* and *Arab* identities as an exaggerated epiphenomenon which eclipses the legacy of British colonialism and dilutes the unique world-historical gravity of the chattel slavery that undergirds the formation of the New World.[4]

Yet, Goyal also challenges us not simply to dismiss these modern slave narratives superficially but rather to take seriously how these texts provoke "a useful and necessary encounter between African American and postcolonial studies,…new models of global raciality and diaspora," that can address the complex constellations of religion, belonging, and political violence that characterize contemporary African geopolitics (Goyal 2014, 66). Building on Goyal's literary reading, this section provides an ethnographic reading of texts analogous to the narratives of slavery and displacement from Bok and Eggers. There are numerous reflections that have emanated from what is now South Sudan that have emerged from and been catalyzed by similar experiences with war and displacement in the struggle for self-determination in South Sudan. Therefore, the objective in bringing these texts together is to unpack their relational qualities where they otherwise read as the product of an autonomous masculine genius, evacuated of the communities in which these reflections were made and of the transnational conversations which they constitute.

Both Kenya and Uganda come into focus as important sites at which regional imagining and political activity has taken place. Northern Uganda has long hosted frequent migrations between ethnic communities on and near the border with South Sudan now separated by national citizenship. The SPLM/A leadership (and past movements representative of southern rebellion) has also historically embedded itself within northern Uganda as a headquarters for their war with the government in Khartoum. The importance of Kenya broadly, and General Lazaro Sumbeiywo

in particular, to the Sudan peace process demonstrates the regional proportions of the diplomatic crucible on which independent South Sudan was forged. In Nairobi today, for example, it was important for Kenyan journalists invested in South Sudan to point out the similarity of South Sudan's new flag to the Kenyan flag; it is a near duplicate of the Kenyan flag, only without the Maasai shield in the middle. For them, this palimpsest national icon immortalized the central role played by Kenyan political leadership in the achievement of South Sudanese self-determination

The first two texts, Waithaka Waihenya's *The Mediator* and Bishop Anthony Poggo's *Come Let Us Rebuild*, reveal the profound role of Christianity as a political technology within the negotiations that led to the partition of Sudan and have helped make sense of its aftermath. The second two texts, Joseph Lagu's *Odyssey through a State* and Bona Malwal's second political memoir, *No Future without the Past* demonstrate the historical precedent for the regional consciousness that undergirds region formation. The consciousness shared by these two towering figures of South Sudanese political life positions Uganda as a site of intimacy, desire, and fear.

Waithaka Waihenya's (2006) *The Mediator* is a biographic portrait of General Lazaro Sumbeiywo, Kenyan Army Commander and the chief mediator from Kenya at the helm of the negotiations between the SPLM and the Sudan government which led to the 2005 CPA. The text offers a detailed snapshot as narrated to Waihenya through interviews with Sumbeiywo himself , his wife, and others close to him. The text chronicles Sumbeiywo's early life and career in addition to his role as the Kenyan government's special envoy to the IGAD-led peace process. It also emphasizes Sumbeiywo's commitment to Christian ideological principles and prayer as a source of revelation for difficult decision-making, including the decision to take on the role of mediator when he was approached by former Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi. In highlighting

Sumbeiywo's religiosity, the texts analyzes the ambivalence and anxieties that constituted the road to the 2005 peace—fears that Dr. John Garang might not turn up to a meeting, frustrations at protracted negotiations—through the lens of Christian theology by drawing analogies to characters and events detailed in the Old Testament. The book's title itself is a polyvalent reference to Sumbeiywo's role. *Mediator* is a term that could be read through the technocratic language of international diplomacy, as parallel to the self-sufficient masculinity embodied in *John Garang Speaks*. One might also read the title through the ideology of a Christian vocation, as the book's first chapter framed Sumbeiywo's decision to take the role as an answer to "The Call," suggestive of a divine calling mediated through a telephone call he received from then Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi. The theological references throughout the text serve as signposts for General Sumbeiywo's commitment to the Sudan peace process as guided by his profound spiritual commitments to prayer as a revelatory epistemology (i.e. the answers to complex problems came from spiritual introspection rather than from empirical analysis), by the Bible as a foundational political index and by his devotion to the peace process which he understood as an act of divine service.

References to the Old Testament are peppered throughout Waihenya's text as though the intended audience was a politically engaged community as committed to Christianity as are the subject of the biography and its author. This strategy effectively hailed the readers themselves into a community of Christian theology where, for example, Waihenya's reference to the story of Jacob and Esau from the book of Genesis is deployed to reflect on the intertwined relationship of the two primary protagonists in the narrative of the SPLM/A's conflict with the Sudan government, Dr. John Garang and former President of Sudan Omar Al-Bashir. Jacob and Esau are fraternal twins of Isaac whose eternal fight over the birthright of the land of Canaan

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characterize their relationship from birth. Jacob is born clutching the heel of Esau, as if to hold him back to be born second and therefore without a birthright to inheritance. In this analogy, the book of Genesis was used to make sense of how the fundamental binary antagonism between a national government in conflict with effective rebels has continued as a dispute between two brotherly nations that now operate within a transnational framework as two independent nation-states. The efficacy of this story in capturing this relationship also attends to the intimacy that characterized this protracted and violent conflict between two opposing political entities. This Biblical analogy also helps to deconstruct the otherwise self-sufficient masculinity of two powerful male figures by rendering them as quarreling twin brothers hostile to one another over the love and blessing of their father.

On the eve of former President Moi's administration, the president asked General Sumbeiywo to return to his role as mediator after a brief hiatus.

"Yes, Your Excellency," The General deferred.

"You will do this in addition to your duties as Army Commander. I am doing this because I know you are a Christian (Waihenya 45)."

Waihenya quotes him in a dramatic scene that parallels the reticence of a prophet fearful of the gravity of the divine mission that lays before him. The following portends how Waihenya later likened General Sumbeiywo to the tender-hearted, weeping, prophet Jeremiah. The episode closed with Sumbeiywo's cautious submission to the command of his superior only after a three-day period of fasting and prayer as he sought divine revelation to guide his decision. Through the clarity he gained, he recognized that President Moi's insistence on finding an expedited route to a negotiated peace in Sudan was a commandment as unbreakable as the divine ten commandments revealed in the book of Exodus. It is worth emphasizing here the nuance that has led individuals

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to deploy the social order politics of the Old Testament rather than the ethical concerns associated with Jesus and the New Testament in order to take seriously the profound role of Christianity as a technology to make sense of the formation of a new nation-state. Tounsel argues that the God of the Old Testament was positioned uniquely as "a God of the black and southern oppressed" and thus, as is evident in Poggo's writing which we will see below, a God that "was uniquely theirs and [they were] especially his (2019, 15)." The examples that people draw on—Jacob and Esau, David and Goliath, Moses and his successor Joshua, the prophet Jeremiah, and, as we will now see, the book of Nehemiah—are components of the Old Testament. The centrality of political configurations in these stories in conflicts over land, leadership, and inheritance provide powerful analogies to how South Sudanese political thinkers engage national politics as they take on transnational regional proportions.

Bishop Anthony Poggo's (2013) *Lessons from Nehemiah: Come Let us Rebuild* represents an explicitly political deployment of theology from the Old Testament to make sense of nation-building in contemporary South Sudan. Poggo's text is not generically autobiographical but it is nevertheless a component of a larger reflective body of work written by South Sudanese men at the forefront of building and imagining a broad transnational community. The audience Poggo envisioned for this text is the broader South Sudanese community that has expanded throughout the region and the world. *Come Let Us Rebuild* is not merely a rhetorical device but a directive to a global diasporic community that beseeches them to return in order to assume their role as builders of the new nation. In this text, Poggo draws exclusively from the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, the story of a Jewish exile in ancient Persia who returns to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city during the Second Temple period. Poggo deploys this Biblical text as a source of literal and figurative instruction. He reads Nehemiah both as a historical archive and a spiritual guide.

Through the book of Nehemiah, Poggo is able to position the myriad problems of nation-building such as ethnic and tribal diversity and the burden of crushing debt in the context of a religiously inspired community assembling around an existential task. These worldly problems shrink into mere epiphenomena in comparison to the more fundamental spiritual challenge of recognizing and bolstering collective responsibility. Poggo's *Lessons* link the *spiritual condition of the people* to *the physical condition of the land* because the project of nation-building is itself a divine task, as it was for Nehemiah. Poggo interweaves the significance of these two dimensions, the spiritual and the material, in order to insist that there is a correlation not only in their mutual reconstruction but also in their shared destruction. What Poggo insists is crucial to the success of this reconstructive project is the role (whether by physical return or support from afar) of South Sudanese individuals and communities who have fled as refugees. Poggo explains that he spent a decade of his youth in Uganda from 1964 to 1973. He returned to southern Sudan with his family only after the Addis Ababa peace agreement was signed in 1972. Nehemiah was also an exile who, as Poggo explains, was only allowed to return to Jerusalem after approaching the King of Persia under whom he was captive, with a detailed plan and timeline for his journey and return. Poggo uses Nehemiah's planning to make the case for how and why the new nation of South Sudan, too, needs a "convincing plan" to effectively build the nation and attract its citizens back from exile (2013, 39). For Poggo, diaspora is a spiritual problem to be solved and not condition of identity formation. The reconstitution of this national community is representative of the task-oriented initiative Poggo argues is a powerful component of faith. Yet, the lament of destruction is also a step along the path to rebuilding. Through attention to Nehemiah's own emotional process in the first chapter of *Come Let Us Rebuild,* provides the

space for the community to lament the violence of destruction, only after which it can return from exile and begin the work of rebuilding.

The significance of Uganda appears explicitly in the memoir of Joseph Lagu, the military and political leader of the Anyanya rebels, the first rebel movement to engage in a war with the Sudanese government in Khartoum. In the genre of the idealized African male head of state, theself-sufficient and singular image of Lagu is meant to convey a certain masculine prowess over military tactics and complex geopolitical diplomacy. Yet, within his memoir, he reveals his vulnerability, particularly as he wrestled with the cartography in which southern Sudanese were contained after independence from the British in 1955. The question of South Sudan's geography had been and remains a problem linked to 1922 British colonial administrative policy which both bifurcated Sudan and linked the South to the colonial government in Khartoum rather than to British East Africa centered in Kampala and Nairobi. As Joseph Lagu reflected on how this policy decision has reverberated through time, identity formation, and the administration of national territor,y he asked incredulously:

> Why on earth should we have Khartoum as our capital? It is far away and less sophisticated than Kampala, and its people are so different from us. Kampala is much nearer, and the people are plain Africans just as we are. I cursed the British for drawing the frontiers without consideration for ethnic boundaries. I wished my tribal land had been carved all within Uganda (Lagu 2006, 88).

In this instance, Joseph Lagu's regional imagination set a historical precedent for the formation of region that has intensified since South Sudan's independence. It is important to note that Joseph Lagu is an ethnic Madi, one of the many tribal groups from Equatoria, a subnational region of South Sudan. Members of smaller ethnic groups such as this one often narrate the experience of their communities as distinct from the politically powerful *Nilotic* groups of the Dinka and Nuer.[5] Lagu's ethnic community spans the border between South Sudan and northern

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Uganda an in the moment above, he demonstrates a vulnerability which recasts the broad question of colonial administration onto the scale of intimate desire to feel at home in one's country of citizenship, rather than contained within one arbitrary national boundary or another. When he questions why he should feel more closely linked to Khartoum rather than Kampala he brings to the fore the overlapping problem of race and space as these two capital cities provide him with competing visions of racio-national belonging. While I will return to the question of race in depth in Chapter 5, at this point, it is worth clarifying that by "plain Africans" Lagu was referring to a concept of *African* identity that is not constituted by a connection, or the desire for connection, to *Arab* identity. Later in this dissertation, we will see how the axis of identity on which *African* and *Arab* represent two ends of an intertwined dyad becomes an important threshold for understanding South Sudan's *secession* from Sudan in conjunction with its *accession* to the East African Community, a regional political and economic union.

Bona Malwal is from the same generation of South Sudanese politicians as Joseph Lagu and has been deeply involved in politics in Sudan for much of his near century of life. Malwal frames his memoir through a lengthy discussion of his name, his relationship to his Dinka ethnicity and to his father's chiefdom. Malwal's memoir offers another account of the intimate position of Uganda for the leadership of the Anyanya rebels.

Malwal joined the Sudanese government under Jafaar Nimeiri in 1972 after the Addis Ababa peace agreement. He had been sent to Juba to lead the debate with the government in Khartoum over how to share the oil that the American multinational Chevron corporation had located in 1978. Malwal recounts that Nimeiri did not want to share the speculative oil revenue with the south, despite what he argues was the first such opportunity for the South.

While I was in Juba at this time, for less than two years, my young brothers used this opportunity to obtain weapons that later became instrumental in their joining [sic] the SPLA to fight for the liberation of South Sudan. Juba was close to the border with Uganda. The brutal regime of Idi Amin had just been overthrown there, and obtaining firearms was almost like buying a cup of tea in a cafe, if one had the means. My brothers took full advantage of this and armed themselves. (Malwal 2022, 28)

Here Malwal attends to the proximity he felt with Uganda which transforms its profound geopolitical significance into a site of intimacy. This moment offers two layers of relationality that highlight the relationships eclipsed by the iconic image of Malwal. On one level, this episode articulates the border-crossing sale of weapons and profound political changes in Uganda through the lens of a deeply politicized family. On another, the seemingly innocuous reference to buying a cup of tea does not simply index the ease with which his brothers were able to buy weapons but also the intimate feelings of closeness, trust, and friendship that accompany the most common and the most loving act among men in this context (and beyond), buying and drinking tea.

Yet, the regional consciousness shared by Lagu and Malwal is not only constituted by longings for homeland and warm intimacies. The sinews connecting southern Sudan and Uganda were forged both by ethnic proximity and by war. As Malwal chronicles the history of one of the foundational leaders of the Anyanya, Father Saturnino Lahore who, in Malwal's estimation had become a "theologian revolutionary (Malwal 2022, 213)." Malwal recounts that Father Lahore had been elected to the 1957 parliament in Khartoum by his home constituency in Equatoria and had traveled to Sudan in support of a semi-autonomous relationship between the two Sudans. In 1966, Father Lahore was arrested while in Uganda by the government of Uganda's first Head of State, Milton Obote. Malwal tells us that

The Milton Obote government of Uganda had a secret agreement with Khartoum, to arrest South Sudanese rebel political leaders and to hand them over to the government across the common border with Sudan. Uganda, despite its ethnic affinities with South Sudan, had at this point in time become a security risk for South Sudanese nationals (Malwal 2022, 213-4)

Malwal tells the story of one of his first major journalistic stories in *The Vigilant*, an independent English-language newspaper edited by Malwal in Sudan which was, at the time, the only source for a southern opinions on the actions of the Sudanese government. Malwal sent three reporters to Juba, Torit, and Kampala and compiled a story which combatted the government narrative of how exactly Father Lahore had died. In state-controlled media, the Sudanese government published a story about the subversive guerrilla fighter who had been killed by the brave Sudanese armed forces during an operation in Torit, Lahore's hometown in Equatoria. Here Malwal offers one of the principal ambivalences in region-craft. It is the vehicle through which one can draw on the intimacies of a broad affective geography in which one feels at home, with family, and at such ease that tea-drinking becomes a medium for transnational imaginings. Region-craft is also the vehicle for border-crossing state surveillance and cooperation between multiple national security apparatuses. The gravity of this episode lies both in its relational components—Malwal's commitment to an anti-government narrative about the death of a major rebel leader, and transnational cooperation required to put the story together—as well as in the vulnerability Malwal goes on to describe in his memoir as he navigated the anger his story incited in Sudanese government officials who subsequently sought to shut down this media outlet.

Summary

This chapter has explored the memoirs and reflective texts of South Sudanese political and intellectual leaders as they have reflected on the past and future of the new nation. What emerges from reading these texts closely and together is the profound role of Christianity and the regional proportions of intense and intimate diplomatic negotiations, interpersonal relationships,

and vulnerable visions of the future. It has framed its analysis of these texts in the deconstruction of the idealized iconic image of the self-sufficient masculine African political leader in order to recuperate the relational and consensual elements that constitute them as live figures with families, aspirations, and disappointments. This chapter has demonstrated that a genre of South Sudanese political memoir inaugurated by the edited volume of Dr. John Garang's speeches can be read as ethnographic material in order to unravel the hardened masculine image and reveal the vulnerable relationships that lay underneath. In parsing those relational elements, this chapter has drawn attention to the regional proportions of their geographic consciousness and the junctions at which that consciousness intersects with Christianity and the Old Testament as powerful political technologies. Political theology was an important lens through which my interlocutors made sense of South Sudan's past, present and future. The Old Testament in particular has provided an effective source for the social order politics that leaders like Bishop Anthony Poggo see as relevant to the challenges of nation-building in South Sudan and to the spiritual challenge of motivating the return of the massive South Sudanese diaspora from its exile.

The next two chapters move to the substantive projects of regional configuration, through media and the East African Community, in which transnational arrangements of governance come to coexist with the affective regional consciousness in which one might imagine the entire Nile Valley as their home.

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[1] *Nubian* can refer to a number of different ethnic communities throughout the Nile Valley, from Kenya to Egypt. Here, my interlocutor was referring to the Nubian community in Upper Egypt. This community identifies itself as an indigenous and displaced community, dispossessed of their land principally in 1970 by the construction of the Aswan High Dam. They are also phenotypically *Black* and, as such, act as point of reference to my South Sudanese interlocutors who identify with them on two fronts. First, as my interlocutors are racialized as Black in Egypt, they empathize with the racialized position of the Nubian in Egypt. Second, they also often understand themselves as a parallel marginalized group that was both insufficiently Arabized and relegated to the southern portion of their respective nation-state territory.

[2] Moses and the story of Exodus is a source of vocabulary to describe many leaders of African movements for political self-determination

[3] The U.S.-based conservative evangelical movement used this dichotomy, along with Sudan's history of slavery targeted Christians in the South to rally political support from the George W. Bush administration to push for independence in South Sudan. One product of this community's involvement was the neo-imperialist 2002 "Sudan Peace Act," a response to the second Sudanese civil war, between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Khartoum government. The Sudan Peace Act required that every six months the U.S. president certify that the Khartoum government and SPLM were continuing to engage in "good faith" negotiations. If the U.S. president could not certify this, then the U.S. government would impose an arms embargo, oppose loan applications and guarantees from international financial institutions, take steps to deny Sudan government access to oil revenues, and downgrade diplomatic efforts. The story of the suffering Sudanese Christian community resonated loudly with U.S. evangelical communities. It was highly legible to both white communities in the U.S. conventionally associated with conservative politicians and religion-inspired politics, as well as the Black American community. George W. Bush appointed John Danforth, himself an ordained Episcopal priest, to be the U.S. envoy to Sudan.

[4] In Bentley Brown's (2020) documentary *Revolution from Afar,* an unscripted moment marked a transformative shift in the film and broader historical understandings of the 2004 violence in Darfur. In a women's focus group, a young woman from Darfur compels a new understanding of the government's violence following the civil protests in 2019. The story she told of the violence she witnessed and the erasure of the violence through critique that claimed the violence had simply been exaggerated by Western media movements like Save Darfur. In telling this story, she effectively destabilized the typical narrative about the June 2019 massacre in Khartoum which exceptionalizes the loss of life within the capital city, eliding the violence experienced for decades in peripheral communities. She insisted that the violence in Darfur, be included in the frame of how one might mourn the lives lost in the protracted struggle against military rule.

[5] However queasy these classic ethnologic terms (Nilotic, Semitic, Bantu, etc) may now be to a U.S.-based anthropological audience, they nevertheless continue to be extremely meaningful for South Sudanese citizens.

Chapter 3: Building East Africa

The East African Community (EAC) is an intergovernmental political and economic union composed of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan.[1] After applying for membership in 2011 alongside independence, South Sudan acceded to the community in 2016. In this chapter, I will show how South Sudan became the *Black Sheep* of the EAC, unable to remit its membership dues, to send representatives to summit meetings, or to promote the goal of regional harmony in good faith by removing visa fees for other East African nationals. All of the given names of interlocutors included here are pseudonyms, unless I refer to a well-known public figure. This chapter attends to how South Sudan disappointed the expectations of its membership to the EAC. It juxtaposes South Sudan's accession to the EAC with its secession from Sudan. In doing so, it addresses the racial implications of this geopolitical re-orientation. This article draws on data collected from research and fieldwork conducted from 2018-2020 in Tanzania, South Sudan, and Sudan. In particular, it draws on research conducted within the headquarters and library of the East African Community in Arusha, Tanzania.

The first iteration of the EAC operated from 1967-1977 when it included the three original member states: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The contemporary iteration of the EAC is therefore "a regional bloc that rose in its own ashes (Mshomba 2017: 6)." While recent scholarship has revived past world-making imaginations such as Kwame Nkrumah's *United States of Africa* (Getachew 2019), there are nevertheless new or revised projects of transnational association for contemporary continental political thinkers in charge of intercontinental policy decisions. For those in East Africa, the legacy of Julius Nyerere's imaginative geography remains significant. In contrast to Nkrumah, Nyerere was committed to regional federations as pragmatic

steps towards eventual continental unity (Mshomba 2017). As such, the EAC iterates the project of world-making as region, after the era of independence and through the technocratic vocabulary of liberal institution-building. In this context, region frames transnational connectivity and serves as vocabulary through which people narrate border-crossing lives and families, contemporary and pre-colonial cultural linkages, monetary areas, and spheres of language practice.

This chapter is driven by the following questions: What does juxtaposing South Sudan's *secession* from Sudan with its *accession* to East Africa tell us about the intersection of religion, race, and class as they form asymmetries in the Global South? What are the emotional registers that have emerged to impose one set of professional diplomatic standards? What is at stake when the cartographic gaze of British East Africa becomes appropriated into the historical narrative of an institution that envisions itself as an heir to the regional integrationist vision of Julius Nyerere? To answer these questions, this chapter offers an analysis of the semiotic qualities of *East Africa* that exceed the reference to a geographic area. It draws ethnographic attention to the *ugly feelings* (Ngai 2007), the frustration and disappointment that refuse resolution and redemption, and have come to shape the junction between South Sudan's secession from Sudan and its accession to the EAC. With these emotions in mind, this chapter can attend to South Sudan's membership in the EAC as an instance of apprenticeship in liberal ideologies of responsible behavior that have rendered South Sudan as the *Black Sheep* of East Africa. In doing so, it chronicles the bureaucratic hurdles and geopolitical anxieties that have affirmed South Sudan's status as the regional delinquent.

Ben-Yehoyada's historical anthropology of the Mediterranean (2017) has been particularly valuable for distinguishing between and nevertheless holding together the productive

linkages that bind the practices of region making (e.g. political unions) to the affective process of region formation (collective emotions about geopolitical belonging and alienation). This chapter also draws on analyses of the cultural politics of the European Union (EU) and Turkey's relationship to the EU to demonstrate the global and racial significance of regional unions as technocratic standards become conduits for policing the behavior, culture, and aesthetics of political being and belonging (Shore 2000; Navarro-Yashin 2002; Babül 2017). This chapter argues that the structures of feeling that have shaped South Sudan's accession to the EAC reveal intra-African hierarchical relationships that are often dismissed as acceptable forms of nationalist chauvinism, as epiphenomenal (and therefore secondary) to more deeply rooted structures of difference attached to the institutional legacy of European colonialism, or as exceptional and fleeting instances of xenophobia. Drawing ethnographic attention to the standardizing forms that renders South Sudan into a *Black sheep* offers a frame to broadly understand forms of difference between Global South actors and, more specifically, how regional ethno-geographic markers like *East African* have become keywords imbued with a genre of professionalized cosmopolitan liberalism.

The geography that renders *East Africa* into a commonsensical index of cartographic continuity is the product of an imaginative layering of shared historical space. New spatial assemblages do not replace earlier ones but come to compete and coexist with them, wherein the spatial arrangement of British colonial administration, particularly in the management of currency areas, continues to inform the present. East Africa is both a contemporary assemblage of claims to cultural traditions and ethnic belonging that traverses political borders as well as an enduring administrative legacy of British colonial areas of territorial management and monetary regulation. Regional political and economic unions such as the East African Community remain

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relevant in Africa today as potentials for political federation and the capacity for solidaristic agency within the global capitalist system. The primary goal for these unions is most often to promote political integration through trade. Yet, the East African Community is unique among these organizations in having an expressed cultural ethos, to cultivate, for example, the use of Swahili as a regional lingua franca. The technocratic practices that undergird institutional programming are shaped by cosmopolitan liberal expectations of sensible behavior in community. How a concept of culture comes to life within the EAC compels attention to how administrative units act as conduits for enduring coloniality (Mamdani 1996; Piot 2010). Piot (2010) has observed, there have been dramatic changes in the familiar media that maintain colonial relations—chieftaincy, the patriarchal family, and the despotic dictator. If one follows his argument that these assemblages have become the "sleepy bygone seats of colonial power" principally in rural areas, how might one trace *British East Africa* as indexing a persistent discursive gaze that comes to bear on contemporary conceptions of the same territory (Piot 2010: 4)?

The work and growing relevance of regional unions, particularly as the culture of developmentalism spills over into the realm of political virtue, demonstrates the processes that constitute what I refer to as *region-craft*. I deploy this term to refer to inter-scalar processes and a method for understanding the formation of political community. Region-craft combines the legacy of colonial spatial imaginaries, ideologies of professionalism that pivot on distinctions of class and race, as well as imagined ethno-cultural geographies that exceed and defy the political boundaries of contiguous nation-states. Region-craft is an affective process that involves profound emotional responses and exceeds stable territorialization. It displaces neither the

national nor the global scales but rather attempts to theorize with my interlocutors as they narrate and contest their relationship to the global order through *region*.

East Africa as Keyword

In the years following South Sudan's independence from Sudan, region had a high resonance as debates emerged around South Sudan's geopolitical belonging, whether in the Arabic-speaking world or in so-called sub-Saharan Africa. South Sudanese diplomats described the 2016 accession to the EAC as a moment of ethnocultural destiny anchored by the gravitational pull of the multiple ethnic communities (Luo, Acholi, Kakwa, Turkana, etc) in South Sudan that transgress the new nation's borders with Uganda and Kenya. For Barnaba Benjamin Marial, the former Foreign Affairs Minister of South Sudan, membership in the EAC was a symbol of freedom from the *longue durée* of cultural suppression under the thumb of Khartoum and the Arabic-speaking world. In his opening remarks during the 2015 negotiations between the government of South Sudan and the EAC, Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, former South Sudan Minister of Foreign Affairs insisted

> Throughout the last century, South Sudanese did not have the freedom to choose their own destiny, first as part of the British colonial system and then as part of the Republic of Sudan. It is only since the Proclamation of Independence in July, 2011 that South Sudan is free to make its regional and foreign policy (EAC Secretariat 2015: 2).

The *East Africa* of the EAC is not merely a geographic reference; it is also a keyword through which important social, historical, and cultural processes come to cast an imaginative popular unity onto a heterogeneous ethno-geographic space (Williams 1985; Laclau 2005). Cartography is only a piece of what region can index, historical and political processes determine its shape and how it becomes an intimate part of everyday conversation (Navaro-Yashin 2002). In contrast to overlapping regional organizations such as the IGAD and the International

Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the EAC articulates a mission of political federation that comes to life through a shared *cultural* ethos. To be in East Africa and to be *East African*, for the South Sudanese diplomats involved in the decision to accede, represented an ideal type of hyper-professionalized modernity that would approximate them to the proper political behavior of a global community of sovereign nations. In a Nairobi cafe, one of South Sudan's representatives to the EAC, Jacob, described how vital membership was to his country's past and political future. "We are originally East African," he insisted, and therefore there is a "foundation of unity," geographically, on which we can and should encourage these geopolitical relationships. Unfortunately, he lamented, when "we meet the South Sudanese of Khartoum, our culture is distorted."[2] For Jacob, what was missing, culturally, in Khartoum had profound racial and class implications that operated alongside the expectations of professional diplomacy. The pressures of membership in the EAC might reanimate what had been stifled in Sudan as "the government in South Sudan could be held accountable by the EAC." Jacob insisted that through becoming a stakeholder in the broader regional and transnational project, South Sudan might "learn from the region." For him, a period of apprenticeship was required for the populace and the political leadership of South Sudan who have emerged from war with no opportunity to experiment with and practice democracy. Intra-continental arrangements such as the EAC depend on standards and expectations forged in the crucible of liberal humanism—rugged individualism, the overdetermination of the rule of law, and tolerance masquerading as humanitarian compassion—that come to texture relationships between Global south actors.

The EAC is officially an intergovernmental organization supportive of a transnational customs union and common market with plans for a monetary union. It nevertheless carries a concept of culture based on what many in the Arusha headquarters, and the EAC's published

materials, describe as a common East African identity and a vision for a federated East Africa. It resembles projects like the EU, which combine political and economic goals with an explicit commitment to producing and recognizing a common culture (Shore 2000). While many view both the EU and the EAC as exclusive to the domain of policy professionals and technocrats, these elites are often concerned with "the transferal of popular loyalty and sovereignty from the nation-states to supranational institutions (Shore 2000: 1)." The Treaty establishing the EAC, for example, contains cultural prerogatives such as establishing KiSwahili as a lingua franca, "safeguarding and development of the cultural heritage of the Partner States [sic]," in addition to promoting trans-regional athletic and cultural activities (1999 EAC founding Treaty: 93).[3] Shore (2000) highlights how EU officials stressed that generating new forms of supra-national loyalty required new norms and techniques of the self that animated new categories such as "a good European," a "European problem," or "common European values (33)." Yet, the analysis Shore provides falls short of grappling with the disappointment targeted at the delinquent actor, the behavior of which requires explanation, apology, or a roadmap to correction.

Such actors become geopolitical *Black sheep* that trigger the processes and practices of standardization, which, in turn, constitute the internal mythology of such communities. Two ethnographies of Turkey's relation to Europe, the Middle East, and the EU provide important frames to approach the racialization of geopolitics as Turkey (and others) become hyper-visible in their quest for regional assimilation (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Babül 2017). Babül highlights the human rights training programs that integrate Turkey into Europe through a "harmonization process" that makes possible the imagined moral, political, and economic community of the EU (2017: 4). The focus of such programs on phrases like "capacity building," she argues, that often lack a clear definition, position efficient bureaucratic performance as the site on which a nation-

state should establish democratic practices (2017: 8-9). I will argue that, for South Sudan, membership in the EAC itself operates as a harmonization training, offering the RSS an opportunity to learn how to be a more responsible international actor. When discrete institutional settings become the site for communal liberation via democratic principles, the "failure to improve" by the *Black Sheep* becomes irrational political behavior that impedes developing intergovernmental policy and the march toward more robust integration (Babül 2017: 9; also drawing from Gilroy 1991). Navaro-Yashin (2002) reminds us that the cultural project of the Atatürkish revolution after the first World War "was to create a distinct Turkish culture, Muslim-born yet secular, different from Arabs and keen to adopt Western life practices and technologies (48)." The question of where Turkey belongs thus has a long history and is also bifurcated by two forces pulling in ostensibly opposite directions—Muslim and Christian, so-called Arab and European.

In the context of Turkey's contentious position in the EU, the threat of difference lends itself to familiar racialized dyads, such as Muslim/non-Muslim or European/non-European. These dyads provide an aesthetic roadmap in which race becomes an ostensibly clear distinguishing signifier. That is to say, the European gaze on Turkish citizens and technocrats engenders people imagined as appearing recognizably different, either looking or sounding like a race (Rosa 2018). For South Sudan and the EAC, however, there are analogous aesthetic qualities through which South Sudanese individuals are either imagined to be *blacker* than everyone else (in skin tone or hair texture) or unable to comport themselves with proper professional decorum. Multiple technologies are therefore recruited and manufactured to entrench the differences between South Sudan and its counterparts.

A principal medium for this process of meaning-making was the roadmap to facilitate the accession of South Sudan. The roadmap is a report that was drawn up by an independent Kenyan consultant contracted by the EAC and financed by the German development organization, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). When I sat down with the author of the roadmap, he reflected on writing the report as an act of dutiful responsibility towards a nation of peers in need of guidance. South Sudan's ongoing war posed a direct conflict to the stipulations of the founding Treaty. The roadmap's author claimed that the EAC Secretariat had allowed South Sudan to accede because they did not want it to "end up like Gaza or Somalia." These two places are powerful global icons that have come to represent not only the threat of political intransigence but how the inability to meet the expectations of the global order renders certain places irredeemable, worthy only of invasion and occupation. The purpose of the roadmap to membership was to both facilitate and to accelerate the "full integration" of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) into the EAC (EAC roadmap, 2017). Getachew (2019) used *unequal integration* to describe the hierarchy that shaped the membership of African states within the global political order, namely in outsized entities like the U.N. In Arusha, EAC policymakers used terms such as "full integration" and "satisfactory participation" to index the need for South Sudan to reach measurable developmental thresholds and conditions of policy harmonization in order to conform to the *acquis communautaire* of the EAC. A team of independent contractors employed by the EAC compiled the "Final Report on the Roadmap for the Integration of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) to the East African Community (EAC)" in order to identify the political and economic institutions in South Sudan that did not meet EAC standards. It describes both where RSS fell short of EAC standards and strategies for harmonization. The roadmap in the report asserts that the "RSS joins the Community nearly 20 years since the initial three

Partner States of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania re-established the cooperation and ten years since the Republics of Rwanda and Burundi joined. It is, therefore, *obvious* that a strategy for the integration of the RSS…will require an expedited and well-resourced mechanism (emphasis added; x)." In 2017, when the roadmap was put together, the civil war in South Sudan had grown to larger proportions, extending beyond the capital city to towns and cities throughout the country.

At that time, the question of whether South Sudan's government required apprenticeship was widely discussed. Mahmood Mamdani wrote a New York Times opinion editorial in which he claimed that placing South Sudan under an African Union (AU) trusteeship was necessary to "save South Sudan from genocide (Mamdani 2017)." For Mamdani, the western negotiators who had been at the forefront of the SPLM/A negotiations with the former government of Sudan had failed in their mission to transition South Sudan to independence. IGAD had also failed in this mandate due to the conflicting interests of its member states. South Sudan could be saved, he argued, but only by the singular continental institution with enough "political credibility" on this matter, the AU's High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan, led by South African President Thabo Mbeki. While this recommendation did not come to fruition, the shortcomings of the RSS that it indexed aligned with how South Sudan's EAC representatives understood South Sudan's role as the apprentice to more responsible actors.

The problem of the geopolitical outlier and the regimes of expectation that characterize their place-in-the-world lead to the following series of questions: What are the evaluative criteria that produce a *Black sheep*? Does the *Black sheep* become a site of racialization? If so, how? What vocabulary is available to us to understand a racialized and classed geopolitical hierarchy

where the West is not the only referent? The next section provides the historical context to these questions.

Genealogy of the EAC

The East African Community narrates its own history through the administrative continuities of British East Africa. This section offers a brief overview of the EAC's historical narrative and an entry into the contemporary organization. In their digital and print materials, they trace a lineage that begins from the customs union between colonial Kenya and Uganda in 1917. The colonial administrative areas exceeded the nation-states that emerged in their wake and left behind lasting spatial imaginaries of linkage and unity. While the former EAC was founded in 1967, the first East African administrative unit was the East African Currency Board (EACB), established in 1919 to supply and control the currency of the customs union between the British protectorates in present-day Uganda and Kenya. Tanganyika would be added to the customs union in 1927 (Kratz 1966).

Exploring the East African Rupee crisis after WWI, Wambui Mwangi (2001) describes the spatializing logic of colonial expansion as one "of geographical meta-empire, by which all colonial possessions were ultimately linked (770)." Apter (2005) describes the subtle yet important difference in the francophone West Africa currency union—within which the French Franc circulated—in contrast to the monetary area of anglophone West Africa where their relationship to the pound sterling rendered equivalence between unique currencies. In highlighting this difference, Apter draws attention to how former geographies of colonial dominion emerged as regional anti-dependency projects of monetary cooperation. That is to say,

former European colonial areas of control have, in the post-independence period, become their own self-conscious cultural and political projects.

Introduced in the early 1940s, the East African Shilling was used at different times until 1969 in parts of what is now Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. The East African High Commission (EAHC) was established in 1948 as a regional board through which the respective British governors of the Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika territories could cooperate and manage customs, postal services, railways, and telecommunications. After independence from Britain, the EAHC transformed into the East African Common Services Organization (EACSCO) that was "based in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, which became the *de facto* capital for the entire region (Mwakikagile 2012; 8)." Mwakikagile argues that, at the time, many held the belief that these organizations would lead to the full political and economic integration of the region. Under British rule, the three countries of the original East African Community, Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika, "virtually constituted a single community…they had a common market, a common currency, and common services (Mwakikagile 2012; 8). In 1967, the EACSO was replaced by the East African Community (EAC) led by the heads of state in newly independent Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. The original EAC managed a range of public services, including the former united and transnational university, the University of East Africa, which has since been divided into three independent schools; The University of Nairobi, The University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and Makerere University in Uganda. The hope for regional federation attached to this connectivity would be disappointed both by the tensions between Uganda and Tanzania that would heighten to war in 1978 and, as current EAC staff describe, the "internal inequality" comprising both the size and ideology of the capitalist

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economy of Kenya and the socialism of Nyerere's Tanzania.[4] The EAC collapsed in 1977 and was officially re-established in 1999 to facilitate a customs union and a common tariff system.[5]

Today, the EAC headquarters is located behind the Arusha International Conference Center on *Afrika Mashariki* Road, East Africa Road, in Arusha, Tanzania. It is housed in a modernist building in front of which fly the six flags of the member states. Reading the architecture's minimalist lack of ornamentation as form that conditions political possibility, the EAC headquarters represents the aspirations of the modern African state and its statesmen and women clad in western-style suits, fluent in English and/or French, and yet not divorced from traditional cultural representations tastefully confined to wall hangings or small clothing accessories, thus demonstrating their awareness of where such expression belongs and where it does not (drawing from Hoffman 2017; 4-6).

Figure 2. EAC entryway. Photo by author.

The entry of the EAC headquarters exuded the gravity of multi-national professionalism (see Figure 2). As I approached in casual street clothes, I felt out of place walking along the sidewalk around the perimeter. At the main gate, my presence caught the eye of a security guard who stood up abruptly and looked sharply in my direction. I made my way to the rear gate and noticed a parking lot with still more security and a guard now close enough to ask me what my business was there and who I planned to see. Perhaps the first guard had alerted the second to my presence. I did not have an answer, so I apologized for the disturbance and turned back. The day prior, I had sent emails to EAC staff in charge of media relations and public outreach.

As I walked back through the town of Arusha, I dodged young men attempting to sell me, and everyone else who looked, walked, and sounded like a *muzungu* (white foreigner), an exciting safari tour. There is also a plethora of citizens of Oman who switched effortlessly between Arabic and Swahili making urgent business calls on multiple cell phones. There were Ismaili Muslims of Indian descent who were convening for worship in the central mosque. Both groups moved around Arusha without being solicited for a safari. The topography of race and difference was not simply about complexion but also more deeply rooted qualities: language ability, religion, style, etc. The popular taxonomy of fair-complexioned others here was akin to how Pierre (2013) characterized the difference between "development whites" and "Peace corps whites" in Ghana and how that spectrum of difference parallels the understanding of whiteness indexed by the term *muzungu*, or, the plural, *Bazungu*, in a Luganda speaking context (79-80).[6] Pierre (2013) argues that the contemporary usage of the word *Muzungu* does not simply signify whiteness but a specific genre of carefree, dirty, naïve, oblivious tourist who differs from the "technocrat on official stays (80)." Yet, however stable these conventions of white positionality

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may seem, they are nevertheless distinguished by a porous boundary between style choices. That is to say, I began to see how my own clothing selection and performance of language ability might enable me to slide between representational conventions. I could choose to be the Arabic and Swahili speaking professional or the scruffy *muzungu* backpacker.

The next day I trimmed my facial hair, put on slacks, shiny black dress shoes, a button-down shirt. I decided I would walk into the EAC headquarters with new confidence. As I approached the guards, a tension erupted within me. On the one hand, I carried a U.S. Blackness that has been trained with skepticism towards my reception in professional public spaces and caution towards armed guards indistinguishable from police officers. On the other, in Arusha, I carried a genre of whiteness and my U.S. passport that was at once associated with wealth, privilege, and universal access. When I returned to the EAC, the next day, I walked immediately to the rear gate. The guard stopped me, rifle in hand.

"Who have you come to see?"

"Simon Owaka" I said, breathing deeply to keep calm.

"Documents?" the guard asked, impatiently.

"You want to see my passport?"

The guard looked at me as though I had asked a rhetorical question with no purpose. I pulled my passport from my pocket and handed it to the guard.

"Have a nice day," the guard grunted, holding my passport with his index and middle fingers at the identification and visa pages. "Take this to the next guard," he said.

This must be how white professionals in the U.S. must feel, I thought to myself. I walked with confidence to the rhythm of hard-heeled shoes striking the asphalt. I stepped into the next

security area and was again asked the same questions about who I had come to see.

"I have come to see Simon Owaka," I asserted.

"Does he know you are coming?" She asked. My heart sank. My panic reminded me to stay in character.

"Yes, he knows. I sent him an email."

"Your name?" She asked. I responded, and she nodded.

She looked skeptical, but picked up the phone and called a central scheduling office. When she put the phone down, she looked at me with concern, "there is no meeting under that name."

"Well, I have spoken to him and I am supposed to meet with him today." I insisted as my racial and class confidence began to feel less like a costume.

"Ok, take this badge and go to reception. They can help you."

I approached the back entrance of the building in disbelief. I fought back a grin as I passed men and women in freshly pressed suits and the large glass windows rising above me.

I breathed deeply and approached the reception desk. I repeated the lines that I had used to get me this far. The receptionist looked at me with puzzled glare and called Simon Owaka to verify that I indeed had an appointment with him. Speaking KiSwahili into the phone, she said, exasperatedly, "there is a *muzungu* here who says he has a meeting with you. Can you come and tend to him." Unaware that I could understand any of what she had said, she looked up from the phone, "what's your name?" She asked me. She repeated my name into the receiver and I could hear a muffled "Ahhh yes" on the other end. She hung up, forced a smile, and asked me to take a seat and wait. A few minutes later a tall man in a blue suit approached, gliding towards me from a seemingly endless hallway of marble. "I am Simon Owaka," he said, stretching out his hand.

The ideology that enabled me to access the EAC headquarters is also what rendered South Sudan into the *Black sheep* of the community, unable either to end its civil war or simply to pay its membership fees on time. This embodied experience highlighted the efficacy of what Dylan Rodriguez (2020) observed as the violence of *White Being* evident in the interstices of post-racial reformist optimism of Barack Obama-era United States. Although situated in the crude colorist dichotomy of Blackness/Whiteness, *White Being* floats freely, beyond *white people*, as a normative paradigm that produces and reproduces relations of dominance and aspires to tame the wild and unknowable qualities which refuse to conform (Roriguez 2020, 7-8). *White Being*, in the context of South Sudan and the EAC, appears as the ethic of civic respectability left behind, appropriated, and reproduced in the wake of the British empire's formal departure. The efficacy of *White Being* here was also born out of the optimism of reform and assimilation. That optimism drove individuals, institutions, and states to have confidence in the normative paradigm of the EAC as an alternative to the religious-civilizational project of the government of Sudan. Yet, the search for an appropriate symbolic code merely reproduced South Sudan's subjection. The first time was as the insufficiently Arabized African and the second as the insufficiently professionalized East African diplomat.

The Fact of the Black Sheep

South Sudan's insufficient *East Africanness* was not only an affront to the institutional expectations of the EAC but to a hyper-modern professionalized *being* that the EAC aspires to signify. Non-South Sudanese EAC policy thinkers in Arusha imagine a hierarchy within the organization to make sense of this exceptional case. The Registrar of the East African Court of

Justice discussed both the problem of the legal education of South Sudanese judges and the overall preparedness of their new South Sudanese counterparts for the pressures of a multi-national organization. He described to me how the South Sudanese representatives feel out of place in the halls of the Arusha headquarters because they still have a "bush military attitude, they are not yet civil." This assertion, however striking, is pervasive among South Sudanese political thinkers themselves. It captures a contextual element of regional political history and individualizes it to make pseudo-psychological claims. The forests of Ethiopia, Uganda, the Congo, and South Sudan have long served as refuges for the SPLM/A and the movements that preceded it. Yet, the recent experience in the bush as guerrilla fighters did not offer an opportunity to reorient the self or community to the expectations of cosmopolitan liberalism, rather, this experience was distilled into an uncivilized brute to be tamed (drawing on Dubal 2018).

The obstacle of legal education compounded the alienation of South Sudanese representatives within this organ of the EAC. In the East African Legal Assembly (EALA), two judges from each member state must be appointed. As many of the eligible lawyers from South Sudan had received their law degrees in Cairo or in Khartoum in the Arabic language and in Islamic Law, the Registrar claimed that "when we went to train civil servants, most what we presented was like Greek to them." Adding language itself as a barrier, the uphill battle in the EALA seemed endless to the Registrar as he lamented that "they still need thousands of trainings."[7] As I spoke with others in the EALA, the frustration and disappointment they shared congealed around speculation about how South Sudan was to move forward as a responsible community member. Another interlocutor in the EALA, Judith, was a citizen of Rwanda. She drew her analysis from a place of empathy informed by her experience during the Rwandan

genocide. She juxtaposed the secession from Sudan with the accession to the EAC to conclude that "the Republic of South Sudan has gone from one model to another without ever really developing their own institutions first, so they go from modeling off Sudan to modeling off the EAC." The emotional regime that characterized collective responses to South Sudan's shortcomings were constituted by empathy as well as alienation. Perhaps recognizing the harsh critique the EALA Registrar had levied against his new colleagues, he softened his claims by extending the generosity that "they are forgetting integration matters because they are focused on stability."

There was an impatience on the part of EAC contractors and employees for South Sudan to behave more in line with the principles of the regional union. The questions I asked were often met with long sighs and averted eye contact as EAC thinkers searched for ways to articulate constructive criticism. During my conversations with Mr. Wambugu, the author of the roadmap to South Sudan's *holistic integration*, there was an analogous cautious compassion. He seemed to search for how to express the disappointment in the failure of the RSS to meet institutional standards and his frustration with how much time and effort he had spent in formulating a roadmap that may not be implemented. He insisted, as if speaking directly to his new South Sudanese colleagues, "you didn't join to beg." He seemed to think that the desire to maintain *East Africanness* should motivate a member state to not behave how he believed threatened the both the integrity and reputation of the organization, as "the EAC can't afford to just focus on South Sudan's problems." Their solution to reforming and assimilating an entity from begging to contributing was for it develop and strengthen its own institutions that were nevertheless in harmony with the EAC. Membership itself is an opportunity for training. Institutional standards become pedagogical tools necessary for instruction in professional diplomatic behavior.

The Aesthetics of the Black Sheep

The qualities of the *Black sheep* are immanent in the representational conventions that have given rise to the emotion-laden trope of the South Sudanese *Lost Boy,* who, having escaped from bondage into the forest, renders liberation from slavery parallel to the search for a new home. South Sudan's status is subject to the EAC's internal ethos as one committed to a cultural project accompanied by political economic development. My South Sudanese interlocutors in Juba and Khartoum would often reflect on a hierarchy of African regional unions, contrasting the EAC namely to ECOWAS, its West African counterpart. This pervasive comparison revealed the broad geographic proportions of their political imagination and that political economic unions signify how contemporary African states might interface with the Global North. For Peter Nyaba, assessing the EAC and the IGAD from Nairobi, it was their lack of military strength that led to their ineffectiveness. By contrast, ECOWAS was a regional organization that "means business," "has teeth" or included and represented west Africans who "unlike us (South Sudanese), are committed to their founding charter." Implicit in the comparison between "west Africans" and "South Sudanese" are two recognizable *types* of supranational citizen. This was a moral and behavioral evaluation consonant with how South Sudanese representatives to the EAC made sense of the benefits of membership, as a relationship of tutelage. The difference between these two types was a matter of time and training that South Sudan could only learn from its more experienced neighbors. Jacob, who was mentioned above, is one of the nine EAC representatives from South Sudan. He lives in Nairobi along with many of his colleagues who live permanent or itinerant lives in and through the city. Being *East African,* for Jacob, indexed responsible global citizenship that the South Sudanese masses may not yet understand and it was thus his

responsibility to communicate the benefits of this relationship to a broader South Sudanese populace. He was a conduit through which his countrymen might witness and come to desire the increasingly technological and hyper-modernist urban future towards which cities such as Nairobi are oriented.

The status of the *Black Sheep* is fundamentally ambiguous. It can only be rectified through long-term membership in the EAC but it is only through the accession and the attendant evaluative practices that South Sudan has become the *Black Sheep*. This conundrum in which what the more powerful say or do become transmuted as what the less powerful are and can be is what compels a meditation on the racial implications of this relationship.[8] The significance of race became clearer to me through some of the more cynical responses to regional membership that eschewed the aspirational emotions that drove the decision to accede. The same qualities that Jacob in Nairobi understood as South Sudan's original and perhaps essential *East African*-ness, a high-ranking SPLM-IO spokesperson in Khartoum, Gatwich, described as the undesirable results of the RSS ineffectually "yearning for a place to empower itself." In Khartoum, Gatwich juxtaposed South Sudan's secession and accession processes and represented South Sudan as adrift in a global order in which supranational association provides solid ground for a place-in-the-world (drawing on Ferguson 2006). Yet, this stance came with an overly emotional haste that led to the decision to join the EAC without, as Gatwitch described, "fully understanding" the requirements—the financial in particular—for membership. What accession produced therefore was yet another form of alienation, estranged by its failure to harmonize.

In the regional newspaper, *The EastAfrican*—which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter—professor Jok Madut Jok wrote a 2020 opinion-editorial titled: "South Sudan Needs an Honest Conversation about Its Future in the Regional Bloc," which appeared as

a centerfold story in the print version of the newspaper. In it, he outlined the widely-held criticism of the EAC and of South Sudan's decision to join as one of ruling elites who failed to seek popular approval. His perspective parallels scholars who have observed the EU too as an "elite led, technocratic affair orchestrated primarily by a small group of key politicians and civil servants (Shore 2000; 18)." In the article, Jok maintained that political elites brokered the decision without popular consultation and sought accession too hastily. Emotion, rather than the imperatives of reasoned politics or widespread consultations, he argued, was the basis of what he, and many others, insisted was a geopolitical mistake. Jok associated the choice to join the EAC with an arbitrariness and irrationality that had no place in professional diplomacy. What was at stake was nothing less than the future and the question of how South Sudan will orient itself towards it, either as the regional *Black Sheep* or as the subject of the collective hopes of the South Sudan that should have been.
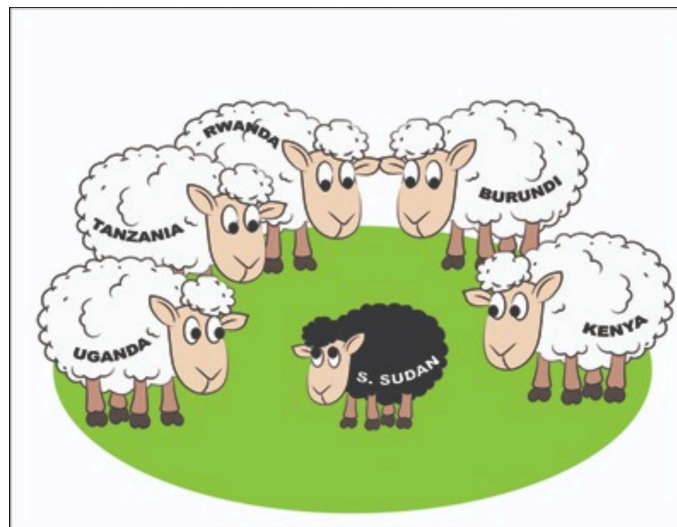

Figure 3. A version of a political cartoon that appeared alongside Jok Madut Jok's article in *The EastAfrican*. Artist: John Nyagah

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The illustrator of the image above, Figure 3, John Nyagah, described to me that he wanted to capture how people were feeling at the time, distant and cautious as they waited for the new country to harmonize with them. The image captured the disappointment in how South Sudan has emerged and represented it as the *Black Sheep* of the herd, unable to pay its membership fees, end its wars, attend summits and fulfill the stipulations of the roadmap. This representation recruits a racialized aesthetics of region-craft in which Blackness signifies the irreconcilably different outlier whose embodied inferiority is measurable, unmistakable and seemingly unchangeable. Five, white (read normal) sheep identified in the version that appeared in *The EastAfrican* by the flags around their necks of the five previous member states: Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Standing at center stage, the position of the black sheep suggests that it has recently been welcomed and is undergoing an evaluative process. As the normal sheep surround South Sudan, their downward glances suggest condescension on a multinational scale. The significantly smaller black sheep looks up, sheepishly, with eyes that express both embarrassment and guilt. The hope in its upward gaze points to the potential for South Sudan to become like its normal counterparts. Yet, it will remain marked even as the process of assimilation unfolds.

The image that accompanies the piece leads one to conclude that the *Black sheep* does not contest the unequal relationship in which it is interpellated as subordinate, with little or no agency over the conditions under which it has joined this political community. As demonstrated above, South Sudanese thinkers express various ideas about the EAC, ECOWAS, and the domain in which continental political unions operate. What is perhaps the most misleading piece of the above image is the sheepish upward gaze of the black sheep. While EAC representatives like Jacob may be appealing to regional leadership for lessons in good governance, there is

nevertheless profound debate about whether the EAC is itself an effective institution. In Nairobi, Peter Nyaba has remarked on South Sudan's accession not simply for its own shortcomings but because the "EAC has no unified vision or project, but multiple disconnected directions" towards which it marshals its political, cultural, and economic plans. In Khartoum, outside of Comboni College, the alma mater of many of my interlocutors, Kwongo, "there is no economic gain for us in East Africa" because membership only further entrenches dependence on neighboring countries to import basic commodities. This relationship of dependency is compounded by the pervasive belief, to be discussed further in Chapter 4, that East African heads of state, namely Yoweri Museveni, dominate the political landscape of South Sudan.

The Aspirational Diplomat
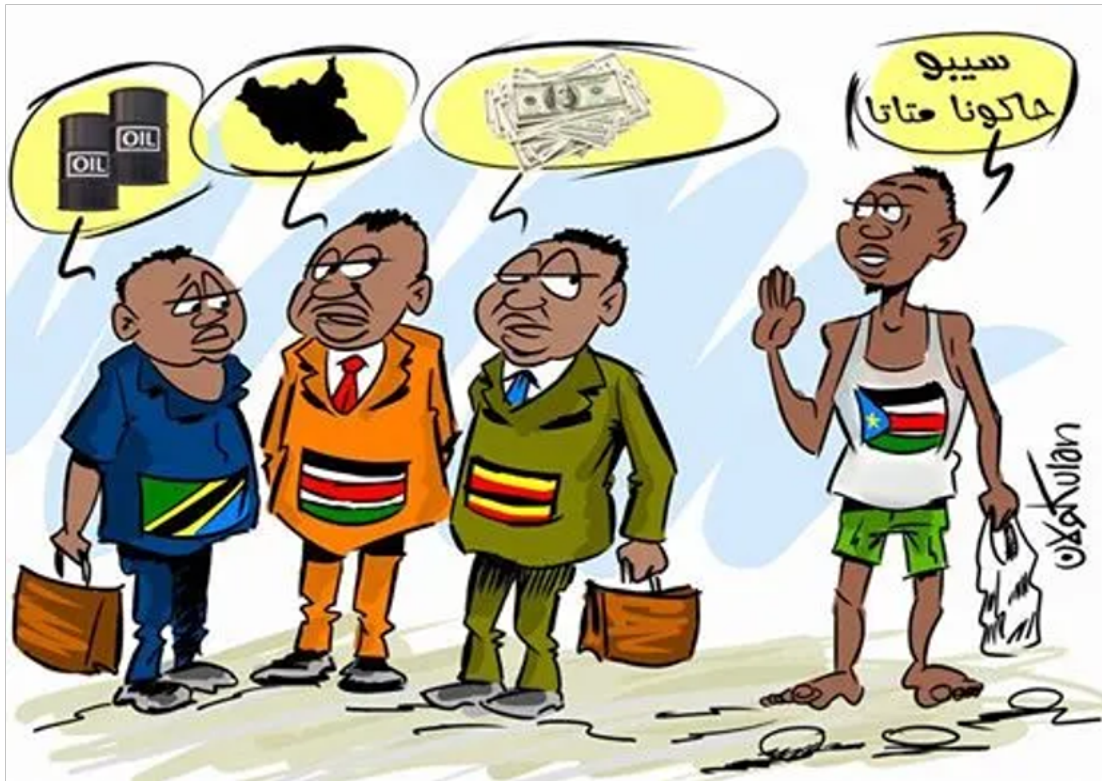
Figure 4. Political cartoon from Paan Luelwel online blog. "South Sudan, the New Kid within the EAC."

Figure 4 is an image from a South Sudanese blog, Paan Luelwel, which describes itself as by and for South Sudanese nationals. It was drawn by an Uganda-based South Sudanese artist in the year of South Sudan's accession to the regional bloc. The knowledge required to dissect the message here, including both the geopolitical relationships it describes and the languages it deploys, require intellectual and cultural capital that is shared by politically engaged South Sudanese professionals and political thinkers within the major regional cities. The symbolic capital required to understand this image also coheres a regional community around it. Of the four figures represented, the three on the left represent the heads of state from left to right: Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. Their interests in South Sudan are represented in the speech

bubbles above their heads. Eat state has it own interest: Tanzania's in oil, Kenya's in the land of the new state itself and Uganda's in the new nation's economy. The fourth figure to the far right raising his right hand in greeting symbolizes South Sudan. He is clearly out of sync in terms of his professional attire, no pants, no shoes, without a proper dress shirt and carrying a plastic bag rather than a brief case. His shabby dress signifies multiple processes of differentiation that include class difference, the adolescence of South Sudan's nationhood, and categories often deployed by my interlocutors throughout the region such as having a rough *bush* or *village* mentality in contrast to the smooth urban professionalism of his new counterparts. The speech bubble above South Sudan's head contains multiple languages and ideas about language. The Arabic script gestures towards South Sudan's lingering attachment to the Arabic-speaking world particularly through the dialect of Arabic spoken in its capital city. Yet the language in the speech bubble is not Arabic. There are two languages: Luganda, the primary language of Uganda and a register of Kiswahili, a language utilized in various ways in all three countries and, particularly, by South Sudanese professionals after completing graduate degrees and/or professional training in Nairobi. The first word is *Ssebo*, Luganda for *Sir*. This term has entered the lexicon of South Sudanese Arabic and English both through individual experiences in Uganda or through forging relationships with Ugandans in Juba. Since the representation of South Sudan utters this word first, before any others, suggests that the South Sudanese character is prioritizing his relationship to Uganda and its president Yoweri Museveni. The priority that the character gives Uganda and President Museveni indexes the vast mythology around Museveni's supervisory relationship to South Sudanese political leadership past and present.

The second line is *Hakuna Matata* which is a crude Swahili phrase for *no problem*. This phrase is used exclusively by and for tourists or enthusiasts of Disney's The Lion King. In this

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case, there is irony in the aspirational utterance of Swahili that is meant to indicate familiarity and instead deepens the feelings of estrangement that spanned these new transnational relationships. The utterance of this phrase positions South Sudan as a foreigner trying to make himself intelligible. As he falls woefully short of this goal it is also arguably an attempt to assuage the misgivings of his new counterparts about his entrance. Their horizontal gaze seems to index a palpable distrust. With a quality similar to the sheep, this representation of delinquency seems to be asking for an invitation and yet here, it is trying on a new set of symbols and signs that do not yet fit particularly well. In this depiction, the delinquent also fails to articulate his own material interests. He is concerned more with signaling cultural competency. The implicit critique of the author aligns with the critique shared by Jok Madut Jok and many other politically engaged professionals who insist that South Sudan has simply replaced its extractive relationship with Sudan by another as it has failed to collectively articulate and demand its own interests.

Bureaucratic Delinquency

This section addresses four instances of South Sudan's bureaucratic delinquency that animated the aesthetic representations above. The first is the EAC's criteria for membership and South Sudan's civil war. The second is South Sudan's inability to pay membership fees and its outstanding arrears. The third hinged is the emotional response to visa requirements for East African nationals entering South Sudan. The fourth is a legal case brought to the EACJ regarding the process for appointing South Sudanese representatives.

EAC member states are required to pay $8 million annually in membership fees. In October 2019, the EAC council of ministers resolved to sanction and remove South Sudan from

the regional community if it could not repay its annual contributions. It had failed to do so since accession. In 2019, South Sudan owed the EAC $27 million. It was able to remit $3 million of that much larger total in 2019, and yet the EAC threatened to suspend South Sudan's membership. This crisis was averted when the RSS remitted another $1.5 million in April 2021. Later in 2021, however, IGAD suspended South Sudan over the same issue, unpaid membership fees. In 2019, the regional newspaper *The EastAfrican* reported about the budgetary obstacles the EAC faced without sufficient contributions from member states. The article quoted its sources within the EAC who were frustrated over South Sudan's inability to contribute and shared their concerns over the latitude afforded to both South Sudan and Burundi while Kenya and Tanzania "rush to pay up".[9]

In the years leading up to South Sudan's accession, the competing personalities of two men, President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riak Machar, came to represent the armed hostilities between the SPLM and the SPLM-IO. While a transitional government was formed in 2020, at the time of accession to the EAC in 2016, the civil war had disrupted daily life in Juba, the capital city. The ongoing war conflicted with Article three of the EAC's founding Treaty which asserts that member states adhere to the "universally acceptable principles" of the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social justice (EAC founding Treaty 1999; 11). As none of these criteria can be met amidst an ongoing civil war, South Sudan's membership was marked from the beginning as delinquent.

The delinquency of South Sudan was also embodied in its diplomatic representatives and whether their bodies traversed regional borders. In interviews with non-South Sudanese EAC diplomats in Arusha in 2017, they complained to me that they were unable to hold meetings for the various EAC organs that called for full member-state representation because the delegates

from South Sudan claimed they were unable to afford to travel from their homes to summits in Arusha. Citizens of EAC member states were still required to apply for visas to enter South Sudan.[10] My interlocutors in Arusha insisted on the stipulation of article 104 of the EAC founding Treaty, not simply as a regulatory measure but to demonstrate that they were committed to regional harmony. Article 104 encourages the free movement of people, goods, and services throughout member states. The lingering visa requirement for EAC nationals was interpreted as a sign of South Sudan's lukewarm commitment to the community and a betrayal of a core principle of an otherwise clear path to regional federation.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Pan-African Lawyers Union, Donald Deya, represented a South Sudanese attorney, Wani Santino Jada, in 2017 to bring a case against the Secretary General of EAC, the Secretary General of South Sudan, and the speakers of the South Sudanese Parliament. Jada's complaint was that his country's candidates for the EALA were handpicked by the president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, rather than democratically elected.[11] He cited Article 50 of the Treaty establishing the EAC which dictates that the nine national representatives of each member state "shall represent as much as it is feasible," the extant political parties in addition to "shades of opinion, gender, and other special interest groups."[12] The application they filed called for the EALA to restrain administering the oath of office to the South Sudanese candidates. The headquarters of the EAC is in Arusha, Tanzania, where Deya described to me how he had assisted this Uganda-based, South Sudanese attorney who had traveled through Rwanda to see him in Tanzania. Deya proudly characterized the case as the first instance in which "President Kiir had buckled to any court." For him, this was the purpose of the EACJ, the principal judicial organ of the EAC. Their objective was to ensure that member states comply with the 1999

Treaty, which seemed to represent the foundation of transnational accountability that is able to influence the behavior of government leaders.

Following Wani Jada's application, the EACJ restrained the EALA from administering the oath of office to the first South Sudanese candidates. In March of the following year, the RSS submitted a new list of nine potential EALA representatives from South Sudan who fit the criteria of EALA representation for member states, gender equity, and an equitable representation of the member state's political spectrum. This case highlighted both the broad geographic proportions within which South Sudanese diplomats operated, and South Sudan's uneasy accession to the EAC. Wani Jada's case to recall the initial list of appointees from Salva Kiir reveals the affective domain in which feelings of frustration and humiliation have become crucial elements of how professional technocrats have navigated their disappointment in their government. Jada's position outside of South Sudan and yet within the region demonstrated how regional linkages produce the relationships with which such a case against the president may be fought and won. That is, today, within South Sudan, he would have had to navigate the surveillance and policing apparatuses of the new state. In compelling the proper form of political behavior that aligned with EAC standards, Wani Jada's case also demonstrated a desire to be *East African* as indexical of the cosmopolitan liberal values of personal accountability and good governance to which the EAC aspires.

In addition to the EAC, South Sudan has also disappointed the expectations of the other supranational organizations it has joined, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). It owed $9 million to the African Union AU, which it repaid in June 2020 after AU sanctions. While South Sudan has also been unable to contribute its share of the IGAD annual budget, it is also important to keep in mind that South

Sudan's shortcomings are not limited to its fiscal responsibilities.[13] An IGAD employee in Nairobi, Hibo, expressed to me his frustration over the seemingly never-ending conflict negotiations that had characterized South Sudanese politics. He began working at IGAD in 2013, concomitant with the outbreak of armed hostilities in South Sudan. Despite his effort in organizing these negotiations, he complained, "I get email briefs from South Sudan so often, I've stopped reading the emails. As he exhaled from his cigarette in exasperation, he asserted that "all of our money and effort go to the South Sudan problem, yet they send letters to us complaining about how we do nothing." This employee's frustration was not simply based on South Sudan's non-compliance but on its delinquency, its political and diplomatic misbehavior, and failure to satisfy institutional norms.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated how region-craft is both a method and a process that enables one to think with individuals and institutions that narrate their histories through supranational region. Region-craft is a method for theorizing with the day-to-day geopolitical reflections of Global South thinkers on the relationships and hierarchies that texture contemporary politics. This chapter has argued that East Africa is a keyword that exceeds geographical reference and comes to capture significant social and political processes that exceed the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. This chapter has also provided a brief genealogy of the EAC and shown how the cartographic gaze of British East Africa persisted. This begs the question of whether, along with the imagination of coherent space, colonial ideologies about civilized political behavior have also been appropriated by the organization. This chapter also

has analyzed some of the representational tendencies that have appeared to make sense of South Sudan's delinquent position in the EAC. It is a generative frame through which to understand forms of racialization in which regional attachments and hierarchies take shape aesthetically to produce the image and the position of the *Black sheep*. Drawing attention to the production and maintenance of the status of the *Black sheep,* we can see how the professionalizing standards of cosmopolitan liberal discipline come to inform the relationships between Global south actors.

Within this chapter there are gestures to the project of Pan-African institution building that are relevant for understanding South Sudan's relationship to East Africa today. As Tanzania hosts the EAC's headquarters and many of its organs, the ideological legacy of Julius Nyerere remains significant. With this in mind, this chapter encourages us to ask, what is the institutional life of Pan-Africanism? A social movement and an ideology forged in the crucible of anti-imperialism and anti-colonial nationalism, how might its vision shrink under the weight of technocratic institutionalism? What role does the vision of governmental accountability held by professionals like Donald Deya, the leader of the Pan-African Lawyers Union, play in the achievement of broader regional harmony?

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[1] In 2022, the Democratic Republic of the Congo became the newest member state.

[2] By South Sudanese of Khartoum he meant those who sought refuge from the civil war in Khartoum rather than in Juba, Kampala or Nairobi.

[3] This includes the biannual JAMAFEST culture and arts festival as well as the East African Community Games, the first one which was held in 2018 in Bujumbura, Burundi.

[4] Getachew (2019) highlights projects of regional federation in the West Indies and Africa. However, she limits the African genres of regional federation to the United States of Africa, an imaginative project famously associated with Kwame Nkrumah and Muammar Gaddafi. This view elides the regional projects that are currently operating in Africa, e.g. ECOWAS, the EAC, IGAD, COMESA in addition to the formation of Tanzania, the only extant political federation of formerly separate African polities.

[5] The former EAC collapsed for a host of reasons, including: the volatile administration of Idi Amin in Uganda, the build up to the Uganda-Tanzania War, and the differing economic ideologies of Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta.

[6] The word muzungu literally means to wander, roam, or meander. Before it took on racial meaning, it was used to describe the Arab, Indian, and European traders on the Swahili coast in the 18th century.

[7] The languages one hears from EAC bureaucrats in the halls of the Arusha headquarters are English and KiSwahili.

[8] See Barbara and Karen Fields (2014) on *racecraft*.

[9] Quoted from The EastAfrican's coverage of the EAC budgetary challenges: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/EAC-struggling-to-pay-salaries-execute-projects/4552908-5185358-5byyhy/index.html

[10] In July 2021, the RSS rolled back its requirement for Kenyan nationals to acquire visas before entering South Sudan.

[11] The Assembly has a membership comprising of 54 elected Members (nine from each Partner State), and 7 ex-officio Members consisting of the Minister or Cabinet Secretary responsible for EAC Affairs from each Partner State, the Secretary-General and the Counsel to the Community.

[12] The Treaty for the establishment of the EAC, p. 39.

[13] IGAD was created in 1996 to replace IGADD (Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development). IGADD was founded in 1986 in response to the magnitude of the successive droughts and related natural disasters from 1974-1984 throughout the region.

Chapter 4: News and Rumor, Mediating a Region

This chapter outlines the assemblages of information exchange that include news production as well as unpredictable forms of communication (such as rumor and gossip). This chapter traces these two elements of information exchange as they extend from Juba and cohere a listening community attuned to economic, social and political conditions which unfold in Khartoum, Kampala, and Nairobi. The objective of this chapter is to draw attention to the exchange of information as a crucial register of region-craft. Paying ethnographic attention to this register emphasizes its constitutive ambivalence. A supranational region coheres around individuals and networks as they share and produce information. The efforts of South Sudan's NSS to control information and its authors also extend regionally, compelling South Sudanese thinkers to evade transnational state surveillance. It accomplishes this by addressing both the predictable and erratic ways in which people engage with information. It moves from the experiences and goals of the individuals behind news production towards the circulation of rumor and speculation. The chapter draws on print newspapers and digital news sources as well as gossip by using what Kris Peterson (2009) has called *phantom epistemologies* to capture the socio-political value of ethnographic data that refuses empirical verification.[1] Within this broader constellation, this chapter will highlight five sources of regional information exchange. The first four are regional news sources: *Al-Mawgif*, an Arabic language print newspaper based in Juba; *The EastAfrican*, a regionally available weekly print newspaper based in Nairobi which is also available online; *Radio Tamazuj* a digital news source focused on South Sudan, the headquarters of which is intentionally hidden for the safety of its writers; and *Wajuma News*, a small-scale online news source managed by South Sudanese writers based in Khartoum. The fifth source of

information is the pervasive rumor and gossip surrounding the unequal relationship between the President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni and President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit. The *phantom epistemology* that undergirds popular understandings of this relationship in which Museveni leads and Salva Kiir follows, extend to the geopolitical relationship between the two independent nations.

Journalism is a significant register through which the borders of South Sudan become porous. Radio, the furthest reaching source of news for most individuals and communities within Sudan, is monopolized by Global North-funded initiatives such as the *South Sudan in Focus* program on the international radio broadcast *Voice of America* as well as programming on *Radio Mirraya,* the radio station of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). These two sources of radio journalism provide news about the concerns of local communities as well as broader national discussions.[2] While radio is statistically the most widespread source of news, paying ethnographic attention to the exchange of information within newspapers and digital news media enables this chapter to highlight how South Sudanese journalists navigate the surveillance of the state government as it attempts to suppress dissident opinions.[3] The strategies journalists use to evade surveillance help demonstrates the supra-national regional configuration that constellates through multiple regional cities.

This chapter attends to the two-pronged process of region making—contiguous nation-states working in concert toward a common goal and the profound emotional attachments to transnational geographies as home. Region-craft is therefore a formation of the production and consumption of news, whether through journalism or rumor. Through the study of media in urban contexts, these two processes appear in the dialectical relationship Larkin (2008) has termed *signal* and *noise*. This chapter builds on this dialectic to juxtapose *journalism* and *rumor*

as two interrelated forms of broad-based communication that are distinguishable and yet inseparable as they come to mediate a broad listening community. In the context of the region that has been remade around and through South Sudan, the regional newspaper the *The EastAfrican*, for example, has emerged as a stable and predictable *signal* for regional journalism. This newspaper interpellates a transnational political space by recruiting a border-crossing listening and consuming audience. The gossip that undergirds the mythology around Museveni, however, maintained seemingly unanimously by journalists, foreign diplomats and the South Sudanese intelligentsia at the heart of this project, represents the bewildering *noise* of rumor's "unstable consequences" that produce a frustration and fear shared by South Sudanese citizens throughout the Nile Valley (Larkin 2008, 11).

First, this chapter contextualizes the domain of media production in Africa through addressing the emergence of the vigilant *muckraker* as a claim of contemporary independent journalism. Hasty (2005) used the term *watchdogs* for journalists who identify as the guardians of the masses, vigilant of government corruption and malfeasance. This term, however, slips too easily between the journalist as watchdog of the people and the journalist as the watchdog of the government itself. Instead, I used the term *muckraking* because it appeared through fieldwork in, for example, writers directing me to their collated articles on muckrack.com.[4]

The chapter attends ethnographically to four media sources, *Al-Mawgif, Radio Tamazuj, The EastAfrican, and Wajuma News* to discuss how the conditions, under which South Sudanese and Kenyan writers produce and circulate knowledge, configure a broader region where these writers develop projects and pursue their goals. Lastly, it draws on Kris Peterson's (2009) *phantom epistemologies* to demonstrate how muckraking has been decoupled from the practice of journalism and been appropriated by South Sudanese thinkers broadly as they circulate the

pervasive rumors about the influence of Museveni on South Sudan and its president, in particular, and on the region broadly. The rumors that uphold this idea constitute an epistemological practice that contributes to the broader region configuration.

The questions that guide this chapter are: what role does the production and exchange of information play in the configuration of regional relationships? What can one learn from South Sudanese and other East African journalists about the shape of a transnational network of information sharing? What role does rumor play as a source of information that aligns or is in conflict with journalism? These questions point to how region-craft takes shape through the production and reproduction of a transnational listening audience, both through the intentional projects of a newspaper that narrates itself with regional proportions and through the affective formations of rumor, disappointment, and fear that shape how information about South Sudan and produced by South Sudanese thinkers operates outside of the territorial borders of the new state.

Much of the ethnography in this chapter follows individuals who have worked or identified as journalists in a number of different media houses in South Sudan and within the broader East African region. The pervasive nature of the rumors about Yoweri Museveni broadens the ethnographic source material to include other members of South Sudan's transnational intelligentsia as well as the reflections of Hilde Johnson, the Norwegian diplomat who was at the forefront of SPLM/A negotiations with Sudan and of Peter Adwok Nyaba, a South Sudanese journalist and thinker who has written several books on the political conditions of the new nation. Geographically, the ethnography of this chapter will include data collected in Nairobi, Juba and Khartoum. My interlocutors claim belonging to a range of the largest South Sudanese ethnic communities—Dinka, Shilluk, Nuer—and Kenyan nationals. The geographic

breadth of this chapter demonstrates the nature of exile for many South Sudanese writers and journalists who find themselves dispersed throughout the region because of their antagonistic relationship with the ruling party in government in South Sudan. As my interlocutors move in multiple directions across national borders in-person and digitally, it has become clear that being physically outside of the borders of South Sudan did not eclipse the feelings of attachment and responsibility to South Sudan's future. Following Victoria Bernal's (2014) work on the articulation of Eritrean diaspora and nationalism through cyberspace, an increasingly relevant question seemed to be "what binds people to their nation even when they live and work outside of it (pg. 7)?" Bernal addressed the emotional attachments (mourning, martyrdom, sacrifice) that constituted the "diasporic citizen" in and beyond Eritrea. The concept of diaspora is often linked primarily to individuals and communities in Africa with ties to the Global North. To center linkages within the Global South, this chapter draws attention to the *regional subject* that circulates within continental Africa employing multiple languages, and networked knowledge of regional towns and cities that transgresses national borders.

This chapter focuses on forms of decentralized news production and information sharing by following the ethnographic study of media formations which has asserted that news production occurs at multiple sites and thus exceeds the singular conception of the centralized newsroom (Wahl-Jorgensen 2010). I draw from Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) who has built on Benedict Anderson's (1983) conceptualization of imagined communities to argue that television has played a salient role in producing the nation and its attendant feelings and imaginaries of space and belonging. While some of the ethnographic material in this chapter addresses the content and production of print newspapers, the physical newspapers nearly always also exist in cyberspace, either as digital news platforms or as article PDFs that circulate on social media

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applications like WhatsApp and Facebook. As such, this chapter also follows studies of digital

news-making that take the "office-based screen worker" as the primary representative of the

journalist type today (Boyer 2013, 2). This chapter pulls these frames together to argue that the

decentralized, digital news-making of South Sudanese writers and journalists throughout Sudan,

Kenya, and South Sudan is productive of political imaginaries, feelings of responsibility,

belonging, and fear that have supra-national *regional* proportions. This chapter demonstrates that

regional subjectivities extending from South Sudan take shape as protean and horizontal

configurations that are constantly in motion as they grow and change shape to mitigate fear,

rumor, and surveillance. I build on Paul Gilroy's (1991 [1987]) critique of   imagined

communities free from the tensions of class and race to argue that neither nationhood nor *region*

are "an empty receptacle which can simply and spontaneously be filled with alternative

concepts" according to political expediency (55). Rather, they are qualified, in this case, by

ethnic and political antagonisms. Transnational exile rather than national belonging becomes

more attractive to dissident intellectuals as they navigate their commitment to the role of

exposing governmental wrongdoing. While not replacing the national scale, supra-national

region emerges in practice and in imagination. The exchange of information through news

production and the spread of rumor are two key sites at which regional configurations come

together.

Muckraking Journalism in Africa

To be sure, journalists, whether independent or state-sponsored, work under regimes of

knowledge inflected with local and global forms of power. These power structures determine

their claims on critical perspective such that the assertion of independent journalism critical of

governmental structures in theory does not necessarily equate to a critical journalistic practice. Jennifer Hasty's 2005 work on the political culture of the press in Ghana under the Jerry Rawlings administration, chronicles how news production became a primary apparatus for the configuration of African modernities in a broad sense and, in particular, for the cohesion of the post-independence nation-state. Hasty (2005) pays ethnographic attention to the minutiae of news consumption which has deepened my understanding of the social and political life of newspapers. The material object of the newspaper does not simply sit on a shelf waiting to be consumed by an individual and then discarded. Rather, when they are purchased, they tend to circulate in informal settings beyond the hands of their original buyer through the collective hands of everyone sitting with that person as they read. Hasty observed in Ghana, as I did in Sudan, that as the newspaper moves from person to person, individuals add their commentary, "official information, unofficial leaks, scholarly analysis…rumors, and jokes (Hasty 2005, 2)." Hasty's observation of this reading practice emphasizes the interplay between journalism and rumor because the consumption of news media is a generative event, cohering community and provoking new ideas and information that shape the collective reading experience. Reading newspapers in this way with my South Sudanese interlocutors in Khartoum was a crucial method of fieldwork. At times, we would discuss their own articles and at others we would discuss articles written by their colleagues and friends. We would engage in a collective reading practice punctuated by sips of steaming tea and warm greetings in the cool mornings. If I arrived with a newspaper in hand, simply retrieving the paper fold from under my arm to read the front-page headlines elicited participation and popular commentary from an ever-expanding network of interlocutors. As the paper moved from one set of crossed legs to another, news stories would be

embellished with new knowledge that derived from personal relationships, past experiences, and speculation.

Hasty's (2005) study takes up the national frame to make sense of the colonial Gold Coast and independent Ghana as political entities that come together around print journalism. She uses Benedict Anderson's (1983) argument about print capitalism and vernacular media to describe how newspapers in the Gold Coast helped to define the territory around which popular support for independence would be linked. Newspapers therefore played a crucial role in condensing a "fundamentally national postcolonial imaginary (Hasty 2005, 9)." Hasty argues that since mass-mediated public discourse was a foreign import, participation in it was a strategic decision on the part of educated Ghanaians to "[circumvent] traditional political authority" and to "[craft] a new social identity as African elites" who could position themselves discursively in proximity—by striking up conversations over news—with colonial officials (2005, 9). In doing so, they could more readily inherit authority over the state. Yet, there was a shift in the stance of these early African journalists as the career opportunities available to them in civil service after independence did not match their education level and their attendant professional desires. Their disenchantment gave birth to increasingly harsher criticism of colonial governments and, as Hasty argues, "the newspapers became the crucible of African nationalism and anti-colonialism (Hasty 2005, 9)." The contemporary private press has inherited the oppositional stance of the intellectual elites of the past who once criticized colonial governments. It is this position that produced the perspective that Hasty calls the *watchdog* but I think is more accurately expressed as the *muckraker*.

Hasty's study provides a useful frame for thinking through the politics of news production and the exchange of information among South Sudanese writers because she focuses

on the fissures between a nationalized state media and a private independent press that occurred in the years immediately following Ghanaian independence. In South Sudan today, there has not yet been a nationalizing moment in which a section of the mass media was officially captured by the state thereby catalyzing tension between a state-controlled and a so-called free press. There are nevertheless English-language daily newspapers in South Sudan, *The Juba Post, The Citizen* and *The Juba Monitor*, the weekly *City Review* which identify themselves as independent presses or as voices of the people, as is the case with the *City Review*.[5] This distinction is significant because it signals the tangibly conservative tendency of the state against which contemporary news production positions itself.[6] Contemporary writers have inherited the oppositional stance that once criticized the colonial government and now positions itself as the muckraker invested in revealing the violent malfeasance of the national government in order to pressure it into the domain of good governance, the rule of law, and human rights.

Contemporary South Sudanese journalists who claim to have suffered from state repression, surveillance, and incarceration are the latest iteration of a genealogy of writers who identify as oppositional. For the first generation of southern Sudanese writers and journalists, their goal was to defend southerners against the civilizing mission of the North. Bona Malwal, discussed in Chapter 2, is a germinal figure within the South Sudanese intelligentsia who are at the forefront of knowledge production highlighting the repressive conditions of former Sudanese governments. In his autobiography, Malwal (2022) describes his role as the founding editor of *The Vigilant*, an English-language newspaper that circulated in Khartoum from 1965 to 1969.[7] As the mouthpiece of the Southern Front which was a former Sudanese political party composed of dissident southerners, the role of *The Vigilant* was to expose the brutality of the government as it perpetrated violence in the South. Other figures within this tradition include Arop Madut-Arop

who studied journalism formally and worked for multiple newspapers. His practice, like that of Malwal, was interrupted in 1990 when independent newspapers were banned by the regime of Omar Al-Bashir. The late Alfred Taban, who was serving as a Member of Parliament in the South Sudan Legislative Assembly at the time of his passing, was a former BBC correspondent in Khartoum and founded the newspaper *Khartoum Monitor* which later became the *Juba Monitor*. He was also detained for his criticism of the Sudan government in 2001. In Sudan and South Sudan today, both the Southern writers who have been inspired by this tradition as well as the *object* of their criticism are no longer Sudanese. The state violence they condemn from government in South Sudan pushes them to Nairobi, Kampala, and back to Khartoum itself.

The four media sources discussed below follow a trajectory that moves from the more straightforward and predictable modes of communication to the phantom and unverifiable. The Arabic-language daily in Juba, *Al-Mawgif* (The Stance), illustrates the oscillating connections between Juba and Khartoum as writers maintain professional and familial connections across the new border. *Radio Tamazuj* represents how independent digital journalism in South Sudan has been censored and therefore extended southward to Kenya and Uganda. This chapter's attention to *The* EastAfrican is the result of grappling with this bi-directionality—northward to Khartoum and southward to Nairobi and Kampala—as a constitutive linkage rather than analytic excess. *Deep hanging out* with reporters at these media houses has compelled me to grapple with the myriad writing projects in which they engage in order to supplement their primary occupation. Their less formal projects are carried out in cafes, mall lobbies, and roadside tea stands throughout the region. With this in mind, the deterritorialized online *Wajuma News* provides a way to grapple with news production as a pseudo-entrepreneurial task in which one intentionally

foregoes the stable space of an established media house for the sake of security from state violence.

The East African

This section focuses on the affective cartographic work accomplished by the regional newspaper *The EastAfrican* as one important site at which the practice of region-making takes shape. In his study of the technologies and diffusion of news in colonial Algeria, Arthur Asseraf (2019) recognizes the resonance between the spread of the global news system and European colonial expansion.[8] Yet, Asseraf does not argue that colonialism in Algeria either closed or off or opened up Algeria to the world, rather it "generated a particular geography (2019, 20)."[9] Asseraf asserts that studying how people shared news in colonial Algeria is one way to understand how they located themselves geographically, how they distinguished "what was close and what was far…the distinction between the internal and the external (Asseraf 2019, 20)." As colonial geographies reconfigured space on multiple scales—linking and unlinking currency areas, supply chains, and coerced labor—the sharing of information was also a crucial means by which people became familiar "with events that are unknown to the audience yet relevant to them (Asseraf 2019, 20)." As I argued in the previous chapter, the conceptualization of *East Africa* as a commonsensical category is the product of historical layering over time of new spatial networks which do not replace earlier arrangements but come to compete and coexist with them. In this way, *The EastAfrican* generates a particular geography in which it recruits a regional audience to be attentive to news events in the contiguous nations of the East African Community. Physically distant geographies come to be relevant through stories about interstate trade, border-crossing development projects, tensions between the leadership of national

governments, and the activities of the EAC itself. The East African region therefore appears as an object of civic engagement as the consumption of news calls readers to participate in political developments throughout the collective imagination of East Africa.

Based in Nairobi, *The EastAfrican,* is available online and as a print newspaper which circulates in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Each member country requires the newspapers to be published through a national subsidiary company with its own printing press. In South Sudan, no such subsidiary has yet been established and one can therefore not yet buy the *The EastAfrican* in print in Juba. While they have press bureaus in each of the five countries, in South Sudan they rely on individual correspondents. While a frequent subject of news, South Sudan's gradual integration into *The EastAfrican* transnational printing network has paralleled its contentious inclusion into the EAC. The newspaper was first published in 1994 in a moment described by Sarah Bekata, one of its editors as "a reawakening of Africa and East Africa 30 years or so after independence" when "intellectuals and the educated classes were rethinking the governments that had been in power" since independence. This perspective for *The EastAfrican* is an archetype of the vigilant *muckraker* who is committed to holding governments accountable to the principles of liberal democracy. The "reawakening" of Africa in this period also indexes the wave of liberalization that swept over continental Africa in the 1990s as a response to the political and economic demands of global financial lending institutions. One quality of this political transformation was the growth of the now familiar apparatus, *civil society*, meant to protect the citizenry from the authoritarianism that defined the initial decades after independence. The emergence of *The EastAfrican* can be understood in this broader context, as the press became a "critical public sphere of political discourse (Hasty 2005, 7)."

While the *The EastAfrican* relies on a vast network of reporters and writers who work throughout the region, there is also a newsroom housed within a downtown Nairobi tower, the Nation Centre.[10] The newsroom and building that contains it constitute an architectural assemblage that helps to congeal the regional project of the newspaper. The space of the building brings to the surface two significant icons of social justice and a cosmopolitan genre of liberalism in East Africa: the aesthetic significance of past Pan-African leaders and the enigmatic but nevertheless foundational influence of the Aga Khan, a global religious leader and philanthropist with a large developmental footprint in East Africa.[11] The material space of the newsroom is lined by a wrap-around wall mural depicting past East African heads of state. The faces of the former president of Kenya Daniel Arap Moi, the former leader of the SPLM/A, Dr. John Garang, and the first president of the united and independent Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. All of these men were considered world-historical personalities in life, and, in death, they have become exemplars of the idealized masculine political icon discussed in Chapter 2.[12] The mural that depicts their faces conjures a productive nostalgia that draws on their iconic images to conjure *The EastAfrican* as an heir to their Pan-African imagination. The relevance of these particular figures to an East African audience emphasizes the regional proportions of this Pan-African imagination. Their images undergird the gravity of *East Africa* as more than geography but as a keyword containing border-crossing attachments to cultural continuity and the belief in the unique leadership qualities of East Africa's male heads of state.

If, as Hoffman (2017) has observed, architecture can be read ethnographically as the form that conditions political possibility, then the cosmopolitan genre of liberalism espoused by the Aga Khan as the *cosmopolitan ethic* of harmonious transnational community, permeates the ideological apparatus of the newspaper through the very walls of the newsroom and the tower

that houses it. The Nation Centre houses the Nation Media Group (NMG) which owns *The EastAfrican* and is the largest private media company in East Africa and one of the largest media companies on the continent outside of South Africa. Property Development Management Holdings is the real estate company that built the Nation Centre tower. The NMG was founded by The Aga Khan in 1959. The real estate company Property Development Management Holdings was in incorporated in 1963 by The Aga Khan and remains an affiliate of the Aga Khan Development Network. The quotidian effect of the Aga Khan and the ideology associated with him, the *cosmopolitan ethnic*, will be discussed further below. The space of the newsroom itself therefore becomes an icon of the constitutive components of East African political sensibility: its political stance, its moral positioning, its heroes, and its goals.

When I entered their newsroom after navigating a labyrinthian security apparatus in the tower's lobby, I was not confronted with the bustling newsroom that I had come to imagine.[13] Instead, what I found were the muted voices of the 21st century. Reporters were hushing a conversation with their neighbor on their right so as not to bother the one on their left. They hid their voices underneath ticking keyboards with their eyes glued to the screens. The newsroom of *The EastAfrican* compels us to see how African journalists are also interpolated into the silent "office-based screen work" that Boyer (2013) has argued has become the norm of professionalized digital journalism (3). Yet, even as silent screens have become the primary tools with which reporters navigate the fast-paced news of regional political crises, business projects, public health setbacks and diplomatic negotiations, they nevertheless balance their commitment to the practice of muckraking which often calls them far beyond the walls of the newsroom.

Outside of the newsroom, I met Fred Oluoch, who was a long-time writer for *The EastAfrican*. We met in the late morning at a mall in a neighborhood close to the Nairobi airport.

I assumed that we would talk at one of the stylish cafes within the mall but this mall was just an easy meeting point. He used the time to walk to our destination to turn the ethnographic gaze back onto me. As we walked, he asked me about my time in Juba, what had brought me there, where I had been and who I had seen. As he prodded my familiarity with Juba it seemed as though he was interested to see whether I had lived the sequestered life of an U.S. citizen there on official government business or as the itinerant researcher who I claimed to me. He led me through streets of Nairobi that felt more akin to the alleyways of Juba and Khartoum than the lush green roads of Kilimani, Lavington, and Kilelshwa that I had grown accustomed to in my expat radius in Nairobi. Eventually, we arrived at a dimly-lit lone hotel and he promptly led me to where we would sit, in the smoking section. He asked if I had ever tried Tusker, a local beer brewed by East African breweries. Tusker, along with White Bull, was a popular and relatively affordable beer in Juba. For enthusiasts of the beer, TUSKER was a meaningful acronym that had been, through the inventiveness of rumor and hearsay, reappropriated from the original meaning.[14] In East Africa today, the name is said to stand for the countries that constitute East Africa: Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya, and Rwanda. As was the case with the many men in South Sudan and Juba with whom I had tried this beer, Fred made sure to point out the acronym to me, interpellating an East African drinking community who felt represented by the label glued to the bottle. The rumor around the Tusker beer label was a pervasive conduit of transnational connection in which men engaged in an affective form of region-craft wherein even intimate small talk conjured a regional community.

Fred described *The EastAfrican* and himself as Pan-Africanist. He meant this in a literal sense in that even as the writers and editors focus on East Africa, stories from the entire continent are potential subject matter. It was also clear that he identified himself and this work as Pan-

African in that he felt a responsibility to write in a way that was commensurate with the anti-exploitative struggle of Pan-African thinking. This included remaining critical of national governments. We were soon joined by a few of his friends who were also journalists in their own right: one a print journalist like Fred and the other in television. As the morning became afternoon, they all became cowboys, swapping war stories of being violently detained and interrogated by soldiers for the sake of crucial stories. They had all spent time in South Sudan throughout the second civil war and they reflected on the responsibility they felt to report what they had seen, to confront the uncertainty of the future and the violence they survived to report it. Fred and his colleagues had been deeply attached to political developments in South Sudan particularly as they came to spend time in Lavington, a well-known upper-income neighborhood of Nairobi discussed in an earlier chapter.

Perhaps referencing their favorite movies or reminding me of my Americanness, they looked at me and laughingly described these chaotic experiences in their past as "the wild wild west." Yet, the violence immanent in this reference was not simply to be glorified. "We have been reporting so much misery" Fred lamented. "So, now we must go out of our way to write the positive side." This regional responsibility, he insisted, had historical roots that preceded Kenya's current President, Uhuru Kenyatta, who has sloughed off this duty. He reflected on former Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, one of the faces depicted in *The EastAfrican* newsroom. Fred he claimed that Moi had a greater concern for international issues. It was Moi, he argued, who had handed negotiations about South Sudan over to IGAD, after which Kenya's role in mediation diminished. Kenya had nevertheless long been significant to South Sudanese politics, he insisted. For him, this significance was a matter of history. He narrated a chain of events centered on the Second Sudanese civil war. When Dr. John Garang was active in the 1980s,

Kenya was the only option to host the negotiations that ended the civil war in Sudan. Ethiopia's Mengistu Hailemariam was still fighting; Uganda was accusing Khartoum of supporting Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army. Khartoum, in turn, accused Uganda of supporting Dr. John Garang and his SPLM. Kenya, therefore, was the outlier as the only peaceful nation. The influence was palpable then and remains evident. Kenya's imprint is visible in the national flag, which is just a Kenyan flag, without the Maasai shield. As Fred detailed this history, his knowledge of regional politics was a demonstration of how region-craft is a methodology for a robust understanding of the interplay of multinational politics and how professional journalists like himself feel interpellated as members within a broader community with a responsibility to tell the truth of political change as it unfolds beyond the borders of any particular nation-state.

When I met with Sara Bekata, one of the editors of *The EastAfrican*, she made sure to express the centrality of the newspaper to the larger vision of The Aga Khan, a man who is a religious leader who espouses what he calls, the *cosmopolitan ethic* of inter-commonal harmony. He is also an agent of global development whose broad network of projects include this newspaper. For many, the Aga Khan and his commitment to cosmopolitan ethics elicit the feelings of reverence one has for a monarch.[15] Sara spoke of The Aga Khan like a father. She described him with a warmth that left me feeling compelled to ask if she had ever met him in person and yet also obliged to leave the question unasked so as not to belittle her deep affection for him if she had not. She insisted that "anyone who joins *The EastAfrican* knows it is dear to the Aga Khan…The point is to build cohesion," she continued, "to bring people together by highlighting their commonalities." She described the importance of community building when I asked about the newspaper's taxonomy of news on Africa. News stories are divided geographically between two categories: *East Africa* and *Rest of Africa*. This categorization was

not a strategy of marking difference but of marking how the "rest of Africa" is still relevant to East Africa. Describing difference in this way was an affirmation of commonality despite difference rather than a form of erasure or exclusion.

While the Aga Khan is a multi-billionaire and a member of one of the world's most wealthy royal families and thus a man whose image is attributed with more humanity than his flesh, Sarah pulled him back down to earth from the financial stratosphere through his deep personal connection to East Africa. She described the Aga Khan intimately, as if reminding me of a relative who I had forgotten, he "grew up in Kenya and Tanzania, so East Africa is particularly meaningful for him." As an emotional tether, religious ideologies, such as the *cosmopolitan ethic* espoused by the Aga Khan, also lay at the backdrop of *The EastAfrican*. This principle assists in shepherding such transnational projects towards the political, economic, and social harmony that aligns with their inherited duty from the Pan-African imagination.

Sarah reminisced on both the despair and expectation she and her colleagues felt as they observed, from Nairobi, South Sudan's tumultuous campaign for independence. As if reliving the moment that hope began to transform into disappointment, she insisted that no other news outlet "covered John Garang's death like we did."[16] For her, their detailed coverage of this event at *The EastAfrican* was a sign of their commitment to their role in the struggle for South Sudanese self-determination. She and her colleagues hoped that South Sudan would be "more balanced" ten years after independence. Aggrey Mutambo, another writer for *The EastAfrican*, recounted how he followed the development of the peace negotiations in Sudan and marveled at the signing of the CPA. He did not expect that former Sudanese prime minister "Omar Al-Bashir could allow this level of concession…but now it's just disappointing." Despite his lament, Mutambo held onto a hopeful imagination of what South Sudan could have been that resonated with utopian

ideas of Pan-African self-reliance and the Aga Khan's cosmopolitan ethic. He insisted on maintaining hope as Fred and Sara have, claiming that "we all know that if they had peace, they'd be selling food to us," rather than the other way around.

In the weeks leading up to a peace agreement in South Sudan signed in February 2020 between Salva Kiir and Riak Machar, *The EastAfrican* published a story written by Fred Oluoch about a South Sudanese banker and businessman, Dr. Addis Ababa Othow Akongdit the first, and, at the time, only South Sudanese executive of Kenya's Equity Bank. The story, covering Dr. Addis Ababa's career trajectory and motivation, seemed out of place in the context of the upcoming peace agreement which was the result of tense ethnically charged negotiations to end years of armed hostility. Much of *The EastAfrican's* coverage, as is the case with other regional and western outlets, has been on the violence of war in South Sudan. When I met Fred in a cafe in Nairobi, far from the space of the newsroom, he explained that there had been an explicit editorial choice to publish what one might call *feel good* stories of South Sudan. Originally, he continued, the story focused less on the autobiography of Dr. Addis Ababa and more on the challenges that Kenyan banks faced in establishing South Sudan-based branches due to the ongoing political instability. The goal of switching the focus was to contrast against the tone of much of the continental and global news coverage of South Sudan's tumultuous years since independence. Sara Bekata insisted that as East Africans, "we have a responsibility, we live here so if we are the first to feel war, we should be the first to both feel and support peace." As she explained that they, at *The EastAfrican,* had a responsibility to "re-energize public support for resolving the ongoing conflict," she seemed driven by the Aga Khan's *cosmopolitan ethic*. "If you just report fail, fail, fail," she repeated in exasperation, "people get tired. People need to be shown something else can happen…When you write about what South Sudan is capable of,

people realize." The goal of their story about Dr. Addis Ababa interpellated South Sudan into a disappointing case that might nevertheless be repaired through a pluralistic ethic interwoven with ideas of humanitarian responsibility and peaceful coexistence which is consonant with the ideology of the financial benefactor of the entire enterprise.

Al-Mawgif (The Stance)

This section attends to the emotional and political tension around the Arabic press in South Sudan. It follows one particular newspaper, *Al-Mawgif* (The Stance) to demonstrate how the Arabic press remains a salient site for the lingering connection to Khartoum enacted by South Sudanese political thinkers. The writers for this newspaper are not necessarily professional journalists but have been trained in a number of fields including pharmaceutics and engineering. Many of them are interested in multiple genres of writing such as fiction and poetry. The government of South Sudan has turned increasingly toward the English-speaking world of East Africa centered in Nairobi and Kampala. As such, the audience for Arabic daily newspapers has dwindled. The national education system is neither invested in increasing the number of people that can both speak and understand the Arabic language nor investing in Arabic language literacy to increase the number of people who can read and write Arabic to the extent that they might be interested in Arabic language newspapers. Yet, as so many political voices of the past have been educated and raised in Khartoum, the Arabic language and the Arabic press remain important conduits for how they voice their criticism of the government in South Sudan. As my interlocutors have claimed, critical journalism written in Arabic is targeted more heavily than its English counterpart. The Arabic language itself has thus become a powerful symbol of contestation that at once indexes the historical detractors of the southern push for self-

determination and the lingering community of highly-educated writers who find difficulty carving a niche for themselves in the new country.

My interest in the Arabic press was piqued by witnessing the material challenges to it. There are significant obstacles to the national press in general as newspaper incomes decline and printing presses suffer from fuel shortages. Yet, the Arabic press acutely suffer from these conditions. At times in the mornings in Juba, one might arrive at the newspaper stand at the side of the road and find only the English language newspapers imported from Kampala or Nairobi. At others, one might find a copy of *Al-Mawgif* with an entire center-fold story redacted. These highly visible structural challenges became palpable through individual connections at A*l-Mawgif*. In Juba, one can feel surrounded by news media as information about political crises, change, and developments were ubiquitous. As radio was the primary form of mass media for so many, one could walk through the neighborhoods at the outskirts of Juba and hear the news on *Eye Radio, Radio Mirraya,* or *VOA news* pouring out of handheld radios. Televisions in hotel lobbies appeared fixed on the South Sudanese Broadcasting Network streaming news of political events interspersed with references to cultural events showcasing the nations multiple ethnicities. In light of the multiple ethnic groups, nationalities, and languages extant in Juba I wondered what role, if any, mass media played in consolidating these communities.

My entry into this community of knowledge producers began at the office of a local graphic designer, Kuong. He explained to me that he was the artist who had designed the South Sudanese coat of arms that decorated the military's uniforms. This otherwise banal symbol was significant because it enabled leaders to evoke nationalistic emotions. In Juba today, the confluence of South Sudanese ethnicities and East African migrants from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia has produced multiple contesting ideas of who belongs and what

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language they should speak, as nation-building continues to be at the forefront of the social and political agenda. In addition to the influx of regional migrants, the status of the Arabic language remains a contentious hallmark of the national past. The writers at *Al-Mawgif* and their role models were educated in Arabic at universities in Khartoum and Cairo. Many southern Sudanese ruling elites in government were educated in English either in their Churches or in universities in Kenya and Uganda. Arabic language newspapers, therefore, the principal mass-mediated Arabic-language material, also conjures ambivalence for contemporary political identity in South Sudan.

Kuong was the first South Sudanese political thinker I met in Juba. It was through his connections that I came to see a much broader transnational network. During one of our conversations, Kuong described the meaning he wanted to convey through choosing the African fish eagle for the South Sudanese coat of arms. In particular, he was able to capture the historical stages of South Sudan's struggle in the segmentation of the eagle's wings. As he showed me earlier drafts of his drawing, he also displayed the news articles in *Al-Mawgif* newspaper that had celebrated the government's decision to choose his design. As I made note of the newspaper's name, he mentioned that before renting his own design studio, he designed the page layout for *Al-Mawgif*. I took that opportunity to ask if he could connect me to anyone still working there. He made a phone call to one of the editors. We walked downstairs for a meal after which he led me up the stairs in a neighboring building and I found myself in the office of the editor surrounded by its reporters and administrative staff. The editor took it upon himself to mention the names of well-known South Sudanese thinkers such as Bona Malwal, Lam Akol, and the late BBC journalist and former member of parliament Alfred Taban. What patience he had for me seemed grounded in the fact that I recognized their names and could also list some of their recent

work. These men were not only important intellectuals and political leaders in their communities but were their colleagues and, in some cases, their relatives.

The depth of their political commitments became clearer over the weeks that I spent visiting their office daily, drinking tea, misunderstanding jokes, and asking too many questions. One day I shared with them a phrase that I had overhead repeatedly as I walked through Juba. "*Laman Kunta fii Sudan…*" or "When I was in Sudan…" followed by various references to a comparatively efficient bureaucratic, administrative, or infrastructural apparatus in Khartoum. I would hear this phrase whenever basic pieces of urban infrastructure failed and folks were stuck in traffic due to flooded streets or the value of the currency had fallen precipitously and the price of various commodities went up. When I shared this with the journalists of *Al-Mawgif*, they erupted in dispute, as though this expression of nostalgia amounted to a call for the re-establishment of racial governance resonant with apartheid South Africa.

One reporter insisted, "almost 100% of us voted for separation, so who really thinks it was better then?" The administrative staff who handled salaries added, "at the start, the SSP was strong, now that it is weak, people are just complaining…Why would anyone want to return to a life in which they were second class citizens?"

On the one hand, there were residents responding to an empirical reality with an imagined material solution to their socio-economic hardship. On the other, there were intellectuals preserving a romantic adherence to the concept of self-determination and anti-colonial sovereignty, albeit directed at a fellow African political entity. Their responses to my question signaled an imagined national community, built on escape from shared oppression, that positioned Khartoum as the site of continuous domination. They seemed to ask, how could anyone dream of returning? Yet, although the employees at *Al-Mawgif* expressed their staunch

commitment to nation-building in South Sudan despite the political economic challenges, many of their staff remain connected to Khartoum through friends, audiences, colleagues, family members, and memories. They maintain these now trans-border relationships and communities through conversational references to the place and through regular trips to Khartoum that include convening literary clubs at street corner tea shops to delivering lectures at the University of Khartoum. What is striking about these relationships is not necessarily that they remain, even as they have been bifurcated by a border. Rather, what is striking is that these primarily Arabic speaking journalists in Juba depend on careers in which they, their own audiences and their readerships are now spread across a border. As such, they must continually return to Khartoum in order to, as one former reporter at this paper has explained to me, "continue to feel relevant." Many of these individuals who are often identified as *Khartoumers* feel that their relevance is waning as South Sudan turns southward, away from the Arabic-speaking world of Sudan and towards the English-speaking domain of Kenya and Uganda.[17]

Radio Tamazuj

This section attends to how government censorship has compelled writers for *Radio Tamazuj* to leave South Sudan semi-permanently or to operate clandestinely in country. It argues that as writers devise transnational strategies to produce journalism, state surveillance has only engendered a broader regional network of surveillance. As a digital form of news production, *Radio Tamazuj* has been able to evade the gaze of the national security apparatus of South Sudan. Because their writers must continually think about the surveillance of state power, my

ethnographic engagement with this news source was burdened with the fear of government surveillance and targeting.

Radio Tamazuj is an online news source committed to covering issues relevant to South Sudanese wherever they may be, whether within the territorial borders of the state or beyond them. *Tamazuj* has operated since 2012, shortly after South Sudan became independent. The name, *tamazūj,* is an Arabic word for intermingling, mixing, and intermarriage. The name was originally meant to capture the hybridity of its original area of focus, the communities along the new border drawn between Sudan and South Sudan. In those geographies, the intermingling of so-called Arab and non-Arab language and culture was salient. While *Radio Tamazuj* has since expanded its reach beyond the borderlands, they maintain their commitment to underscoring the vast forms of difference that take shape within and between the now two Sudans. Their programming offers news articles in both English and the Arabic language as well as a daily Arabic language podcast. They identify themselves as independent journalists, not beholden to any government organization in Sudan or South Sudan. Due to security concerns from the government in South Sudan, they do not attach author names to their articles (aside from opinion pieces), list the names of editorial staff, or provide a location of their offices.

In 2017, the prevailing picture of South Sudan drawn by the global media was a country on the brink of another outbreak of ethnic violence. The *United States Institute of Peace* published a report with strategies to avoid what they called a "looming genocide" and mass starvation against President Salva Kiir's ethnic group.[18] The report insisted, the threat of "inter-tribal dehumanization and incitement" was rampant, emerging in all extant ethnic groups. Against that backdrop, *Radio Tamazuj* provided a window into how South Sudanese journalists themselves decided to represent the course their country had taken. The interviews in local

Arabic that they stream on their podcast also highlighted local opinions designed for local consumption to foster conversations about what local communities felt were pressing issues and how the communities themselves or state and national governments might address them.

Yet, in that same year, as I perused the *Radio Tamazuj* website at the Juba University internet cafe, an error message appeared. The pages failed to load. I assumed this was an issue with the internet connection. Yet, as I looked around at the screens of my fellow cafe-goers contently fulfilling their online tasks, I had no explanation for why only the website for *Radio Tamazuj* had failed to load. Later that week, I would learn that the Ministry of Information had, in that moment, blocked national internet access to *Radio Tamazuj*. Minister of Information Michael Makuei claimed that this decision was in retaliation to how the site's reporters had disseminated information they considered hostile to the government. If they are in conflict with us, he argued, "then we have the authority to close them."[19] Here, the minister's reference to "close" the site refers to his decision to deny access to it throughout the country. *Radio Tamazuj* remains unavailable within South Sudan.

As I learned more about *Radio Tamazuj* I assumed I would have the same luck with their writers as I had with the reporters at *Al-Mawgif*. Yet, the website itself contained only an anonymous contact form, no address in South Sudan or anywhere else. I had only begun to take note of this anonymity once the website was unavailable. This led to a range of questions. Who were the journalists? What ethnic group(s) did they represent? Perhaps most importantly for me as an anthropologist, where were they? My search for the writers behind *Radio Tamazuj* compelled me to think *regionally* about South Sudan generally and about localized forms of journalism in particular. Their security measures, however, would make it difficult to render their staff or their office(s) into ethnographic objects. Anonymity was a goal and a strategy that could

not be sacrificed in the name of anthropological research. A year later, I would meet a self-identified *Radio Tamazuj* journalist not in Juba but in Kenya. He agreed to meet me along with the mutual friend who connected us and he was only comfortable meeting in second-story cafes in semi-concealed corners where he would see who came in, but those who came him may not immediately see him. Their security concerns had been heightened by an attack on one of their writers in Kenya. This attack had led them to direct all official communication with *Radio Tamazuj* through a third party organization, the Holland-based *Free Press Unlimited*.[20] Residence outside of South Sudan was, in part, what made it possible to maintain the news site and to allow them to report on what he described as issues important to South Sudanese nationals, wherever they may be.

The writer who I met was a cynical critic of the government. By virtue of the secrecy around our conversations, the information he shared with me blurred the boundaries between rumor, conspiracy, and news. The civil war that had erupted in South Sudan after independence was, in his estimation, a technology of popular distraction. Rather than focusing on the lack of infrastructure and social services which may lead to popular unrest, he explained, people are distracted by war. Relatedly, he insisted that the decision to accede to regional unions—the IGAD and EAC—was only an elite decision that lacked popular consent. His distrust of political elites extended into the region to include, for example, the monopoly of Kenyan banks in South Sudan and the transnational influence of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni over regional geopolitics.

While I had multiple conversations with this reporter, he kept me at an arm's length. In response to any question I asked even remotely related to the details of their operations, he directed me to contact the offices of *Free Press Unlimited*. They might ultimately connect me to

him but I would have to be vetted through them if our conversations were to go any deeper. The rapport that I established with him contained an ambivalence that was constitutive of many of my relationships with self-identified journalists. We could talk for hours over tea and coffee but I may not necessarily leave even having learned their official name. Instead, they would use a familiar nickname that they might use amongst friends. In that way, the fear of government surveillance came to intrude on the ethnographic intimacy that made these conversations possible. In the past, colleagues of his had been targeted by NSS agents from South Sudan searching for the writers behind the now notorious *Radio Tamazuj*. The fear of this occurring again, either to him or to another colleague, is what kept him in exile in Nairobi and what fueled his journalistic practice.

Wajuma News

This sections demonstrates the dissolution of the stable newsroom as the principal site of news production. Instead, walking city streets while conducting the activities of everyday life have become the site at which large-scale geopolitical knowledge becomes the object of reflection and criticism. One goal of this section is to parse the experience of one interlocutor, Adiang. In particular, this section emphasizes the afterlife of Adiang's experience in prison in Juba. This section situates his incarceration as the catalysis for his turn to critical journalism in order to analyze the imprint of violence on the production of news beyond the paradigm of human rights (Bishara 2013), and as productive of political agency and significations of masculinity (Açıksöz 2012). The objective here is to see how processes of news production become embodied and embedded into everyday life as forces that compel transnational exile.

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Adiang was arrested, detained, and tortured in prison in Juba for journalistic articles he had written in Arabic critical of the government's relationship with the branch of the SPLM/A in the Nuba Mountains, the SPLM-N. He argued that the government should not prioritize their support this branch of the party and instead focus on issues plaguing the masses of South Sudanese citizens. Not only had the content of the article garnered the ire of the government but that he had written in Arabic tugged on the lingering scar of Arabic-speaking and Khartoum-based critics of the SPLM/A. Although the federal government does not support the growth of Arabic literacy, it is arguably more widespread than literacy in English. Articles critical of the government written in Arabic therefore garner more attention as they reach a potentially much broader audience.

A New York-based human rights group, *Non-Violence International*, had assisted him out of Juba into Uganda and then finally to Khartoum. There were emotional, physical, and political remnants of his detention. Yet this carceral debris was not spectacular. It was mundane and as such, it only became visible over time. One evening over tea at a cafe he complained of discomfort as he adjusted the back brace he had been wearing under his loose shirt. He had been wearing the brace since he had regained movement in his legs after the physical abuse he had suffered at the Blue House, Juba's notorious prison facility. As he had applied for and failed to acquire refugee status in Germany, his narrative of torture and subsequent flight was a well-rehearsed and heart-wrenching account.

The first time I met Adiang, one of the first things he shared with me was his ID card showing his affiliation with a Ugandan magazine *The Worker's Eye* which is affiliated with the Ugandan Journalists Union. He handed me the card as he relayed a story from his time in Kampala during a routine traffic stop by police one evening. What was important about this story

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was that when the Ugandan officer asked for his identification, the press credentials were the only identification he had. With a proud smile, he described the shock on the offer's face and that the officer had decided not to push Adiang for the small bribe to which he would usually have gestured. "They fear journalists in Uganda more than in Kenya or South Sudan," Adiang remembered, "and they are freer." This story of invulnerability in the face of police stood in stark contrast to what he had described in being targeted and silenced in Juba.

My connection to Adiang had grown out of my ongoing relationship with the writers from *Al-Mawgif,* in Juba. He had worked with them in the past and had also written for that publication. Adiang was part of a much larger network who would circulate around the region from their permanent homes in Khartoum rather than from Juba. Unable to reproduce the influence he had felt in Kampala or to overcome the structural impediments to South Sudanese professionals in Sudan, Adiang had started his own online news source, *Wajuma News*. The name *Wajuma* is not a word but an acronym of the three major cities in South Sudan; Wau, Juba, and Malakal. Adiang felt that he had a responsibility to provide information in a setting where his communities were already lacking so many basic resources. "The people who want information" he told me, "they are hungry. The reader is a hungry person." His understanding of his role as a provider resonated with the uncertainty that had come to characterize his nuclear family that stretched across the Sudan/South Sudan border. His elder brother had passed away unexpectedly and the expectations of the eldest son and family provider had fallen on him.

Many of our conversations occurred while actively walking through the streets of the city. We would walk through *Suq Al'Arabi* (The Arab Market), an open air market in downtown Khartoum, discussing a story he was working on, why it was important and, if it was in English, he would ask me whether I was willing to proofread it. At the time, the walking seemed

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convenient as I would accompany him on his day-to-day errands to buy clothes or books for his family. Occasionally, he would describe how or why a particular story might be of concern for the South Sudanese government. When we met for tea in the late mornings and early afternoon, he began to point out specific actors who he knew to be surveillance agents from South Sudan. They were former classmates and friends of his from their shared time attending military college in Sudan. He pointed out the building downtown near *Suq Al-Arabi* that he believed they were using as their headquarters. "They are searching for who is behind *Wajuma News*" he would whisper to me in English. A number of his trusted friends had relayed to him that they had been asked whether they knew who was in charge of the website. The moments when he would mention his fears of surveillance accumulated over time and they clarified that our constant walking was itself a security measure. The people around us could, of course, hear us as we passed by but they could not listen to the narrative of our conversation or to the broader context that he would explain. When the men he pointed out eventually asked Adiang what he knew, it became clear that were under the impression that they were searching for a group of people writing stories for *Wajuma News,* rather than an individual. The anonymity of the internet became a partial strategy to evade state surveillance.

Yet, Adiang had of course not always self-identified as a governmental muckraker. This was a new perspective that was largely a product of his incarceration. In 2011, he had returned to Juba hoping to put the surveillance skills he had learned in military college to use as his contribution to building the new nation. It was his detention and torture, he reflected, that compelled him "to think twice" about the violence of the state. The clarity of this new perspective resonated with a similar process occurring at the national scale as a group of eleven government Ministers and other high-ranking SPLM/A members had been detained after

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independence due to their role in a suspected coup attempt and disagreements over the share of oil revenues with Sudan. This group came to the negotiation table following their release as a new entity known as the *Former Detainees* (FD's). The process by which they were reintegrated into the government highlighted the extent to which they had become a consolidated bloc. Adiang's transformation across multiple borders resonated with that of the FD's, as they came to be known. Political detention had multiple effects, the least of which is often the intended effect of the suppression of political dissent. The consonance between these two moments of politicization demonstrated the inter scalar quality to the ways in which personal fears of governmental surveillance and targeting come to have much broader affects that extend to politics on a national and transnational scale.

Rumors of a Toxic Relationship

This section addresses pervasive rumor and hearsay as an unstable counterpoint to more predictable forms of news media as constitutive of a transnational regional listening and reading community. In particular, this section attends to rumors about the alleged influence of the president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, over South Sudan in general and, in particular its president, Salva Kiir Mayardit. The section argues that the position of the muckraker has been decoupled from the practice of journalism and appropriated broadly by South Sudanese intelligentsia throughout the region as they articulate a polemic against the geopolitical influence of Yoweri Museveni. The contribution of this section also boldens the deconstruction of the idealized masculine head of state in Africa by placing two *soldier-cum-presidents* in relation to

one another in friendship or apprenticeship rather than as the self-sufficient former rebels that their iconic images suggest.

There is a longstanding relationship between Yoweri Museveni and the political leadership in Sudan and South Sudan. This relationship itself and the circulation of rumors about it contribute to the configuration of regional linkages. Individuals in multiple regional cities participate in the exchange and spread of hearsay about President Museveni's relationship with President Salva Kiir. The knowledge of political history and contemporary geopolitics required to make possible assertions about this relationship conjure the method and phenomenon of region-craft. The reflections of my interlocutors converge on what they understand as a relationship of domination in which South Sudan has simply replaced one imperious distant government, in Sudan, with another, in Uganda. The shared frustration about Salva Kiir's alleged weakness in this relationship has amplified the speculation around Museveni and Kiir into an object of everyday analysis driven by the desire to expose and terminate their uneven connection. Many South Sudanese thinkers believe this relationship is an obstacle to the nation's future development. This geopolitical conjecture animates group conversations over tea, hushed conversations at mall cafes and hotel lobbies in Khartoum, Juba, and Nairobi where South Sudanese thinkers congregate and debate the political future of South Sudan. Rumors about this openly secret relationship are not uttered in resignation but as a polemic against Museveni, as though my interlocutors have deputized themselves as muckrakers, repeating familiar critiques launched at African heads of state: rampant corruption, lack of transparency, and (often tribal or ethnically inflected) nepotism.

While South Sudanese political thinkers throughout the region insist that this relationship operates in this way on an interpersonal and geopolitical scale, there is no empirical proof to this

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effect. Yet, this conjecture is very much a part of regular conversations that characterize day-to-day reflections on South Sudan's place in the political spectrum of contemporary East Africa. As one interlocutor, a professor at Comboni College described, "Museveni can't rule Uganda without exploiting South Sudan." This position on their relationship was the principal shared opinion that gave palpable coherence to this protean regional constellation. The absence of proof therefore has led me to understand these rumors as a *phantom epistemology* (Peterson 2009). This is a way of apprehending phantom information that eludes certainty, occupying the nexus of rumor and positive knowledge. Peterson developed this concept in the context of the public health framework in contemporary Nigeria wherein rumors or "sociopolitical truths about corruption [were] often anecdotal data (Peterson 2009, 39)." *Phantom epistemologies* is therefore a means to analyze anecdotal data as socially and politically significant information even though it may not satisfy the demands of empirical social science.

The rumors about Museveni occur throughout the region and in multiple registers of knowledge production. They are rooted in Juba and are exacerbated by the presence of Kenyan and Ugandan nationals which has been met with xenophobia emerging out of competition in the post-independence labor market. These anxieties have coalesced around the perception that Ugandans and Kenyans, having enjoyed fifty years of independence and English language rather than Arabic language-based education, would out-compete South Sudanese nationals for employment opportunities in their own country. In Nairobi, political analyst Peter Nyaba has asserted that "Museveni is the real president of South Sudan." In his own writing on the multiple crises faced by South Sudan, Nyaba has described Museveni as a "regional super president auxiliary to Kiir (Nyaba 2016, pg 174)." Nyaba's assertion exceeds Museveni's influence in South Sudan and extends it to a broader regional polemic targeting Museveni's transnational

aspirations. Nyaba and others, who continue to maintain that Museveni may have played a role in the death of Dr. John Garang, believe that Museveni considered Garang his only intellectual rival in the region as a fellow graduate of Dar es Salaam University in Tanzania. With Dr. John out of the way, Museveni had the ability to diplomatically outmaneuver any other president of the region. In the frame of concepts like *Black Internationalism*, the concurrence of postcolonial political leaders at the same Global South university is read as a moment generative of an anti-imperialist political perspective adversarial to the West. The rumors surrounding Museveni, however, compel into view an African political space in which two men compete rather than cooperate.

In Khartoum, Comboni College professor, James, insisted that "Kiir cannot take any step without Museveni." To emphasize his point he rhetorically posed a call-and-response, "people used to say: who is ruling South Sudan? Museveni!" James, like Peter Nyaba, asserted their interpretation of this relationship as grounded in the facts of public discourse, "even he (Kiir) said this in one of his speeches. Uganda is everything." Irrespective of the content or context of this speech, it evidenced, for James, Kiir's extra-territorial commitments that strengthen a geopolitically toxic relationship. These assertions often accompanied an analysis of South Sudan's historical and contemporary relationship to East Africa and a narration of the specific regional political history that undergirds this myth. Another interlocutor in Khartoum, Ruth, reflected on South Sudan's past and present to explain that "our problem was never just Al-Bashir, from the beginning there were lies and mistakes…We expect things to get worse. The worst thing is the influence of Uganda. We bring milk, fish, and mango from Uganda. Our kids go to Uganda to learn and yet look at that bad English! The [Ugandan] shilling was below the SSP (South Sudanese Pound), now it is above. Uganda can't leave South Sudan in peace." Ruth's

comments reflected a wide range of thinkers who understand Museveni's influence as an impediment to the growth of South Sudan's economy such that it might decrease its reliance on importing Ugandan products and labor. Her attention to the affect this relationship has on children resonates with how region-craft inflects family structures as educational careers often span multiple regional borders. Specifically, her reference to poor Ugandan English indexed her interpretation of the benefits of South Sudan's relationship to East Africa as it offered the unfulfilled *promise* of financial uplift through exposure to English language learning. There is a subtextual reference to the English that South Sudanese children might better learn in Sudan rather than the adulterated version, falsely advertised as refined, that is available in Uganda. What drove such frustrations that center on the influence of Museveni and Uganda is the commitment to ending the relationship between Museveni and Kiir by exposing it and thereby resolving the unevenness that has continued to characterize South Sudan's transnational relationships.

In the memoir of her role in the negotiations to end the South Sudanese civil war, Norwegian diplomat Hilde Johnson made note of and participated in the pervasive public gossip about Salva Kiir's relationship to Museveni. She described the profound significance attached to basic gestures. She recalls having attended a presidential speech in July 2013 where she noticed that Salva Kiir did not acknowledge the presence of his Vice President, Riak Machar. As this occurred only months before the civil war had spread to Juba, rumors emerged about whether Salva Kiir's decision to sack Machar from party leadership had been long premeditated. At the independence celebration, she and others observed that President Museveni had arrived in Juba for the celebration of the independence anniversary and had stayed in country for *one* extra day longer than planned. Seeing this, she recalled, "speculation was rampant," as regional leaders

wondered whether Museveni had been advising Salva Kiir to remove Machar long before he did (Johnson 2016, 167). The presence of rumors about Kiir and Museveni's relationship in Hilde Johnson's memoir demonstrate the salience of these stories not only for popular understandings but for how the political elite ruling the country also maintain this pervasive rumor. Of the elements of region-craft discussed thus far in this dissertation, the rumors about Museveni were undoubtedly the most pervasive. Whether in Khartoum, Juba, or Nairobi the mention of Museveni's relationship to South Sudan and to Salva Kiir would elicit a conversation that seemed uncoupled from space and time that might end and be picked up again at any moment and in any place throughout the Nile Valley.

The principal history that circulates as a foundation to these rumors, is itself rumor, albeit based on fact. Both Yoweri Museveni and the late Dr. John Garang attended the University of Dar es Salaam at the same time in the 1960s. The concomitance of their enrollment has led many to say that Museveni saw Garang as his only intellectual rival in East Africa and knew that Salva Kiir, rumored to be a military man without much depth, would replace him in his absence. As the rumor says, this decades-old rivalry was therefore Museveni's motivation to plan the helicopter crash in which Garang lost his life so that he could more easily direct South Sudanese politics through the pliable Salva Kiir. While the university was a significant meeting point for left-wing African political thinkers, the two men did not meet there (Prunier 2008, 80).

A positivist history for the rumors about these two men began in 1986 when Yoweri Museveni assumed power in Uganda. The following year, Mengistu Haile Mariam's abolished his military *Derg* regime.[21] Lam Akol, in his memoir of the struggle of SPLA/M, describes the fall out of this regime as the catalyst for he and other SPLA commanders to marshal southern Sudanese refugees out of the Gambela region of southern Ethiopia's border with what is now

South Sudan (Akol 2003, 267).[22] The drastic changes in Ethiopia led to a violent rift in the SPLA in 1991 which has left enduring cleavages within the political leadership, particularly between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riak Machar.

In 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) emerged as a challenge to Museveni's one-party system in Uganda. The SPLA became a focal point for a regional war of position between Uganda and Sudan. Sudan's Omar Al-Bashir supported the LRA and Museveni supported the SPLA/M, each man acting in retaliation as they supported each other's rebels (Dubal 2018, 18). This war of position extended to Riak Machar's individual efforts to support peaceful negotiations between the Ugandan government and the LRA leader Joseph Kony. This has, in turn, led Museveni to support Salva Kiir whenever tensions arise between Kiir and Machar. Museveni's prominent role as a mediator between the two factions of the SPLM/A, one led by Salva Kiir and the other by Riak Machar, has been a major cause in the perceived apprenticeship in which Kiir follows and Museveni leads.

Summary

My objective in this chapter has been to demonstrate how the production and spread of information constitutes a crucial register of how region has been remade in the aftermath of South Sudan's political independence. Processes of communication are not always straightforward or predictable and also come in the form of rumor, gossip, and whispers that may not satisfy the requirements of positive empirical science. This chapter has addressed the intersecting and related practices of knowledge production that take shape as journalistic practice on the one hand and as rumor on the other. It has paid ethnographic attention to the daily

practices, decisions, and observations of South Sudanese and other East African writers. For my interlocutors, Khartoum, Nairobi and Kampala were important sites of intellectual production. Yet, this chapter also attended to the history of journalistic news production in post-colonial Africa to avoid romanticizing the role of the self-proclaimed independent journalist as a vigilant critic of contemporary African governments.

This chapter has highlighted the affective cartographic work accomplished by the regional newspaper *The EastAfrican* as one important site at which the practice of region making takes shape. As the *de facto* media arm of the East African Community (EAC), *The EastAfrican* is a principal component in the project of region construction. The newspaper interpellates a regional reading audience into being by fostering transnational concern for the political and economic issues that face the member state countries of the EAC. The newspaper conjures the productive imagination of two important icons, the Aga Khan and regional heads of state. Its newsroom display the nostalgia of infamous familiar heads of state to conjure a particular Pan-African imagination with regional proportions. The cosmopolitan ethic of the Aga Khan permeates the ideological apparatus of the newspaper, positioning it as a driving force in the production of harmonious transnational community.

This chapter has attended to the emotional and political tension centered on the Arabic press in South Sudan. The journalists at *Al-Mawgif* are members of a transnational network of thinkers and writers. Entering into this community relies on recognizing the importance of intellectual genealogy for these writers as they position themselves along a trajectory of journalists who have taken on the role of government criticism. The men and women who write for *Al-Mawgi*f demonstrated how journalism was not simply a vocation but a conduit for the associational lives of thinkers from many educational backgrounds. Yet, as all of the writers for

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this newspaper were educated in Khartoum, they remain intimately linked to the city despite their staunch commitment to reside within and to participate in nation-building in South Sudan. Spending time with this community revealed the significance of Khartoum despite the trauma of the past civil wars and the forms of marginalization that led to them.

It has paid attention to how government censorship has compelled writers for *Radio Tamazuj* to leave South Sudan semi-permanently or to operate in secret in country. In doing so, this chapter has argued that as writers find creative ways to produce journalistic content, state surveillance has only engendered a broader regional network of communication. Engaging ethnographically with a news source constituted by journalists who wished to remain anonymous required appreciating how flexible the everyday work of media production can be. The secrecy and phantom quality of the journalistic practice of *Radio Tamazuj* framed both how rumor and hushed whispers come to be integral parts of public knowledge production and how suspicious and atomized writers must work in order to ensure safety. Radio tamazuj sat at the junction between straightforward and predictable forms of communication and the reticent, unpredictable, and phantom.

This chapter has attended to the prevalence of rumor about the relationship between two regional Presidents, Salva Kiir Mayardit and Yoweri Museveni. Popular perspectives on this relationship seem to bring together a vast regional network into one shared public space collectively aligned to dismantle this apparent apprenticeship and enable South Sudan to slough off yet another exploitative neighboring government.

This chapter has teased out the afterlife of Adiang's experience in prison in order to analyze the imprint of violence on the production of news beyond the paradigm of human rights (Bishara 2013), and as productive of political agency and significations of masculinity (Açıksöz

2012). Paying close attention to the afterlife of Adiang's time in prison provided a way to see how processes of news production are decoupled from the stable newsroom entirely and become embedded within everyday life. His story of detainment and refugee flight conjures a regional trajectory in which Kampala provided a safe haven from the government in Sudan. In Khartoum, the memories of his time in Kampala serve a regional imagination of self and community facilitated by regular movement between regional cities. His return to Khartoum after living in Juba is also indexical of the counter-linearity of political independence that has shaped the trajectory of many of his peers. The significance of the return to Khartoum will be discussed in the following chapter.

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[1] While Francis Nyamnjoh's (2005) insight regarding the persistent low internet coverage of much of Africa remains significant, on the one hand, there has been a significant increase in the availability of mobile phones since the early 2000s. In 2004, 9% of Africans had access to mobile phones and by the end of 2020, this number has increased to 46%. On the other, the availability of internet connections notwithstanding, low-tech news sources such as radio and print journalism remain significant.

[2] Both of these radio programs are funded by Global North institutions. *Radio Mirraya* is a program under the UNMISS umbrella and *Voice of America* is the largest U.S. state-owned international radio broadcaster.

[3] Another important source of news production are tweets that contain the hashtag #SSOT which is a South Sudanese appropriation of Kenya's #KOT which Kenyan political and economic thinkers and commentators have long used to consolidate a national and global conversation on political developments in and around Kenya. South Sudanese writers, political commentators, and researchers have used #SSOT for the same purposes. The tweets and threads that contain both hashtags provide a window into a border-transgressing world of social media news production.

[4] The term *muckraking* was originally used by U.S. President Theodor Roosevelt to describe the generation of activist journalists whose expository writing, such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, throughout the Progressive Era highlighted the violent machinations of capitalist industry.

[5] While *The Juba Post* was the first independent English-language newspaper based in Juba, it was not the first newspaper written or published by southern Sudanese writers.

[6] I do not think South Sudan is unique in this respect as a conservative posture has been shared by newly independent African governments faced with the task of consolidating a multi-ethnic community and galvanizing popular support for new government policies and officials.

7 Malwal, like his age-mate Peter Nyaba who were both discussed in previous chapters, was eventually incarcerated as a political prisoner under the Nimeiri regime (Deng 1995). In a 1991 interview, Malwal describes how his second publication, *The Sudan Gazette*, was banned when the regime of former President Omar Al-Bashir seized power in the June 1989 coup. Malwal then published the *Sudan Democratic Gazette* from London between 1990 and 2001.

8 There is a vast literature that addresses the question of imperialism's dependence on the control of circulating information (Choudhury 2010, Bonea 2016, and others)

9 Here he builds off of Fred Cooper's 2005 analysis that, to understand the production of colonial space, we cannot rely on "a contrast between a past of territorial boundedness and a present of interconnection and fragmentation" but rather an oscillation between processes that both territorialize and deterritorialize and both construct and destroy social and political connections (Cooper 2005 92,105).

10 I follow anthropologists of news production who have argued that over-emphasizing the newsroom elides not only the historical development of "functionally specialized areas…devoted to news production" but also the many prominent global newspapers that function without dedicated space (Wahl-Jorgensen 2010, 24).

11 The Aga Khan is an inherited title held by Prince Karim Al-Husseini, the Imam of the Nizari Ismaili Shias. His multiple projects, e.g. his development network and the Aga Khan University network, stretch across the Middle East, South Asia, and East Africa.

12 See also the discussion in Clarke 2019 on the icon of the Pan-African Freedom Fighter.

13 As in, that which characterized the 1988-1998 U.S. television series about a sarcastic investigative journalist, *Murphy Brown*.

14 East African Breweries was formerly Kenya Breweries owned by Charles and George Hurst, two British settlers in Kenya. They were notorious farmland owners, gold prospectors, and safari hunters. On a hunt, Charles was impaled by the tusks of an elephant and the beer was named in remembrance of that event.

15 This concept of this ethic is grounded theologically in the first *ayah* of *Sura An-Nisā* in which *Allah* says: "O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from the two spread a multitude of men and women." This point of departure for a vision of pluralism that embraces difference as a divine creation and community-building as a religious duty (Dewji 2018, Andani 2019).

16 Former SPLM/A leader and vice president of Sudan, the late Dr. John Garang, continues to be an extremely significant figure in the South Sudanese political imagination. In hotels, businesses, and restaurants in Juba today, his portrait often hangs next to the current president, Salva Kiir Mayardit, as if Garang remains an active civil servant. His sudden death in a helicopter accident in 2005 was a pivotal moment in the political relationship between the SPLM and the government in Khartoum. While a peace agreement had been signed in 2005, his death seemed to mark the end of the possibility for popular reconciliation between the "north" and "south" of Sudan.

17 In her (2016) dissertation, Nikki Kindersely provides an extremely helpful definition of *Khartoumers* that I build on here. *Khartoumers* were previously called *jellaba* (a references to the loose-fitting traditional dress worn by people throughout the Nile Valley and the greater Arabic speaking world). Now, the term refers to people who once lived in Khartoum, often accused of being over-educated, over-serious, and snobbish by people who lived in Uganda and Kenya during the two civil wars.

18 This is quoted from the USIP report: https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/south-sudan-looming-genocide-plans-prevention

[19] This was drawn from an article on *Radio Tamazuj's* website describing the censorship: https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/government-blocks-access-to-radio-tamazuj-website-observers-condemn-decision

[20] Free Press Unlimited also manages the security for their sister news source in Sudan, *Radio Dabanga*.

[21] The liberalization of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev led to a retreat of financial and military support to global communist governments such as the *Derg*. On visits to Moscow and Beijing in 1988, Mengistu was "advised to seek a negotiated solution with Eritrea" and to do away with his "doctrinaire agricultural policies and Maoist-style uniforms (Marcus 1994, 212). Without the military assistance of the Soviet Union or China, Mengistu was unable to succeed against the military victories of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) or the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The rebels from Eritrea helped the TPLF to push Mengistu out of Ethiopia and on May 1991, Mengistu left the country and sought refuge with Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe.

[22] Mengistu's regime had been friendly to Dr. John Garang and the SPLM/A but the incoming Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic front was not. It expelled their office headquartered in Addis Ababa.

Chapter 5: Returning to Khartoum: The Counterlinearity of Liberation

This chapter addresses a hypothetical question I posed above in conversation with journalists in Juba shocked by the suggestion that any southerner might consider that life was better in a unified Sudan, *how could anyone in Juba dream of returning to Khartoum*? It also provides a response to question about racial formation Black majority societies that I have posed elsewhere, *who is Black when everyone is Black?*

Despite decades of war and racialized marginalization, the relationship between the two Sudans not only persists but southerners continue to return to Khartoum as family members, as economic migrants, or as political dissidents in exile from the country in which they should feel at home.

I first met Nydi in Khartoum in 2018 through another contact, Samuel, in Juba. Both men were in a community of young adult writers and intellectuals from South Sudan who had spent all or most of their lives in Khartoum. By the time I returned to Khartoum in 2019, Nydi had relocated to Juba to pursue new career opportunities as a translator. When we reunited in February 2020, he was visiting Khartoum primarily to help care for his elderly mother whose health was deteriorating. I was disappointed that he had left Khartoum and had planned to reconnect with him in Juba, but he reassured me of Khartoum's magnetic effect on many South Sudanese nationals, particularly those like him who write creatively and politically in Arabic, "our audience is here" he said, explaining that he and his community feel neither recognized nor appreciated in Juba. Laughingly, he continued, "we return periodically to remind ourselves that we are still relevant."

Yet, southerners remain a marginalized minority in the city. One evening, I introduced Nydi to a group of Sudanese colleagues at one of Khartoum's principal stylish cafes. In Khartoum, there are rarely, if ever, any southerners in establishments like this one. When he approached the table, rather than introduce himself as Nydi, he forewent the nickname and used his full name, Nydihok. My Sudanese colleagues struggled to pronounce his name and asked him several times to repeat it. As I listened to him slow down to make it easier for them, I wondered about the extent to which this was intentional, whether he intended to compel racialized and religious difference into view by insisting Sudanese people stumble over consonants and vowels that were unfamiliar to either English or Arabic speakers. Months later, when I asked him about this moment, he confirmed what I had suspected, "many northerners now say that the map is distorted (*kharta mushawaha)* through the loss of the South, but they are not serious about unity." Nydi was a harsh critic of northerners who professed their deep affection for southerners and the South but remained nevertheless uninvested in cultivating a social *milieu* in which they might feel welcomed. The first step, he might say, would be to learn how to pronounce southern names.

Khartoum has nevertheless continued to be an important portal to reluctant nostalgia for many South Sudanese nationals in Sudan. The relationship my interlocutors maintain with Khartoum is foundational to the broader regional constellation this project follows. Political independence transformed far-reaching national connections into transnational ones as southerners became undocumented foreigners in Sudan nearly overnight. It is for this reason that regional and transnational frames of belonging and identity have come to coexist and compete with national understandings of community formation. This chapter focuses on Khartoum because of the semiotic significance of the city as a powerful site of racial meaning-making. This

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chapter draws attention to the shattered expectations of social change (Ferguson 1999) and the city as a signifier of racial identity and national belonging (Nassy Brown 2005). As Arabic language speakers with ongoing connections to Khartoum—*Khartoumers*—they represent both a lingering scar from the past and a future threat to a South Sudanese government yearning to orient itself southward to an *East Africa* centered in Nairobi. I draw on James Ferguson's (1999) work to formulate a *counterlinearity of liberation* that has driven South Sudanese political thinkers back to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan and the site of the oppressive government that animated the civil war, after experiencing the disappointment of South Sudan's political independence. As the home of Sudan's government, Khartoum has been understood within South Sudanese political imagination as the *Goliath* figure, in contrast to the weaker *David* in the South (Tounsel 2021).[1]

This chapter has two goals. The first is to unpack some of the cultural styles that have emerged among this community of southerners as they navigate life in Khartoum. The second draws from Nassy-Brown's (2005) study of Black Liverpool to highlight the significance of race through attention to the city of Khartoum as a signifier of racialized belonging. Independence has altered the criteria for citizenship in Sudan such that it is unavailable to people who the state has determined to be southerners through paternal lineage and the geography of that lineage, irrespective of their contemporary relationship to independent South Sudan. The chapter highlights Khartoum as a signifier of race and nation to demonstrate processes of racial meaning-making that draw from a range of sources in excess of a Black/white or African/European binary.

To further outline the urban context in which race, place, and history intersect, I start this chapter with a fictionalized rendition of an ethnographic vignette in Khartoum.[2]

A Taxi Ride

Car after car rolled by, driven by men who squinted at the two friends as they sped past them. Adaima and Koang watched as shock overcame an otherwise calm sea of faces as drivers were taken aback by their tall, dark frames. The two friends stood at the side of the road, trying to hail a taxi.

 "Have you downloaded *Tirhal*, the new rideshare app?" Adaima asked Koang. "Not yet," he sighed, shaking his head gently "…not enough credit." The process of hailing a taxi was never easy, however familiar this experience was. It pained them anew each time. The frustrated sighs they shared were a partial comfort.

Eventually, a taxi slowed down next to them without fully stopping. Koang bent down to peer in through the passenger side window. Adaima walked around the back of the car to the driver's side, slamming his hand on the roof of the car.

"*Salaam Aleykoum*! How are you?" Adaima smiled, emphasizing the '*ayn* as much as he could. He wanted to appear familiar and congenial as he was relieved to have finally hailed a taxi.

"*Aleykoum Salaam, Alhumdullah*." The driver responded, nervously, feeling surrounded.

"Where are you going?" The driver asked, hoping they would not ask him to a drive to a neighborhood that frightened him.

Adaima was reminded of his time studying in Egypt, navigating the faces of Egyptians in Tahrir Square. He remembered the fear, disdain, and intrigue that congealed on their faces. Their anxiety permeated their senses like an invisible mask that muffled their ears and clouded their eyes. They could only see his dark skin and hear a foreign Arabic that aroused laughter and disgust in them. The difference between here and there, he thought, was that the citizens of what is now Sudan also arouse this mask over the faces of Cairo, Jeddah, and Beirut. The Sudanese resent that the label "Arab" was not as available to them as so many wanted it to be. The distance that men like this driver could forge between themselves and the likes of Adaima and Koang was an imperfect fix.

"We are going downtown, near to the office of Al-Ruya newspaper." Koang broke the frustrated and nervous silence.

This newspaper held a weekly lecture series. Adaima attended regularly with his age-mates.

"Ok, I know *Al-Ruya* well. Hop in," said the driver, as he merged back into the night traffic.

Streetlights whizzed by as they rolled through Khartoum at night. The driver looked back at his passengers in the rearview mirror. His nose rose to his eyebrows in a squint that struggled to discern Adaima's face from the shadows dancing in the backseat. He wanted to be familiar with their faces in case he had to identify them later.

"I have a good friend from South Sudan." The driver offered, as if dipping his toe into a cold pond, wary of the righteous rage that he and his compatriots knew was latent in so many southerners in Khartoum.

"My name is Khalid" Adaima responded with a still face as he processed the driver's skepticism. The cab driver peered at Adaima from under his eyebrows.

"Oh? You have a friend from the South? How did you meet him?" Koang asked with genuine curiosity, accepting the peace offering.

"We grew up together in Nyala," the driver replied in a language that was neither Sudanese Arabic nor English. He was speaking Dinka, with a heavy accent, but Dinka nonetheless.

"You're pretty good." Adaima replied with his own semi-fluent Dinka.

"Where I lived, I had many friends from the South, from *Bahr al-Ghazal*."

Calm filled the car like oxygen. The three men inside began to breathe more easily. They had reached a settlement that their now respective governments had failed to acquire.

"So, why haven't you gone home?" The driver asked with a smile, still riding on the energy that had blossomed out of their newfound familiarity.

"Home?" Koang and Adaima asked in disbelief. "We are home," they responded. "We live here too!"

"Well, yes. My apologies. I mean to your country, the one that you voted for." The driver tried again, as if re-trying an experiment bound for failure.

"Our country?" Adaima asked with a scoff. "Was it not your country as well just some years ago? Have we become strangers so quickly?"

"This, right here, Khartoum, is our country as well, if that one is," Koang added with bravado. "We grew up here too, like you."

"Yes…yes I see. I really liked Garang. He was a great man, with a real vision!" The driver gambled. He hoped that his reverence for the late SPLM party leader would guide him out of this mess.

"Garang?! Yes, of course you know Garang. They always mention Garang." Koang laughed dismissively as he reached for his wallet when the taxi slowed.

"Dr. John was indeed a great leader." Adaima confirmed, speaking like a statesman himself. "We are many, you know. We are not just Garang." He sighed, knowing this would have little effect on the driver.

"It was the British who separated us, you know." The driver yelled, desperately, as Koang and Adaima exited his taxi.

"The British left in 1955," Adaima refused. "What have you done since?"

Cultural Styles

The point of departure for the above episode is the messiness of urban life in Khartoum which included multiple profound encounters with strangers, intimate yet public interactions with long-time friends and the innumerable feelings of apprehension, desire, fear, and frustration that characterize day-to-day interactions between Sudanese and South Sudanese. This episode is an example of how anthropologists might pay attention not simply to what our informants have said but to how they said it and how that *how* changes depending on the setting (Ferguson 1999 drawing on Conquergood 1991). That is to say, the above episode is an effort to capture what Ferguson called "cultural style" which he used to highlight the "*practices that signify differences* between social categories (emphasis in original 1999, 95)." For him, there are two poles of signification, the *localist,* which marks those who continue to have a sense of connection to homes in rural communities and the *cosmopolitan* which indexes those who have embraced the heterogeneity of urban life and have rejected connection to rural social systems. This chapter will refine these two styles by ethnographically attending to a *regional style* that appears at times *local* and *cosmopolitan* at others. Regional styles are assemblages of signs that can be linked to the rural communities that traverse South Sudan's territorial borders, experiences of refugee

flight or professional careers that span multiple regional capital cities. With this in mind, it becomes clear how cultural styles that appear hyper-local and reflective of rural communities are nevertheless transnational in proportion. My intention is to construct a lens to address how dexterity in a heterogeneous set of symbols—fluency in multiple forms of Arabic, transnational lives that take shape between major continental African cities, and imaginations shaped by multiple histories of colonial domination—informs cultural style in this context. While cultural styles are a form of self-fashioning, as Ferguson argues, which enable the flexibility suitable for the confusion, improvisation, and ambiguity of urban life, this self-fashioning is neither abstract nor arbitrary. Rather, it is, like other cultural performances, enacted within a "'situation of duress (Ferguson 1999, 94, drawing on Butler 1990 and Weston 1993)."' The regional frame remains relevant because, while the signifying field exceeds the national scale, it nevertheless relies on regionally recognizable indices. In this case, the duress under which the cultural style is performed is the insufficient liberation of political independence that has drawn South Sudanese individuals and communities back to Khartoum.

Further, although Ferguson draws from analyses of gender performance to pinpoint the construction of style, there is little attention to the body and how it moves through space. With this in mind, this chapter thinks through the intersection of gender, sex, and power to examine the embodied experience of regional cosmopolitanism for southern Sudanese in Sudan (drawing from Grace Brown 2017). While Brown pays attention to the *northern* and Arab/Islamic Sudanese fleshed body as a historical subject, this chapter attends to how fleshed bodies gendered as male and identified nationally as southern are interpolated into broader social, political, and economic assemblages.

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Paying ethnographic attention to daily life in Khartoum in this way also repositions the study of South Sudan broadly within anthropological inquiry into urban life, the form and function of ethnic and tribal identity within cities, and ethnographies of contemporary African political and economic processes. South Sudanese anthropologist Jok Madut Jok has singularly provided substantial literature on rural South Sudan. Yet, neither his analysis of historical and contemporary formations of slavery in Sudan (Jok 2001) nor of the intersection of racism and religious nationalism (Jok 2007) have become what U.S.-based anthropologists have turned to to understand contemporary South Sudan. Instead, Sharon Hutchinson's (1999) revisitation of Evans-Pritchard's (1930) analysis on the social and political systems of the Nuer has become the lens through which American anthropological understandings of contemporary South Sudan take shape.[3] Revisiting the Nuer a half century after Evans-Pritchard, a period characterized by massive and often violent political and economic shifts throughout Sudan, Hutchinson asserts the *coevalness* of Nuer communities with broader global political economic changes (Fabian 1983). She argues that, unlike the picture we receive from classical anthropology, Nuer communities in fact exist in the same temporal present as the anthropologist herself and not as immortalized ethnological artifacts. Yet, as Hutchinson maintains a focus on the meaning-making attached to cattle in social and political systems, as Evans-Pritchard did, she also follows the anthropological tendency to associate a particular ethnographic theme with a certain place.[4] That is to say, we are left thinking there is something particularly *Nuer* or, perhaps, *southern Sudanese* about placing political and social importance on cattle and cattle-rearing. The effect of this is to overdetermine rural social life and to maintain South Sudan within the domain of analyses of rural and/or tribal social systems rather than providing the analytical means by which we might also understand how ethnic identities become useful strategies to navigate urban life. While the focus of this

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chapter is not ethnicity *per se*, its discussion of identity and identity formation draws the study of South Sudan into urban space in which knowledge about rural belonging become symbolic references used to build, shape, and navigate life in Khartoum. My objective is to demonstrate how the teleology of South Sudan's independence has not simply been a linear march towards nation-building in or around the capital city of Juba and its surrounding towns. Keeping the two Sudans in focus simultaneously demonstrates the gravitational pull of Khartoum as a signifier— the site of the former oppressive Goliath government as well as a significant site of family and self-making—which reveals significant ambiguities that have characterized the aftermath of political independence (drawing from Nassy Brown 2005).

Khartoum Styles

This section discusses two ethnographic episodes to demonstrate how *localist* and *cosmopolitan* regional styles take shape in everyday life. The juxtaposition of the two episodes demonstrates how these two genres of regional style respond to a significant political-economic issue, the profoundly impoverished status of southern Sudanese in Khartoum, particularly in relation to refugees from Syria.[5] While the *localist* genre has sharpened strategies to entreat its Global North counterparts for financial assistance, the cosmopolitan takes up this issue politically, to demand policy change and redress.

I came to Khartoum from Juba after having spent time both in the outlying neighborhoods of Juba as well as in Torit. Although Juba is itself a capital city, placed in a spectrum where Khartoum is the principal urban center, Juba is a rural town and the outlying neighborhoods and towns trend further towards the pastoral countryside. Many of my interlocutors in Juba had spent considerable time in their early lives and maintained relationships

with towns and cities in the northern states of South Sudan, such as Bentiu in Unity state or Malakal in Upper Nile state. This directionality runs counter to much of Sudan Studies, which often reproduces the hyper-centrality of Khartoum in understandings of Sudan. My time in Juba exposed me both to the *techniques of the body* (Mauss 1973) and the *drama and kineticism* (Grace Brown 2017) that infused the gesture, movement, and motion of southern Sudanese bodies in Khartoum. This motion was an important index of the construction and orientation of the self in space. What I refer to here includes the way one orders tea and holds the tea cup, the contortions of one's wrist as one eats with one's hands and washes them afterwards, sitting, walking, or counting cash bills. All of these motions ground how cultural styles take shape in motion as they are seen, felt, and heard.

A Day in the Park:

Tut worked as a research assistant for a Khartoum-based research institute assisting other Global North researchers who wanted to conduct fieldwork related to South Sudanese in Khartoum. To most of the researchers who knew or had hired him, he was known as Simon. He kept to himself. He had a family that he struggled to support. He often wore brightly colored African wax print shirts that some South Sudanese women brought into Sudan from Kenya to sell in Khartoum's *Suq Al-Arabi* (The Arab Market). Tut is extremely tall and has had his lower incisors extracted, as is a common masculine rite-of-passage in many Nuer communities. Due to his height, his complexion, and this tribal practice, he fulfilled the stereotypical imagination of what a Nuer man should look like.[6] He seemed not only aware of his imposing height but also of the association that the European and Sudanese researchers made between South Sudanese communities and extreme financial hardship. Southerners had suffered in Khartoum before

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separation and now those who had returned had little recourse to redress their grievances. Tut was adept at both concealing the political trajectory that had brought him to Khartoum and at strategically using his domineering height to tower above all with his proverbial hat-in-hand to beseech multiple people for the same components of financial assistance: medical and educational feels for his young family, three children and a wife that lived in Khartoum with him. His slow-moving body, scant and deliberate speech, and the way he thoroughly scrubbed not only his hands but his face, teeth, and nearly his entire outfit after we shared meals together reminded me of people I had encountered in Torit and in Juba who had come in from rural areas. He had expertise in a style that reflected the countryside. Yet, that countryside had become a significant symbol that anchored stories, humor, and geographic references that enabled him to gather interview participants and maintain his efficacy as a research assistant.

When we visited the Khartoum headquarters of the SPLM-IO, his colleagues greeted him as comrade Tut. I looked up at him with surprise and confusion. Comrade Tut? I thought your name was Simon. He smiled, as if to soften the moment at which the curtain was drawn back to reveal the illusion. In truth, *Simon* was a soft-spoken performance piece that helped him navigate the world of Global North researchers. *Tut*, on the other hand, was born in the Gambela region of Ethiopia and therefore fluent in Amharic in addition to Arabic, Nuer, English, and Dinka. He associated his ability to speak Dinka with his participation in the red army.[7] He attended University in Gambela and was an Ethiopian citizen before he acquired his South Sudanese nationality. As a younger man, he had been mobilized during the Ethiopian occupation of Somalia, though he saw only scant combat. This experience, however, had not factored into his practice of self-making in Khartoum.

Even as one of his superiors expressed his dissatisfaction with their situation in Khartoum and its connection to broader global issues, Tut had little to contribute to the conversation. The SPLM-IO spokesman who we had come to speak with launched into a soliloquy about the racially uneven conditions in Khartoum, he was "upset by the preference given to Syrian refugees." For him, this was "evidence of the sickness of the old regime and that the 'concept of Arab,'" —the idea that northern Sudanese are racially distinct from their southern counterparts— "is still driving policies." His frustration with the government in Sudan's response broadened out to the Arabic-speaking world as he expressed his hope that "the war in Saudi will begin to change people's minds, after they fight and die in Saudi's war only to still have them call you slaves."[8] There was hopefulness in this cynical reference that highlighted how South Sudanese interpret Sudanese claims to Arab identity and heritage principally as an ambivalent racial consciousness, equally unwilling to accept their alienation in the Arabic speaking world and embrace their emplacement in Africa. While these broader geopolitical issues were important to Tut as he followed along nodding as I did, he was far more keen to convince me to attend a fundraiser at his local church for the SPLM-IO efforts in Unity state.

One day, we met in a park in a southern neighborhood of Khartoum. We were scheduled to talk with one of his comrades in the SPLM-IO. The park that Tut had chosen was surrounded by a wall of trees. Upon entering, one felt as though one had, at least, momentarily, exited from the chaos of the city. The wide grassy green area was peppered with scattered juice stands surrounded by empty colorful plastic chairs upon which sat couples who were enjoying glasses of cold mango juice in the privacy of this secluded park. We identified a set of empty chairs and gathered three of them under a tree for ourselves and the guest we awaited. Shortly after we sat down, a young man approached us, exiting from the backdoor of the closest juice stand. He

asked for our drink order in an Arabic that was familiar to me as a dialect of the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine). There was a large population of Syrian nationals in Khartoum fleeing the ongoing war in their country, so I presumed the young man was from this community.

"What do you want to drink?" The shop owner asked us earnestly in an Arabic that was strange to Tut.

"Huh?" Tut looked at me with his eyebrows furrowed, taken aback by sounds he did not expect to hear.

"He's asking us what we want to drink." I translated into an Arabic I knew to be more familiar to him.

"Ok, we'll take two waters." Tut replied in the Arabic of Sudan as he positioned his chair more deeply into the shade.

"Huh?" the shop owner responded, stitching his eyebrows together as he switched his gaze to me. "What did he say?" The shop owner asked me directly

"Two waters" I repeated, in what I remembered of the Arabic I learned in Jordan as an undergraduate.

"Ok, what else?"

Tut looked at me confused again. What more was there to say?

"We need to order something else, a fresh juice." I explained to Tut.

"Why? I don't want juice. Do you? Why must we?" Tut protested, knowing that more drinks meant more money.

"It's alright," I reassured him. "We'll take two orange juices." I said, turning to the shop owner, who was now focused exclusively on me.

"Ok got it" he said in relief, "Thank you for being amenable, unlike *other* customers" he added, grumbling under his breath as he walked away.

The Sitting Fee: *Rūsūm Al-Jalsa*

I met two interlocutors, Deng and Adiang, in a cafe in a downtown hotel. Adiang, who has appeared in the previous chapter, was trained in Sudanese intelligence and had become a self-described journalist who had returned to Khartoum after having been jailed in Juba for his writing. Adiang, like Tut, also has young children and a wife. In contrast, Adiang's young family lives in South Sudan and relies on the remittances he sends from Khartoum. Adiang oscillated between living with friends and living with his elderly father, who had been politically engaged in Khartoum in his youth. Although he too, like Tut, is not fully employed, Adiang is deeply connected to the Africa Refugee-led network which has supported his travel throughout East Africa and the Middle East including Gulf states like the United Arab Emirates. This work has not only taken him to cities like Addis and back to Kampala where he initially landed after leaving Juba, but it has also exposed him to people from throughout the region through virtual meetings and other correspondences. Adiang's participation in this organization is a central component of how he understands his contribution to the broader problem of displaced people like himself living outside of their home countries for political or economic reasons.

I had visited this particular downtown cafe many times with Deng and Adiang before. It was a favored spot amongst politicized South Sudanese thinkers, journalists, some of whom were current or former members of the SPLM-IO. It was up two flights of steps. The windows were covered with curtains and black adhesive; and the main entrance was in a distant corner, visible from every table inside. It was the perfect spot for someone to relax who was also anxious about

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who might be following them. On this day, we chose a semi-private cubicle rather than a table because my interlocutors preferred the privacy. As soon as we sat down, a waitress arrived and asked us to pay a fee for the table we chose, *rusum al-jalsa* (a sitting fee). The three of us shared a confused look. This fee was new and seemed, in that moment, to be discriminatory. There was another group seated next to us, people who we could identify by their Arabic as also from South Sudan. When we heard this same waitress ask them for the fee, we were convinced this was in fact discrimination. As we discussed this problem amongst ourselves, Adiang referenced that just days earlier that he and I had been seated at this very table with two Sudanese men and had not been asked for this extra fee. Adiang was incensed. *Rusum al-jalsa…rusum al-jalsa*, he repeated incredulously. How could this discrimination be so blatant? He was determined not to pay and to talk with the manager. The waitress obliged, took our order, and we waited. As we sat, Deng ordered a *shisha* water pipe. He was an adept smoker. When the pipe arrived, he uncoiled its hose nimbly and inhaled. He reclined as he exhaled a thick cloud of smoke.

"You know," Adiang began in quiet consternation, "Syrians can be naturalized citizens rather than live in a refugee camp like us."

"It's true," Deng agreed, turning to me, "Syrians are treated better than us." He continued as though I was a representative of an international aid organization who had direct access to the political circles in which such decisions were made, "we want to pay school and hospital fees in SDG (Sudanese pounds), not in dollars." Adiang demanded

I nodded in agreement and thought of the first night I had met Adiang at a weekly discussion hosted by the Sudanese newspaper, *Al-Tayar*. That evening, as we observed a lecture from the front garden of the newspaper's office, he shared a PDF with me that displayed the difference in

school and medical fees that Syrian refugees paid in contrast to South Sudanese, who were not considered refugees in Khartoum.

As though preparing for the looming clash between himself and the cafe owner, Adiang directed his frustration at the two water pipes that stood in between myself and Deng as we exhaled our respective clouds of smoke. He extended his arm with his whole hand of fingers outstretched and palm turned upwards and asked us how could we expect to hold the ten commandments of God if we indulged in tobacco water pipes and failed to attend Sunday church service? Unsatisfied by our dismissive smiles, he tabled this protest for later. He was convinced that the Sudanese waitress was herself behind the unjust *rusum al-jalsa* because she, like so many of her countrymen, thought that southerners like him have money. They (Sudanese) know that southerners must pay for educational, medical, and other fees in U.S. dollars. "She knows we have dollars," he said as his eyes probed every corner of the cafe searching for the manager, "and that we can pay."

The owner eventually appeared and Adiang grafted a smile on top of his frustration to ask about the sitting fee. Adiang insisted that he visited recently without being solicited in this way. As soon as the manager spoke, there was an audible readjustment of how Deng and Adiang sounded as they spoke Arabic. The manager sounded Syrian as he explained that the fee was a new strategy to discourage people from sitting too long and getting drunk on alcohol that they snuck inside. As I listened to Adiang and Deng engage him, I noticed that Adiang had code-switched. The Arabic he spoke sounded like he had spent considerable time speaking the Levantine Arabic dialect. Adiang suggested that the owner might have the fee written on a card on the table so customers know the expectation when they sat down. I watched Adiang speak to him fluidly, performing a fluency that was practiced, either through past travel or through

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consuming media in the Arabic of that region. The manager appeared grateful for the suggestion and, more importantly, for a potentially racialized incident in his cafe to have been avoided.

The contrast between southerners and Syrian refugees provides a sharp racialized contrast in which one's legal immigration status has become an issue of genealogy and geographic belonging. The two styles described above cannot simply be interchanged, one cannot become fluent in Levantine Arabic or have one's lower incisors removed overnight. They both represent a particular *performative competence* (Ferguson 1999) that relies on long term investment and practice. There is a specialization in both instances that accounts in different ways for the political economic stakes at hand. The boundary between the two episodes, albeit porous, is also palpable to my interlocutors as they variously reflect on the components of these styles and their effects on one's worldview. In the context of the *counterlinearity of liberation*, these differing styles constitute and are constituted by alternative responses to one's status in Khartoum.

On the one hand, for the localist regional style, there is an investment in the bodily techniques and vocabularies of the suffering refugee family that urges expatriates to help and therefore enables one to acquire the financial means to rectify the hardship of, for example, finding reliable employment in Khartoum as an undocumented South Sudanese citizen. This performance elides the backdrop against which it is performed, one constituted by transnational connections to rural communities and experiences of war and citizenship that traverse state borders. This assemblage includes the divestment from overt politicization and from the linguistic flexibility that facilitates the forms of transnational communication that appear in day-to-day interactions in Khartoum.

On the other hand, for the cosmopolitan, there is an investment in the signs and symbols of urban life, such as *shisha* water pipes and the posture that compels one to insist on addressing

what one sees as flagrant injustice. Adiang's international work with the Africa refugees-led

network has exposed him to people and languages from throughout East Africa and to dialects of

Arabic from throughout the Middle East. This work requires an investment in transnational

cultural fluency that comes to bear on his life in Khartoum. His commitment to the plight of

regional refugees emerges in Khartoum as an obligation to expose analogous injustices where he

sees them. This regional style depends on the practiced competence to address that injustice on

multiple scales and in multiple linguistic registers. Cosmopolitan regional style, however, leaves

one less able to perform connections to rural communities either symbolically through the lack of

ritual scarification or substantively through the signifiers of the quintessential displaced subject,

namely living with one's young children and wife. The investment in cosmopolitan regional style

does not lend itself to the same investment in family as its localist counterpart. These two styles

therefore represent two engagements with family life, one as a single and apparently able-bodied

man less able to himself be intelligible as a refugee but able to advocate for others, in contrast to

a family man who moves across borders with his wife and children, seeking refugee assistance.

The contrast between these two *coeval* styles moves beyond the concern of past

anthropology with a traditional/modern dyad suggestive of an evolutionary cultural pluralism in

which localist style, over time, might become cosmopolitan. The regional styles of these two

interlocutors do not form elements in a sequential process of urbanization, as though the first

interlocutor is less culturally skilled than the second. (Ferguson 1999). The problem of cultural

evolution itself emerged ethnographically when I would encounter Sudanese scholars in

Khartoum. Upon learning that my interlocutors were South Sudanese, someone may ask, in

reference to the scarification practices of Nuer and Dinka communities, whether "they do that

anymore" in a tone of semi-disgust and a hopefulness for the practice to remain in the past or in

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the village, where it belongs.[9] Instead, these two examples demonstrate two coeval phenomena, two "live options in the present" that represent two orientations to Khartoum, two trajectories that have led people to this city, and two responses to the unexpected interactions of urban space that result from two investments in divergent cultural styles (Ferguson 1999, 102). Both of these styles are performed under the duress of being South Sudanese in Khartoum as an index of compounded traumas: the historical which led to the secession of the South and the contemporary which has compelled some Southerners to return to Khartoum, disappointed in political independence.

The friction between Syrian and South Sudanese citizens in Khartoum highlights the duress under which my interlocutors live. Their status is rooted in the contestation over legal status and recognition. These two national communities represent two ends of the spectrum of social and economic integration into urban life. The Syrian community identifies as Arab and Muslim and has enjoyed comparatively straightforward integration into the broader urban landscape as the owners of restaurants, barbershops, and cafes. Omar Al-Bashir was in power when the crisis in Syria erupted and welcomed the refugees as members of the broader Arab world. In 2018, he was the first head of state from the Arabic-speaking world to visit Syria since the war began in 2011 as an iteration of the so-called *Arab Spring*. The South Sudanese, on the other hand, identify as Christian and African and yet their recognition as familiar entities in Khartoum has disallowed them from recognition as refugees and the attendant government assistance. As residents of Khartoum, they are not classified by the national government as refugees. Instead, they fall under the category of *Al-huriyat Al-'arba* (The Four Freedoms). These include the freedom of residence, freedom of movement, the freedom to undertake economic activity, and the freedom to acquire and dispose of property. This agreement was

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modeled after of a similar one that has existed between Egypt and Sudan of the same name, one

that is embedded in an historically-rooted aspirational harmony within the broader Nile Valley.[10]

The challenges for South Sudanese nationals arose when in 2011, the administrative category for

Sudanese citizens transformed from *jinsiya* (nationality), to *rakam watani* (national number)

which was assigned to all of those qualifying for Sudanese citizenship. Patrilineal descent from

any of the historical regions of South Sudan (Bahr Al-Ghazal, Equatoria, and Greater Upper

Nile) disqualified one from Sudanese nationality. Therefore, the identity documents southerners

may have had in what became Sudan were rendered obsolete. They became unqualified for

further recognition from the state government. Access to government subsidized services such as

healthcare or education and the paperwork one needs to register or own a business or property

required a national number. The new Sudanese Nationality Act therefore evacuated any

substantive *freedom* from the Four Freedoms agreement. This bureaucratic transformation has

had a racializing effect, substantively altering the relationship of South Sudanese residents in

Khartoum to property, labor and healthcare.

Another City

This section argues that state racecraft has embedded racial formation into the

marginalization of South Sudanese residents in Khartoum. This sections unpacks the racializing

dialectic between, on the one hand, the exclusion and dispossession of South Sudanese in

Khartoum, and on the other, their significance as those *against* which broader urban society and

national Sudanese identity maintains and renews itself. My interlocutors have asserted that the

negation of their capacity to live freely in Khartoum is foundational to the reproduction of a

national identity which is no longer available to them. The right to work for southerners in

Khartoum has long been characterized by domestic work and menial labor. Yet, the proliferation of un- or underemployed educated southerners after separation has brought new attention to the limitations constituted by their undocumented legal status. My discussion of race in this section contributes to the broader discussion of the racialization of southerners in Khartoum in which fluid racial schema have linked notions of race to "religion, economic activities, material conditions, the naming of people and other cultural practices (Jok 2001, 2007, 2016, p. 3)." It also builds on the argument that the marginalization of southerners in Khartoum has been built upon the political stigma attached to southerners broadly as potential supporters of rebel groups destabilizing the country. The compounding marginalities of southerners as violent rebels, as menial laborers, and now as undocumented freeloaders has imbricated southerners as ungrateful for, and undeserving of governmental assistance or modes of political redress (Jok 2001, 45). To ethnographically address popular notions of difference in the now two Sudans requires discussion of racial ideologies in which Arab & and Muslim identity formation has supplanted the European/White Christian figure as the substrate against which Blackness becomes visible.

In the context of Sudan, this process has taken shape historically as South Sudanese articulations of their colonial experience narrate the successive dominance of the British followed by the Arab-identifying Sudanese. The secession of South Sudan from Sudan was therefore seen as the rectification of an insufficient decolonization process in which the South remained unable to exercise self-determination after the formal end of British rule. Yet, what is important in this section is how contemporary understandings of racial meaning have taken shape through the *counterlinearity of liberation* that has compelled the persistence of southerners in Khartoum. The changes in the legal framework for Sudanese nationality after partition seemed to suggest that Sudanese policy makers presumed all or most of the southerners would leave and

return to South Sudan, whether they had ever been there or not. Attention to the conjuction of race and space in this context compels one to focus on the phenomenological components that constitute the *localness* of Khartoum as a signifier of wherein the construction of belonging reveals the contours of community and Other (drawing from Nassy Brown 2005).

The 2011 amendment to the 1994 Sudan Nationality Act revoked Sudanese nationality from any individual who had paternal heritage within three generations residing in any of the three historical regions of southern Sudan *(Bahr el Ghazal*, Equatoria, and Upper Nile) or whose parents or grandparents have habitually resided in historical southern Sudan since 1956 (Bakhit 2016, 50). Either criterion disqualified one, *de jure* or *de facto,* from Sudanese citizenship. Only individuals from the still contested border region of Abyei are eligible for dual citizenship which is contingent on verification by a certified local *Sultan*, or community leader. South Sudanese citizens in Khartoum are thus often stateless, unable or unwilling to claim Sudanese citizenship due to their heritage and unable to enjoy South Sudanese citizenship because of the violence and political persecution that they may face in South Sudan as described in previous chapters. What is striking about the new 2011 Nationality Act is the *de facto* acquisition of South Sudanese citizenship. That is to say, someone born and raised in Khartoum who is unable to claim paternal heritage north of the new border lost their citizenship status whether or not they formally sought South Sudanese citizenship. This change in legal status also brought changes in the relationships to property and labor as southerners were dismissed from civil service, became unable to register new companies, and healthcare became prohibitively expensive.[11] As such, this *de facto* effect has slipped into the realm of what Frantz Fanon might have included in the *space of non-being* where, by virtue of the process by which one's identity is formed, a discrete group identified by its intrinsic inherited qualities becomes ineligible for the protections of human life. Citizenship

status was therefore a principal means by which ethnicity and ethno-geographic belonging have taken shape as racialized difference in everyday urban life.

By contrast, those residing beyond Khartoum, in, for example, the large *Al-Kashafa* camp in Sudan's White Nile state, are eligible for aid coordinated by the UNHCR. Yet, there are also those who reside in shantytowns on the outskirts of Khartoum, in *Jebel 'Aulia*, for example who may find themselves in limbo after having collected their belongings and their families at a relocation site to await an escort to South Sudan immediately after independence. Unfortunately, this was an escort that never materialized. The so-called date of arrival is what distinguishes these displaced groups in many cases, as explained to me by a UNHCR employee. "The population of *Jebel Aulia* are not freshly displaced persons," he explained. The freshness of their arrival determined their position in the broader humanitarian triage organized by the UNHCR. They had not fled from the recent wars in South Sudan but were part of a longer history of political economic inequality in Khartoum, the amelioration of which was certainly beyond the purview of the UNHCR.

The shortcomings of the *Four Freedoms* agreement and the inability of South Sudanese citizens to acquire Sudanese nationality have reproduced a racializing process through this contentious relationship to place. Deploying this frame here places emphasis not only on responses to the material suffering produced by one's bureaucratic status but to how the relationship between my South Sudanese interlocutors and Khartoum is linked to the production of a certain vision of Sudan after separation, of Sudanese-ness, of Sudanese places and, importantly, of *un-Sudanese* ones (drawing from Nassy Brown 2005). To make the connection between race and place here, one must in part relinquish an exclusively material understanding of Khartoum in order to emphasize the ideological production of Khartoum, the signifier of

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relations of identity, belonging, and generational trauma (drawing Nassy Brown 2005, Low 2016). The ethnographic data of this section focuses on one neighborhood of Khartoum where my interlocutors spent much of their time, one square block within the historic *Suq Al-Arabī* (The Arab Market).[12] The overwhelming presence of South Sudanese at this site is palpable. In large part, this is due to the centrality of Comboni College, its primary and secondary schools, and its church which have historically been a material and spiritual refuge for southerners and other Christians in Khartoum.[13] It was only by virtue of observing the aversion of educated Sudanese professionals to this space, unless they were visiting *Al-Waha* Mall or engaging in the black market trade of paper currency and gold which also characterizes this place, that it appeared more clearly as a metonym for the profound racial histories that continue to shape Khartoum at large (drawing from Nassy Brown 2005, 6)

Sūq-Al-'Arabi is downtown in a number of ways. It is downtown as a central market and the second largest open air market in Khartoum after the one in Omdurman.[14] It is also downtown in a cosmopolitan sense as one of the few places in Khartoum where one might witness all of Sudan's diversity at once—the multiple geographies, languages, aesthetics of Islamic practice, and dialects of Arabic that constitute the broader Sudanese community. Yet it is not a downtown in the sense that its cosmopolitanism attracts the commercial desires of the professional or elite political classes. *Sūq Al-Arabi* is not a glossy market place with polished storefronts. On one corner, you will find an active community of southerners, socializing and exchanging information about developments in Juba, Wau, and Malakal. On another, you will find eastern Sudanese who dress and speak in a dialect of Arabic that sounds as though they are intimately tied to Yemen. If you listen to the tea ladies or the ladies selling hand-woven

tawaghiyat (caps) talking amongst themselves, you will hear the numerous indigenous languages of Darfur.

From the late morning, one particular block within *Sūq Al-ʿArabi* felt as though it was a portal through space and time that had transported me back to Juba. The first time I visited this block was the early evening, immediately after the sun had set. I was walking with Abu Obeida, who I mentioned in Chapter 2, an agricultural engineering professor at *Bahri* University. He was extremely familiar with the streets and alleys of this neighborhood and led us around multiple corners where we could not rely on the brightness of the street lights to find our way. In the early darkness, the streets felt as though they expanded endlessly as men and women gathered on the sides of the road to drink tea with milk and crunch on pillowy *zalabiya* (fried dough) after work. There seemed to be laughter all around us, punctuated by warm embraces and the smiles of tea ladies pouring cups of bright red hibiscus and black tea that had become velvety with addition of powered milk. As we walked, my anticipation grew, and it seemed to me that he continually refused suitable places to sit. We walked past corner after corner, at which tea ladies sat surrounded by their spices, white-hot coals, and kettles of boiling water. He assured me that we were looking for a "nice" place to sit. In a moment, he stopped and when he turned the corner in relief, I felt as though we crossed a threshold. There were men sitting and walking past me in brightly colored wax print shirts. The monochrome quality of much of men's fashion in everyday Khartoum faded into the background. Here, there were multiple foreheads decorated with traditional scarification who peppered groups of friends, strangers, and acquaintances who were greeting one another warmly. We had indeed traveled to South Sudan, or perhaps South Sudan had traveled to us, or never left Khartoum at all. Abu Obeida seemed at home and found a group

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of acquaintances sitting around a tea lady they knew. He joined them in both their cross-legged stillness and their intentional gestures as they reached for one another to offer a hug or grab for a glass of tea carefully balanced on a thin metal saucer. The cadence of Arabic changed, the idiosyncratic letters of the Arabic language, *kh* and *'ayn* disappeared and the Arabic one heard became peppered with Dinka and Nuer phrases. One could hear the opposite as well, Dinka and Nuer sentences conjoined and accentuated by Arabic conjunctions and emphatic phrases. This was another city. Here, there were remnants of the Khartoum that once was, before separation. A Khartoum that now exists as nostalgia. Yet, this was also a form of segregation that highlighted the question of race as South Sudanese bodies get marked as Other as they move through Khartoum.

A germinal study that has come to shape how one might ethnographically account for how race takes shape and place in contemporary Africa is Jemima Pierre's (2013) work. Her objective is to construct a global theory of racial meaning-making that, while thinking in and through Ghana, is applicable broadly to postcolonial Africa still haunted by what she insists, using Brackette Williams' (1989) term, is the *ghost of Anglo-European hegemony*. The problem Pierre sought to solve is that *race*—as a signifying field that structures global society—has been effortlessly applied to the experience and structure of Blackness in the Americas while race and Blackness in contemporary Africa remains unaccounted for and ignored, particularly in the study of the African diaspora. While she demonstrates that African diaspora studies have indeed rendered contemporary Africa the non-coeval counterpart of the Americas; it seems that she takes issue less with the study of inequality, dispossession, or the ferociousness of colonialism and global capitalism but with the semiotic idiom in which that inequality is articulated. Such

studies, she might argue, use Africa as a synonym such that "Africa stands in for race" as the global racialized subject while, "paradoxically, race does not exist in Africa (2013, xii-xiii)." That is to say, for Pierre, there is something lost in the academic treatment of inequality in Africa that fails to subordinate to race, other process of identity formation—class, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. What is lost is a more robust grasp of how what Pierre identifies as "racialized-as-Black African communities" are interpellated into, using Mills' (1998) term, *Global White Supremacy*.[15]

The concept of the *racial project* is the process of ethnogenesis through which racialized groups take shape. The use of this concept allows one to observe, as she does, that "racialization processes are not the same everywhere; rather they are a family of forms that are subject to local articulations and incarnations (Pierre 2013, 5)." Yet, the other side of Pierre's argument pushes variability to the background in order to forefront how "while processes of racialization are multiple and varied, they are *all* interconnected through the broader historical reality of European empire making (Pierre 2013, 5, emphasis added)." At issue here is how one addresses, ethnographically, the processes of racecraft that emerge to produce and reproduce racialized difference without an ideological or material reliance on Europeanness or on its correlative, whiteness. Moreover, to center racial formation in Africa it is incumbent to understand forms of difference that have not be constituted by the epidermal fact of race and visual racial recognition, whether it congeals on the skin or hair as Blackness or as whiteness. If the ideological consolidation of Blackness in Africa relies, for example, on the popular or governmental recognition of the African Diaspora and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, even if through commodified heritage tourism, how might the dialectics of Blackness change when the tourism

industry draws on the legacy of Pyramids, ancient Christianity, Islam, and Arab civilization rather than on European slave castles? A question that arises for an ethnography of race in contemporary Africa is whether and how one might recognize, discuss, and analyze the production of racial meaning in day-to-day contexts in which both Whiteness and Blackness (and White people as such) are pushed to the background. Instead, what comes to the forefront to manage unequal relations to labor, property, and citizenship are religious difference, the concept of *Arab,* and historically articulated political conflicts and cross-border attachments to geography.

The heart of the problem is how to think about *racecraft.* Pierre deploys the term to describe the racialized formation of the colonial state; "the racecraft of indirect rule," names a process laid out by Mahmood Mamdani which emphasized the colonial state's central antagonism as the dualism between citizen and subject or, the more fundamental terms, settler and native (Mamdani 1996, Pierre 2013, 31). In the case of the now two Sudans, how might we account both for the *racecraft* immanent in a colonial legacy imbricated by both Britain and Egypt in addition to the post-partition changes in legal recognitions of identity and belonging? An interlocutor in the SPLM-IO Khartoum headquarters offered a response to this question. As he reflected on why Syrian refugees receive assistance that displaced South Sudanese citizens do not, he insisted that "the concept of Arab" is still driving policies in Sudan. My interlocutors conceptualize Arab identity in Sudan principally as an ambivalent racial consciousness of people equally unwilling to accept their exclusion in the Arabic-speaking world and to embrace an African identity. As a source of state race-craft, *the concept of Arab* constitutes a regime of racial consciousness inclusive of religion and its normative practices, naming customs, geographies,

and heritage. If *racecraft* provides the means to understand how state power racializes through mechanisms of deprivation, dispossession, and segregation then it seems incumbent to be able to parse out the shape of that process irrespective of the source material, whether the idiom of racial dominance hinges on *Arab* or *European* identity formation.

In order to make ethnographic sense of the effects of racecraft, one must attend to the juncture between state power and everyday life. The racial meaning-making that derives from *the concept of Arab* takes shape through linkages to the everyday practice of religion. In a moment of restrained frustration, as if talking to a northerner and telling him for the first time what had long been on his mind, Gatwich relayed to me at length:

> During the revolution, young men went to the street to call for reunification. Yet, you don't want us to marry your women because we are Christians, but you can marry ours. You want only northerners to be the most handsome people. If I invite you to lunch you will ask how I killed my ram…have you come to eat or to ask how I kill my rams? Why are you always concerned with my arrangements? When you offer me food, I have no questions, but this is not reciprocated. You want political leadership. You want the best plots. You want Islamic laws, and to manage me.

What Gatwich described above took place at the level of minute and quotidian interactions that bridged imaginative intimacy and the substantive production of an African Other. Gatwich's claims indexed the multiple social and political elements that have come to constitute race: suspicion, beauty, segregation, religious practice, governmental leadership. In this case, the normative religious practice was the preparation of *Halal* meat. The production of racial meaning in this instance is produced by the reification of Arab identity. The apparent flexibility of Arab identity to be variously shed away or embraced over time has led the formation of *Arabness* to be understood "as tribal, not racial" and, "above all, a political identity (Mamdani 2009, 108)." Yet, here the embrace of Arab identity included political and economic privileges based on inherited geographic belonging. The construction of non-Arab difference relied on the negation of those same privileges to Africanized others due to their inherited out-of-

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placeness. It seems incumbent not to differentiate *political identity* from *racial,* as though imaginative genealogy is non-political, but to take seriously the racializing juncture at which genealogy *becomes* political. To apprehend race requires attention to the formation and techniques of the body, violent (bureaucratic and militarized) relationships to place and property and to how both of these processes become imbricated over time as inherited inequality. Contestations over what racial groups signify are always "political enterprises" dominated by no singular "political party, interest group, or scientific organization" that can claim to have itself structured racial inequality (Baker 1998, 2). It is worth clarifying that the 2011 partition of Sudan into Sudan and South Sudan did not conclude or initiate the racialization of people of southern descent in Khartoum. It transformed it.

The argument I am making here is rooted in a pervasive anti-Africanness that permeates the Arabic-speaking world, including that part of it which is located within the African continent.[16] In this context, Blackness, as a racial signifier, can mislead the understanding of historically articulated difference because, in Sudan, and throughout the Nile Valley, *everyone*, in the crudest phenotypical sense, *is Black*. Although the history and contemporary iterations of slavery in Sudan come to bear on relations of labor and difference in contemporary Khartoum, the racializing process here is also constituted by the politicized formation of a bureaucratic identity. Moreover, my interlocutors conceptualization of Arab identity and their marginalization as displaced southerners is based on particular political and economic antagonisms. The first is that the Sudanese government does not want to be accused of supporting rebels in conflict with the government in South Sudan. The second is that a marginalized class of undocumented southerners in Khartoum can provide the inexpensive labor needed to reproduce economic life in the city. I will offer more detail on both of these claims below.

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Many of the individuals who contest the racialized inequality inherent in the displaced Syrian/South Sudanese binary have at times identified with the SPLM-IO. Membership in this opposition party may be linked to their commitment to its chairman, Riak Machar, or they may have joined because the party has served as a catch-all for dissenters of the South Sudanese government.[17] A large portion of Machar's personal exile from South Sudan has also been spent in Khartoum. Historically, southerners in Khartoum have been associated with social and political forces that are oppositional to self-determination in the South. Residence in Khartoum, therefore, historically identifies one in opposition to the government in South Sudan irrespective of one's actual political perspective. My interlocutors were well aware that there was no substantive way to differentiate between who was a member of the SPLM-IO or the depth of their commitment to their chairman and the party leadership. Therefore, any southern resident of Khartoum could potentially be a dissident of the government in the South. Between Uganda and what is now the two Sudans, there is a long history of regional tensions that have arisen due to one head of state accusing another of aiding the other's rebels. Therefore, in my interlocutor's estimation, the government in Sudan has been unwilling to offer assistance to South Sudanese citizens who reside within Khartoum because as one of the party leaders, William, has claimed "Sudan doesn't want to be accused of harboring someone else's rebels."[18] The fallout of this tension has been to politicize the presence of South Sudanese in Khartoum. As such, the reference to the *bedoon*, or the infamously stateless people throughout the Middle East, has become a useful allegory for how South Sudanese in Khartoum understand their racialized predicament.

As I sat with Gatwich, our one-on-one conversations would evolve into informal focus groups as his comrades would join us to listen and interject with their frustrations about the

privileges of Syrians and other refugees who enjoyed life in Khartoum while their people suffered. Gatwich seemed to be preaching to a chorus of supportive gestures of approval—head nods and approving *mmm*'s. He declared that Sudan was invested in the instability of the South, "when war broke out in 2013, it was a victory for Sudan, they were dancing on this." He was referencing South Sudan's own civil war in 2013, the conflict that had cleaved the split of the SPLM-IO from the SPLM. In his estimation, the war they continued to experience was in the interest of the Sudanese government. Instability in the South would mean that southerners would be either unable to leave Khartoum or be compelled to return. They would be forced to reside and labor in a city in which residence itself would evacuate the capacity to make demands on the state. The continued influx of South Sudanese to Khartoum was therefore a reproductive force, providing the foundation of cheap surplus labor on which Khartoum society relied. One of Gatwich's colleagues interjected to assert that the Sudanese government forbade the UNCHR from offering food and shelter to southerners living in and around Khartoum. "The NGOs don't want southerners from elsewhere to flock to camps near Khartoum. This would happen if they offered more services…The UNHCR only gives plastic tarps for *tukul* (round-shaped homes) construction to guard from rain."[19] What was significant for my interlocutors as they described their dissatisfaction with the assistance offered by the UNCHR was not the apparent bureaucratic neglect *per se* but a sense of negligence *in comparison to* other displaced groups, namely Syrian refugees.[20] The unintelligibility of South Sudanese as worthy victims negated their ability to articulate recognizable grievances either as demands on the state or on the principal NGO at the helm of humanitarian assistance.

Yet, for the government in Sudan, the bureaucratic negation that regulates their residence in Khartoum is not articulated as malice but as compassion. As Gatwich explained to me with a

grin dripping in irony, "Sudan engages us as brothers, while targeting our children." Omar Al-Bashir recognized southerners in Khartoum as former citizens, in order to claim that they should not be recognized as refugees because they are not new arrivals but a familiar presence in the broader national community. South Sudan, therefore, remains a central, albeit unrecognized, component of Sudanese national identity, most recently as an unfortunate loss that has led to the grotesque distortion of the national cartography.[21] This imagined kinship, however, masks how South Sudanese in Khartoum have been barred from relationality, unable to make claims for assistance on the entity that imposes kinship on them. Yet, exploitation was a constituent element of this intimate relationship. The objective of their marginalization, Gatwitch explained, was that "they want to make a class out of us, a working class, permanently paid less." Their strategy, he continued, is to "produce a generation of uneducated southerners" and "simply wait for the generation who benefitted from education in Khartoum to just die." As claimed above, the 2011 partition transformed the racialization of southerners in Khartoum. While one cannot dismiss the marginalization suffered by southerners before partition, their recognition as Sudanese citizens provided the platform to articulate grievances about structural underdevelopment and neglect. The significance of his claims and the resonance with his compatriots is linked to the substantive policy decisions that continue to make life difficult for southerners in Khartoum and to cultivate ambivalence about the future that these conditions forebode.

Gatwich's reference to the generation of southerners educated in Khartoum referenced the experience of many of my interlocutors who attended college during Omar Al-Bashir's regime. Al-Bashir led a large-scale expansion in higher education, both in student enrollment and in the number of public universities, in Khartoum specifically, and Sudan broadly throughout the 1990s.[22] The push to increase the student matriculation beyond those from elite backgrounds able

to afford school fees led to specific programs that targeted students from marginalized areas, *manatiq al-hamisha*. While many of my interlocutors from this generation loudly decried the Arabization and Islamization policies of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, they also quietly credited this same regime for their education. I raise this apparent contradiction to argue that a significant component in their racialization has been their bureaucratic illegibility that has only emerged after partition.

The problem of neglected South Sudanese residents of Khartoum has not gone unrecognized. In 2015, the UNHCR began a campaign to register and document them. The goal of this process was to provide these residents with identity cards that would enable them to access the services that had been promised to them under the terms of the Four Freedoms. Yet, registration did not come with guarantees. The UNCHR did not immediately neither effectively dispensed the identity cards, nor was there an oversight apparatus that compelled, for example, a Sudanese employer to abide by the guidelines that the card dictated. Instead, for so many Southerners, *the north* or *the Sudanese* remain potent icons for a social force that remains uncommitted to a harmonious co-existence.

Summary

This chapter has paid close ethnographic attention to the significance of Khartoum as a principal site around which regional connections have been remade. It has argued that the city of Khartoum is an important signifier of racial meaning-making and understandings of national belonging. The conditions that southerners encounter in Khartoum compel reflection on how race and place intersect to shape daily life in the city. The physical presence of my interlocutors in Khartoum is the product of multiple political, economic, and social imbrications that are rooted

in the disappointments of political independence in South Sudan. With this in mind, this chapter has argued that the trajectory that has brought individuals back to Khartoum is a *counterlinearity of liberation* in which the expectations of political independence were turned upside down by the subjection of my interlocutors to various forms of state violence in South Sudan.

In its focus on Khartoum as a signifier, this chapter has explored the multiple *cultural styles* my interlocutors enact under the duress of urban life. These cultural styles became well-defined as my interlocutors came into contact with refugees and displaced people fleeing the war in Syria. Their reflections on the stark differences between how Syrians and South Sudanese experience Khartoum highlighted the polarizing processes of racialization that continually draw on *the concept of Arab* to distinguish one group from the other. My interlocutors narrated and contested racial difference on terms that exceeded the formation of Blackness, whiteness, or European identity. Racialized marginalization in this context drew heavily on ideas of religious difference and its attendant indices of national identity and belonging.

This perspective on race enables one to pay attention to the effects of Arab identity construction as one of many racial projects in contemporary Africa. It enables us to bring into a single frame how shifting property relations, legal recognition, the politicization of identities such as *Arab*, the Arabic language itself, naming practices, geographic belonging and the politicization or religious difference come to shape racial processes. The objective of this chapter was to contribute to the construction of a conceptual frame to attend to racial difference that is not, either materially or abstractly, contingent on the visual field of phenotypic difference for racial recognition. It interrogates the limits of skin color as a roadmap for identifying racecraft.

[1] Tounsel argues that this contrast appeared with particular clarity in written fora such as the *SPLM/SPLA Update*, which "became a medium with which to disseminate a martial theology of political dissent (Tounsel 2021, 96)." The metaphor was a rhetorically effective one despite, as Tounsel argues, the military might of the SPLA in comparison to the government in Sudan did not match the David/Goliath contrast.

[2] I wrote a longer short story in which this scene appeared when I started writing this project. I found that the flexibility of fiction opened up epistemologies of race which were not as easily accessible through normative anthropological or social scientific language. I was inspired by Richard Wright's *Black Boy* to think more deeply about the moments in which people become fluent and perform (often unsuccessfully) that fluency in racial ideologies in different contexts. This brief interlude foregrounds the material analysis of racialization below and highlights the failed projects of repair that appear within everyday encounters between Sudanese and South Sudanese citizens in Sudan's capital city.

[3] Badiey and Doll's (2013), Nikki Kindersley's (2016) dissertation, and the 2016 collection in *Monde Arabe:* Le Soudan, cinq ans après l'indépendance du Soudan du Sud are important exceptions to this, the latter circulating principally in francophone and european anthropological circles

[4] I am drawing on Ferguson's (1999, 24) juxtaposition of Johannes Fabian (1983) and Arjun Appadurai (1988).

[5] The numerous Syrians who resided in Khartoum at the time had fled from their country's protracted instability. In Khartoum, they worked primarily in the service industry—owning and operating restaurants, cafes, and barbershops of varying sizes.

[6] While there are of course numerous tall and slender people from Nuer and Dinka communities and even within these communities, this stereotype is maintained; there are of course many who are neither tall nor slender.

[7] The Red Army was notoriously an army of minors who had been recruited to fight alongside the SPLA in its war against the government in Sudan.

[8] The SPLM-IO spokesman was making reference to the significant role that Sudanese soldiers from Darfur have played in Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen which has been ongoing since 2015.

[9] These scarification practices include parallel horizontal lines or stacked v-shaped lines on the forehead. Even if someone did not have the forehead scars, they might have also undergone the extraction of their lower incisors.

[10] A notable difference between the agreements between Egypt and Sudan and Sudan and South Sudan is the explicit language around the right to work. In place of this, the Sudan agreement has a far more ambiguous reference to "economic activity."

[11] Assal (2011) describes the SPLM's "more advanced" plan for citizenship post referendum in contrast to that of the NCP (pg 10). The SPLM insisted that dual citizenship should be allowed, if people decided to stay in Sudan they should not face obstacles in doing so.

[12] There were other places as well such as Al-Hajj Youseff, a distant eastern suburb, but Suq Al-'Arabi was where contestations over ones place in Khartoum took place.

[13] Comboni was college founded in Khartoum in 1929 as a part of the Italian Catholic Mission.

[14] This contrast helps to clarify where *Suq Al-Arabi* acquired its name. It became known as the Arab market in contrast to the African market in Omdurman.

[15] In his conception of the term, Mills observes that white supremacy is neither "synchronically uniform" nor "diachronically static (1998, 100). Since he centers white privilege in the formation of Global White Supremacy, Mills addresses its multiple forms since we live in a world in which "yellows, blacks, and browns rule their own countries and non whites in the First World 'white' nations are no longer formally subjugated (1998, 101). Nevertheless, he argues that the enduring significance of Global White Supremacy compels attention to the legacy of formal systems of white political and economic privilege throughout the colonized world. This is sufficient for understandings of the shape of global trends that do not rely on long-term ethnographic engagements with local articulations and contestations of power.

[16] The anti-African ideology was thrown into stark relief when the original flag of Sudanese independence reappeared as a symbol that intertwined freedom from the Arab league with Sudan's Africanness during the uprisings to overthrow Omar Al-Bashir. I have written about these profound racial implications in Race after Revolution: Imagining Blackness and Africanity in the "New Sudan" for POMEPS 44, Racial Formations in Africa and the Middle East

[17] This is not to say that every individual was a card-carrying party member or former government official before the tensions escalated between Salva Kiir and Riak Machar. It also not the case that the SPLM-IO endorses an ideology wholly opposed to the ruling party. Their primary grievance was centered on representation and what they see as not only a Dinka majority in government but, similar to so many criticisms of African political leaders, a nepotism that favors Salva Kiir's own ethnically-circumscribed networks.

[18] This was also arguably a reference to the tense and unresolved legacy of the split in SPLA/M in 1991 after the fall of Mengistu's Ethiopia. The government in Sudan led by Al-Bashir is said to have exacerbated ethnic divisions in the SPLA/M and to have funded those who defected from John Garang's leadership, namely Riak Machar in order to weaken the SPLA/M's opposition (Waihenya 2006, 71-2)

[19] *Tukul* is the term for round homes traditionally made from mud walls and grass roofs in suburban and rural areas of South Sudan. Here an interlocutor was describing how UNCHR supplied plastic tarps which are used in place of grass.

[20] Relatedly, similar claims of inequality are made in comparison to refugees from Eritrea. Eritreans in Sudan are often also Arabic speakers who are said to more closely *resemble* the people of Sudan in culture and phenotype and therefore be more readily accepted in Khartoum and hired in, for example, occupations that require direct interaction with clients such as working at a cafe.

[21] Troutt Powell (2003) has made an analogous argument about the centrality of Sudan in Egyptian nationalism as a site of imaginative kinship and possession within a vision of broader Nile Valley unity.

[22] This horizontal expansion was an element of the broader Arabization and Islamization schema of the Al-Bashir government. This "higher education revolution" also came with consequences for other sectors of education and Al-Bashir's rise to power meant the cessation of financial assistance from the West (Gasim 2010, ElHadary 2010).

Conclusion: The Method of Region-craft

Home and family have been underlying themes throughout this dissertation. While the object of this project has been to trace how region has been remade after the independence of South Sudan, this process has, in many instances, taken shape through intimate relationships and feelings of being at home that traverse national boundaries. The family of a young woman who first introduced me to Mabior Garang had a transnational history that stretched across the Nile Valley, from Cairo to Nairobi. It was in Nairobi where she herself had met Mabior Garang at one of his favorite hang-outs in the city. The transnational quality of Sana's family resonated profoundly with Mabior's. When I met Sana she was volunteering as an art teacher for a UNICEF program while finishing a master's degree in Khartoum. Sana and her family had lived, worked, and studied throughout the region in: Cairo, Khartoum, Juba, and Nairobi. The languages with which she and her siblings were most familiar represented the segments of time and geography where her family had lived. She was the oldest child and was comfortable in Arabic as she had studied until the University level in Khartoum and Cairo. Her younger siblings, on the other hand, had learned KiSwahili when their parents took them to Nairobi after their applications for refugee status in Australia were denied. Sana had also become fluent in KiSwahili in Nairobi while she finished her first University degree at the same time that her younger brothers were in elementary school. When I asked which language she wanted to use, her only demand was that we not speak in the Arabic language. Sana I spoke principally in English, framed by KiSwahili greetings and punctuated with KiSwahili phrases. When I asked why she preferred not to speak Arabic she explained that she had "lived her life in the Arab world" and now she wanted to "free herself from that." Her knowledge of KiSwahili represented

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a linguistic escape-hatch from the Arabic-speaking world through which she could feel African, at home in Nairobi, and at ease with the Kenyan and other East African nationals with whom she could communicate. While the language of her household was Nuer, this language did not offer the same freedom of cultural style as the cosmopolitan language of KiSwahili. The geography of Sana's family history spoke directly to the more common forms of South-South mobility that are eclipsed by refugee flight to the Global North (namely the U.S., the U.K. Canada, and Australia). The occupations of her parents had been another principal driver of why and how her family moved so often. Her mother worked for the South Sudanese embassy in Sudan and her father for South Sudan's Ministry of Petroleum. Due to the intertwined nature of hydrocarbon infrastructure in the two Sudans, her father's job in this Ministry included much time spent in both countries. When I met her in Khartoum, she longed to return to Nairobi and was afraid to return to Juba. She has remained in Khartoum because of her father's fears surrounding the potential for her to be targeted due to her public writing on the popular Nyamilepedia digital magazine that has been critical of the government in Juba. Her arrival in Khartoum had come as a surprise to her. Days after she published her article, she arrived home to her father handing her plane tickets he had purchased for Khartoum. She only had a few days to prepare to leave and, at that time, had not returned since, when they used to visit Juba frequently as a family. Sana and Mabior shared parallel histories of families with regional proportions and open dissent that had garnered unwanted attention from the NSS.

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In this conclusion, I will attend to the broader implications of some of the principal themes that have emerged from this dissertation. The first section grapples with what is at stake for region-craft as a method for the study of South Sudan and elsewhere. The second reflects on

the consequences of drawing attention to what is produced in the wake of war, in contrast to what is destroyed. The third section highlights possibilities for the study of race at the juncture of anthropology and history. The fourth addresses the context for this dissertation, the ongoing civil uprisings in Sudan. Specifically, it addresses the relevance of the concept of civil society for how my interlocutors articulate their dissident stance against this broader backdrop in Sudan. This conclusion will end with a brief reflection on the potential relevance of *The Black Atlantic* and *Black Internationalism* as germinal concepts for the study of transnational connection within Africa.

The Stakes of Region-craft

The process that I have outlined in this dissertation as region-craft is not limited to East Africa or to South Sudan. The re-configuration of political space in postwar conflicts is ubiquitous around the globe and, in particular, in the Global South, where the arbitrariness of national borders frequently boils to the surface of political conflicts. On one hand, this study is relevant to understand regional configurations globally both where contiguous states may be acting in concert towards a cultural or political-economic goal, and where people articulate regional connections through kinship ties, claims to home that traverse national borders, and ideas about difference that take shape as geographic belonging. The mobilities that appear as a result of educational trajectories and professional careers often helps to solidify how people feel attached to multiple places at once such that even the enormous space of the Nile Valley can be narrated as home. On the other, this study offers attention to the particularities of *East Africa*, South Sudan's geopolitical reorientation away from the Arab world, the interplay of media and gossip as a crucial dialectic of information sharing, as well as developmental aspirations of the Aga Khan and his cosmopolitan ethic which provides a hardly visible financial and

infrastructural platform on which people maintain projects in East Africa with regional proportions.

My focus on region has been born out of the impetus to identify alternative scales to which the nation and nationalism might be subordinated. Paying attention to processes of political association that occur at the transnational level require a certain amount of letting go of stable territorial rootedness. While important, the nation is not the exclusive domain of state power or the container of imagined community. Region, like nation, is not free from the ever-present tyrannies of ethnocentrism that inform all nationalistic imaginaries. Transnational connections complicate national borders and compel one to question the ostensible stable signifiers on which nations rely. As such, they provide a partial exit strategy from the exclusion and negation that animates and reproduces all forms of nationalism. Imaginative attachments to East Africa represent alternative possibilities for territorial belonging and political self-determination.

Region-craft is then, in addition to a methodology of study and a social phenomenon at work in the world, also a perspective on the kinds of political community-making that occur alongside the consolidating nation-state. Regional economic communities have become increasingly important entities in negotiations of global trade arrangements in and through contemporary Africa. One important example is the African Union-led continental Free Trade Agreement. Following these developments, region-craft also seeks to draw attention to the institutionalization of the Pan-African vision of leaders like Julius Nyerere who understood region formation as a stepping stone towards continental unity. As the East African community continues to expand (most recently with the membership of the Democratic Republic of Congo

in 2022), the organization is unique on the African continent in its mission that seems almost evangelical as it spreads and continues to redefine that parameters of *East Africa*.

Yet, political organization that occurs at the regional scale can also be a vehicle for state surveillance. Adiang, an interlocutor who appeared multiple times throughout this dissertation, sent me the 2020 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on the torturous practices of the South Sudan National Security Service (NSS) against individuals it had identified as dissident to the national government. As he was featured in the report, he was pleased that his and other similar stories had garnered international attention. The report was complied by another South Sudanese writer, Nyagoah Tut Pur, a researcher for HRW. Pur also authored a 2020 blog titled "*9 years on, South Sudan Still a Nation in Waiting,*" which centered the frustrations of South Sudanese citizens whose quality of life had only worsened since partition.[1] It described how acquiring surveillance and military equipment from Israel in 2014 has enabled the NSS to become more effective at multiple geographic scales through wiretapping and aerial drones. In doing so, the report has taken seriously the criminalization the transnational linkages and the national security agency of Global south states, which is too often entirely eclipsed by the interests of the Global North (Li 2020). What further set her analysis apart was its attention to the regional configurations of South Sudan's national security apparatus. The HRW report includes data collected from interviews conducted in Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan in order to follow where activists and journalists have fled to avoid subjection to the surveillance apparatus of the state. The report detailed how South Sudan's security apparatus has transformed over time and how it has garnered, in some cases, the tacit complicity of regional authorities to target and kidnap individuals it has deemed as dangerous dissidents. The report also recommended regional forms

of accountability for NSS abuses both through the East African Court of Justice and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

What War has Produced

South Sudanese thinkers, many of whom who I have cited elsewhere in this dissertation (Peter Nyaba, Bona Malwal, and Lam Akol, for example) along with their counterparts from elsewhere in the region along with Global North researchers and thinkers have been grappling with how the struggle for political autonomy and recognition led to such widespread violence and economic deprivation. It seems that the saturation of understandings of contemporary South Sudan with violence has impelled the search for practical solutions. The focus on the roots of the violence in South Sudan and the routes it has taken since has drawn attention both to the extraordinary loss of life and has provided roadmaps to the path that South Sudan *should have* taken. Mahmood Mamdani's 2016 Boston Review article—"*Who's to Blame in South Sudan?*"— charted a path, through the post-independence battle between ruling elites, to a reluctant optimism for a second political transition in South Sudan. Over the course of fieldwork, I was often asked what contribution my research would make to build sustained peace in the new nation. While I am not convinced of the policy significance of mine or any other anthropological analysis, the question nevertheless compels one to reckon with the substantive import of academic research in general and in particular on areas actively affected by war and its aftermath.

Race Then and Now

The thinking on race that appeared in this dissertation has been inspired by historians of Africa who have been at the forefront of developing approaches to racial formation on and through the African continent that compel us to expand the sources and shape of racial thinking that undergird contemporary Africa (Powell 2003, Lydon 2009, Glassman 2011, Hall 2011, Brennan 2012, El-Hamel 2013, Weitzberg 2017, Young & Weitzberg 2021).[2] This growing literature has chronicled how multiple sets of actors (including indigenous African intellectuals) have developed modes of racial thought with lasting consequences for the political economic conditions of our contemporary world. Glassman (2011) contends that narratives in which Europeans are the only effective intellectual actors in colonial or post-independence Africa dominate most studies of race in the colonial world. The significant question in the debate that these studies have fostered is whether we can in fact call systems of inherited inequality *race* when their conceptual center of gravity is neither Europe nor the European Enlightenment (Mamdani 2018). Much theory on race establishes itself through a history in which Enlightenment-era race science accompanied European colonialists to the shores of Africa as the ideological material for expedient taxonomies with which to dominate and manage the native populations they encountered. By contrast, Glassman pushes us to think through formations of racial meaning that "had little to do with racial science," and were connected instead, for example, to religion or conceptualizations of "civilization" and its corollary "barbarism" that pre-date and persisted through the colonial encounter (Glassman 2004, 9, 724). For Glassman, ethnicity and race are not distinct kinds of differentiation but, as nodes on a continuum of

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socially ratified identity formation, underpinned by the invisible qualities of descent which are at once collective and individual, day-to-day and historical, as well as consequential and mundane.[3] Glassman's objective was to think of race in its ideological multiplicity, rather than emanating from a single administrative source. This frame enables a method to trace racial processes that defy the quest to identify the "original sin" of racism and the attendant "logic of the trial" which seeks only dichotomous understandings of "victims and culprits" rather than tracing the historical and ethnographic processes of how racialized difference has come to intersect with economic and political theory and policy (Stoler 1997, 185, Wacquant 1997, 222).[4]

To be blunt, what I hope readers will take away from the meditations on race in this dissertation is how multiple concepts of identity, including the so-called Arab, have produced their own *Blackened* Others. The study of the two Sudans compels one to take seriously how people articulate racial alienation within the Arabic-speaking world. While there is much attention to the plight of non-African religious and ethnic minorities in the Arabic-speaking world, there is less attention to processes that are analogous to what thinkers like Cedric Robinson (1983) have called, *the manufacture of the Negro*. One impediment is the incessant secular quality of contemporary studies of racial formation that have evacuated robust understandings of the juncture between racial and religious difference.[5] Another obstacle is that because this argument—*the manufacture of the Negro*—is so profoundly historical, scholarly responses to it, from the pillars of Islamic or Middle Eastern studies, often use history to avoid, rather than to confront contemporary racial formations. Historians of the medieval Middle East will use their profound archival knowledge to assert the impossibility of racial ideas or of racism within the structure of Middle Eastern slavery or in Islamic legal jurisprudence.[6] In my

estimation, such debates over history are inconsequential in light of the demands of the present to attend to the shape-shifting configurations of anti-Blackness and anti-Africanness.

Civil Society

As mentioned in the introduction, the research for this dissertation was undertaken in the context of ongoing civil protest in Sudan to wrest state power from military rule that sought to further embed its unlimited powers. Among my interlocutors, this process became a backdrop to still another ongoing civil campaign to capture state power from the vestiges of armed struggle in South Sudan. As my interlocutors read and engaged international news, both of these forms of civil unrest were of course set alongside the myriad other forms of civil protest against military rule appearing throughout the continent of Africa and the underdeveloped world more broadly since 2010-2011. It is this resurgence of civil protest that compels us to revisit the conceptualization of civil society.

I engage civil society as the primary analytic frame with which African studies more broadly makes sense of the associational life of individuals who are university-educated, born in or familiar with urban life and who have identified with a responsibility to hold the governing structure of their locality accountable to democratic principles of horizontal political structures. The point of departure here are the shortcomings of the term "elite" to make sense of University-educated professionals who are nevertheless not wealthy, at times articulating a wage-based struggle for better labor conditions, and who may or may not have themselves lived in a camp for internally or externally displaced people. It seems that when it comes to the study of elites in an African context there are two primary tendencies that I will term as *disruption* and *continuum*. Disruptionists take inspiration from early independence leaders like Julius Nyerere who sought to deracialize *and* detribalize the nation-state of Tanzania, foregrounding residence and

commitment to building democracy. They follow the institutional and legal legacies of colonization and decolonization to argue that there have been fundamental breakages with the pre-colonial past such that analyses of contemporary political spectra must account for how the colonial state and the universalist liberal-Christian legal regime it reproduced attempted to solve the question of native subjugation and alien rule (Mamdani 1996, Grovogui 1996). For those who subscribe to the continuum thesis, they follow a thread from pre-colonial African leadership structures that highlights the agency of African political leadership in how it manages social, political and economic relationships with non-African foreigners. Their goal is to trace a genealogy of how political leadership in Africa has oriented itself toward the world economy such that what appear to be foreign impositions come to be seen as elements of the historical condition of "extraversion (Bayart 1989, Bayart, Ellis, & Hibou 1999)." A vulgar materialist might reduce this tension to one of debate over a simplified understanding of *African agency* rather than a protean constellation of interests, coercion, and development goals.

The stakes of this crossroads is both theoretical and political in that how we are compelled to *understand* African political society becomes linked to whether or not that understanding informs one's commitment to African self-determination as an unfinished project. The resolution to this tension, as with seemingly all academic solutions, lies in between, paying attention to political developments over time as structure and agency ebb and flow. Mamdani's (1996) primary contention with the discourse on civil society is that it focuses more on idealized goals and exceptional promises than analytical attention to historical change. He distills the history of civil society in colonial Africa down to four moments: 1) the instantiation of the racist colonial state as the protector of European settlers, 2) the anti-colonial struggle for the working and embryonic middle classes into civil society, 3) independence and the deracialized state that failed

to deracialize civil society, and finally 4) the collapse of the embryonic indigenous civil society and the absorption of trade unions and civil organizations into political society (1996, 19-21). Mamdani offers a fifth historical development that he does not name as such, post-independence reform. Rather than dismantling the *decentralized despotism* that emerged as a product of indirect rule and the administrative powers of native chiefs, the states that emerged at independence, both the conservative and radical states, reproduced the legacy of the bifurcated state. The former simply maintained the hierarchy of chiefs after independence. The latter, however, sought reform and development, reorganizing decentralized native authority only by emphasizing "administrative decision-making" centralizing authority it in order "to unify the 'nation (1996, 25-6).'" Thus even as the radical states were deracialized, they fell short of thorough democratization. Decentralized despotism was therefore replaced with its centralized counterpart. While Mamdani focuses on the peasant-based rural struggle of decentralized despotism, the primary form of colonial state power, it is incumbent to ask what of the struggle against its complementary form? This section's focus on *civil society* is therefore a step towards reformulating Mamdani's goal "to appreciate what democratization *would have* entailed in the African context, we need to grasp the specificity of tribal power in the countryside (1996, 21, emphasis added)." Instead, drawing from his own formulation of the fourth historical moment, to appreciate what the marriage of developmental technicism and nationalism *has* entailed in the African context, we need to grasp the effects of civil power in the city (1996, 21).

African Internationalism along the Black Nile

Whether because the population that I focus on here are mobile African people or because of my own positionality as a Black-American Anthropologist studying Black or African peoples, there seems to be a professional and personal obligation to contend with the conceptual family of the Black/African Diaspora. To address this, I build on the scholarship of Jemima Pierre (2013) who has recently addressed the inability of Black/African Diaspora studies to take contemporary Africa seriously as an object of study. In the frame of *Diaspora*, an imaginative and silent Africa provides only cultural raw material, demanding neither historical specificity nor coevalness with its descendants in the Americas. This conceptual family contains both *The Black Atlantic* or *Black Internationalism,* two potential frames with which to examine the transnational mobility of South Sudanese intellectuals.[7] Indeed the term diaspora has both affective and institutional currency within the broader regional South Sudanese community demonstrated by, for example, *Diaspora* bank accounts through Kenya's Equity Bank in South Sudan that provide the means by which expatriates are able to invest, financially and emotionally, in maintaining attachment to the new nation. Paul Gilroy's (1993a) *Black Atlantic* provided a reconceptualized spatial zone of transnationally mobile hybridity in which to combat the "continuing lure of ethnic absolutism (1993a, 3)." Yet, the "well-policed borders of black particularity" which animated Gilroy's ocean-spanning counter narrative not only persist but seem to cling increasingly tighter to national boundaries (1993a, 6). *The Black Atlantic* highlighted hybridity and interconnection as media through which Black diasporic communities could let go of "the desire to be centered" that has still yet to be more fully centered in U.S.-based nationalistic conceptions of Black community (Gilroy 1993a, 190). Yet, the *Black Atlantic* provides a framework to understand

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transnational connection that is in constant motion, ever-changing, and constituted by tensions around authenticity and the authorial voice of the global Black experience. Uses of the *Black Atlantic* tend to uphold the ideological hegemony of the Middle Passage in which U.S.-based analyses seem to monopolize global Backness by linking it exclusively to the Atlantic Ocean and to the nation-states that have emerged in the Americas.[8] Yet, perhaps it is time to let go of this as well. Brent Hayes Edwards (2003) conception of *Black Internationalism* builds on Raymond Williams (1979) observation that colonial metropoles like Paris provided a unique crossroads at which intellectuals of African descent from across the broad French Empire could "'link up' (Edwards 2003, 3)." Indeed it is perhaps only in such spaces, as in African universities and continental Pan-African cultural festivals, where Pan-Africanism might become ethnographically intelligible. Yet, the significance assigned to cities like Paris and the French language renders Africa and the Africans who remain on the continent unintelligible within a Black Diaspora frame. Contemporary Africans only become visible once they have reached the shores of Europe or North America. That is to say, a byproduct of this dissertation has been to situate Khartoum and Nairobi as *African* nodes of *Black Internationalism*. The site of metropolitan confluence for my interlocutors were major continental African cities that, arguably more than Paris or London, have facilitated intense circulation and exchange between Africans from multiple backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, and attachments to geography. As such, African nodes of Black Internationalism cannot and should not be understood as sites of return, memory and diaspora in the non-coeval imagination of Africa from across the Atlantic. The pseudo-scientific claim to shared epigenetic qualities is not at work here. Instead, they are significant centers of contemporary African political, social and economic change wherein intense forms of exchange and imbrications of identity come to the fore. Edwards argues the practice of *translation* is

paramount in sites like Paris because he recognized the friction between African descendant groups who do not communicate primarily in English. French therefore became the language of an *adversarial internationalization*, a term he borrows from Edward Said (1990). Yet, in the context of the two Sudans, the Arabic language has become the language of dissidence for the South Sudanese intelligentsia who continue to disrupt expectations of national containerization. Edwards argues that Black internationalism resembles the Third World intellectuals Said described and is driven by the imperative to challenge "prevailing discourses of Western Universalism (2003, 7)." This frame, however, leaves us little room to maneuver in a discursive arena where the primary ideological-linguistic antagonism is not between French and English but between English and the Arabic language. With all of this in mind, this dissertation contributes to the recuperation of *Black Internationalism* and *The Black Atlantic* to provide points of departure for analyses of South-South mobility. The remaking of region through and around South Sudan can become intelligible in this more expansive frame. We can see how alternative bodies of water (such as the Nile Valley), alternative transnational languages (such as KiSwahili and Arabic), and the insufficient liberation of political independence constitute crucial scales of geopolitical interaction within continental Africa.

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[1] Tut Pur, Nyagoah. 2020. "9 Years On, South Sudan Still a Nation in Waiting." *Human Rights Watch* (blog). July 9, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/09/9-years-south-sudan-still-nation-waiting.

[2] Charlie Piot's (2010) work is an anthropological study that has thought historically about indirect rule, the principal mechanism of state racialization, *racecraft*, that upheld the bifurcated colonial state (Mamdani 1996). Piot has argued that since the end of the Cold War, there has been a profound decline in the influence of the conduits by which indirect rule came to affect the daily lives of people—chiefships, strict patriarchal families, and authoritarian states. This project contributes to how anthropological studies of race in African might account for the attendant re-articulations of *racecraft* that this period.

[3] I have also been inspired by an alternative conception of *racecraft* that is indebted to classical anthropological understandings of witchcraft (Fields 2001, Fields & Fields 2014). It draws on understandings of witchcraft to emphasize the invisible and spiritual qualities of race that nevertheless underly and act upon the material realm (2014, 203).

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[4] In a footnote, Pierre (2020) outlined the debate about the analysis of race as a choice between two schools of thought. On the one hand, there are those who follow Glassman and other historians who she claims trace the production of race to *internal* differences "within African communities" or as a result of Islam (S220)." On the other, where she positions herself, are the followers of Mamdani who support a distinction between notions of difference before and after contact with Europeans. The latter argument derives from Garuba (2008) who argued—similarly to the scholars of the Swahili coast with whom Glassman contends—for the flexibility of pre-colonial identity formation, on the heterogeneity of the self and harmony of community, and that indigenous ideas were simply not as world-historical in intention or effect as their European counterparts. It perhaps goes without saying that identity formation is always flexible and indirect rule was in fact the colonial state's failed attempt to crystallize a process of domination that required constant revision. In my estimation, the issue at hand is not a matter of choosing a scholarly camp but rather of the ethnographic responsibility to contend with the histories that inform our shared present. Are we to jettison an increasingly vast historical literature compelling more capacious understandings of how race operated in colonial and post-independence Africa?

[5] Two powerful exceptions to this trend analyze the legacy of Papal Bulls for western international law (Grovogui 1996) and the teleology of paradigms of difference in which the religious preceded the racial (Wynter 2003).

[6] The protracted Quranic exegesis in the first chapters of Chouki El-Hamel's (2013) book evidences the extent and gravity of the historical counter argument to drawing critical attention to contemporary racial formation.

[7] Anthropologists studying Africa from any other racial or national identity are of course not expected to contend with these ideas.

[8] As Clarke (2006) reminds us, by the 1970s, U.S. African diaspora studies had both homogenized global Blackness but had also generated "an approach to diaspora that charted migration as a unipolar link from Africa to its elsewhere (Clarke in Clarke and Thomas 2006, 135)." Zeleza (2005) locates this monopoly materially in the U.S. monopoly on academic production, the global hegemony of the English language, and the prominence of the labor of the U.S. Civil Rights movement. Michelle Wright's corrective for what she calls *Middle Passage epistemology* is a *postwar epistemology* that lends itself to more robust analyses of the trajectories of Black populations in North America more broadly (Canada, Mexico) and northern Europe.

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