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## THE ORIGINS, ROUTES OF MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT OF THE LOU-NUER

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study aims to provide some answers to questions related to the origins, routes of migration and the settlement of the Lou-Nuer people who are decedents of first twin boy born to Gea Gaw and his wife Nyawel Bew. The first twin boy's name was *Both* changed to *Denai* due to his physical appearance. The name was changed into Lou based on colour of certain bull according to the Nuer traditions. The British colonial power in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, added the name Nuer to distinguish them from the Lou-Dinka in Bahr El-Ghazal. The article as well attempts to answer questions related to the root causes of migration; how, where and why in addition to the stages they have taken till they finally settled in the country they are inhabiting today. The article as well briefly explains the Lou-Nuer contact and relationship with their neighbours within the Nuer community and other tribes in the region. The article gives brief information about the central area Wei-Deng, its spiritual role in connection to other tribes and across the borders with Ethiopia.

### 2.0 THE LOU-NUER LOCATION

The Lou-Nuer are people inhabiting the cavern valley of western Sobat and Pibor rivers. The area in general is covering the eastern Jonglei State and marking the international border of frontier to Ethiopia along the western Akobo and Pibor Rivers. It is estimated that they have inhabited the area for period of about 200 years. The Lou-Nuer country boundary from the south by the Murle, Anyuak in South east, Ethiopia in the east, Gajiok (Nasir and Ulang) in the east and northeast, the Ngok and Luach Dinka in the north, Gawaar in the west, Dinka of Duk, Tuic East and Bor in the west and south west.

The historical roots of migration to the area began with migration history of the Nuer and other Nilotic people in South Sudan. In a period assumed to be around 1300s, the people who became known as Western Nilotic

(Jieng, Naath and Luo people), have settled along the areas of Bahr-El-Ghazal and western Bahr-El-Jebel rivers. The settlement helped them to acquire and develop techniques for animal domestication, and other lifestyles. But the challenging question remains, where did they come from and how? This article will attempt to answer it according to the Nuer traditions and beliefs.

### 3.0 THE LOU-NUER ORIGIN

The Nuer traditional concept says, God has created their first ancestors in the area of Lich started through one man called *Gea Gaw* and his wife *Nyawel Bew/Bech*. It is the Nuer believe that he spouse came out from Tamarind tree located now in Koch County of Unity State. *Gea* and *Nyawel* after coming out of the tree were blessed with seven children, six boys and one girl, they were *Ngor (Thiang)*, *Both (Nai)*, *Diet, Bol, Lahang and Bor* plus their sister called *Ker* who later on gave birth to two boys, *Leh/Lek* and *Lak*.

Other children, *Mem, Kiir, War*, among others, were adopted and gained the same legal status with full kinship rights.

The Lou-Nuer are therefore, according to this tradition, children of *Both Geaka* who later on became known as *Denai*, whose name was changed to *Lou*. While the community of *Gea* was multiplying in number, the land became smaller and some internal disagreements started to occur to the level of conflicts. Other reasons were related to power struggle among the leaders, which led individual groups to decide to migrate in search for better living place. Thus, eastern Nile was identified to be the best choice, which many years later on, became the three Nuer districts: *Akobo, Fangak and Nasir*. Those districts combined of five groups: *Lou, Gaawar, Thiang, Lak, and Jikany*. However, for the purpose of focus, this article will deal only with the Lou-Nuer who are the people of *Akobo*. Although the original homeland's name *Lich* remained, the migrants refer to it *Chieng-Tang*

1. Interview with Honorable James Mayul Thor, on 20/2/2021, Juba.
2. The term *Tang* means stick or staff which could mean the only weapon they had while migrating.

### 4.0 THE MEANING OF THE NAME LOU-NUER

The name *Lou* is a nickname related to a colour, which means grey, and the name *Nuer* is an adjective created traditionally by the ancient ancestors through rituals. But who are the Lou-Nuer? The traditional stories relate that, *Both Geaka* was physically born weak than his twin brother *Diit*. Therefore, he was nicknamed *Both Nai-Nai* which later on turned to *Nai* and his children became *Denai* or *Jinai*. The *Nai's* children were *Bany, Yien, Nyang* and their sisters *Nyabiel* and *Paduai*. *Bany Denai* quickly got developed, multiplied in number and became bigger than the rest of his brothers. However, Meanwhile, had three boys, *Dak, Baal and Reat* from his wife *Nyagon* and their descendants became known as *Gon*. *Yien* and *Reat* are the people of *Uror County*, while *Baal* owns *Nyirrol County*. The other children of *Nyamuor* are: *Nyang* nicknamed *Galiek* and his two sisters *Nyabiel* and *Paduai*. These three became the group of *Muor* inhabiting the *Akobo County*. *Nyabiel* had two sons, *Mach* and *Joak*, while her sister *Paduai* had one son called *Bol*. Due

to community development, Joak became independent as community of Joak-Joak (*Joah-Joah*). The elder brother Mach joined his cousin Bol and Uncle Nyang (Galiek). The three groups became Jimaach, meaning people of one fire or group who cook together (Nyuaak).

On the other hand, the Denai children from Nyagon and Nyamuor became closer to each other and had bull with grey colour which became the name Lou. The children of Bany had yellow bull with some white in bottom known as Reng-Yien. The two bulls (Lou and Reng-Yien) became a source of fun and social entertainment occasionally when they fight. Therefore, the Denai family got divided into those two groups supporting the two bulls.

The community stories also narrate that, the Reng-Yien bull used to defeat the Lou bull, till one day the Lou defeated the Reng-Yien. From point of superiority and pride, the Reng-Yien supporters got annoyed and could not control their anger which they immediately poured out towards the Lou bull supporters and decided to fight them. The Lou supporters in turn could not tolerate being intimidated by their cousins, the children of Bany the Reng-Yian supporters anymore as a result of which: (a) The Lou replaced the name Denai as the later had replaced the name Both. (b) The Reng-Yieng replaced the name Bany. (c) The Lou, to avoid the continuity of the conflict, the migration into new lands became the only choice.

*The word Nuer is said to be added to the name Lou by the British colonial authority in early 20<sup>th</sup> century to distinguish them from Lou section of Dinka in Bahr El-Ghazal.*

## 5.0 THE THEORIES OF MIGRATION TO THE WEST NILE

**The first generation of Lou people who led the migration journey from Chieng-Tang was Yocnuach set age marked in 1805, born around 1780s. The migrants have spent many years before they reach the current cavern of Pibor and western Sobat. In fact, the first generation settled in Mun-Loal (Lou-Nuer) country, which was assumed to be Lajak age set, born in 1827 and marked in 1840. They were succeeded by Thut born in 1830s and marked in 1850s (Mading 2018).**

This theory gives a room to refute the idea, which claims that, the marks at the fore head of each Nuer male were imposed by the colonial powers, because the first Europeans who reached South Sudan was in 1840 (Harrell, 2010), while the first age group called *Riak* was marked in 1765. It is believed that the Nuer migrants had kept and carried with them all the same cultures, norms and traditions developed in Lich (Chieng-Tang). Indeed, the traditional norm of inauguration for marking the generations is one of the strongest bases unifying the whole Nuer nation wherever they are, from far west to the far east of South Sudan and Ethiopia.

At the early migration stage, it is narrated that in one of the dry seasons, part of Denai youth of Nyagon and Nyamuor, who now became the Lou, decided to avoid constant confrontation with their cousins of Bany (Reng-Yien). Therefore, a young man called Bediit Riaw with nick name (Bediit Rial-Char) from Baal Yien led the desperate journey crossing the white Nile River in port known as *Wath-Yooka* opposites to Juay-Boor in Fangak of Zaraf valley.

After crossing, they settled there for period of time. Later on, a conflict erupted between Muor and Gon. The Muor where defeated and pushed to the east of Zaraf River, and Gon remained in the valley.

Sometimes later, other clans of Gawaar, Thiang and Lak under leadership of Buokapel followed the Lou, but they crossed from different port known, *Wath Pawar-Jaak*, which is opposite to Paguir. According to the traditional stories, after their settlement for few years, they went into conflict with Gon, and defeated them crossing the Zaraf River following Muor. When the Muor heard of what happened to their brothers, they came back for aiding Gon, however both Lou clans could not resist the attack, they were forced to leave the valley.

The new settlers occupied the area and became their homestead, which is known as Fangak today. But some names still referred to the Lou settlement up to date.

The Lou as well took with them some memories of the area. But they started their second massive journey to unknown territories, following western bank of the Sobat River, until they reached Wei-Bel (Bukteng) in Makak swamps. This theory suggests that, all the Lou sections of: Gon and Muor were journeying and eventually settled together.

The second theory believes that, not the whole Lou family had migrated together, rather Muor and some of Gaatbal remained in *Chieng-Tang*, and came with Latjor Duach, the leader of Jikany.

According to this theory, the migration of Latjor to the east came as a result of two leaders, Latjor Duach (Ding-Yien) and Chol Gea had leadership conflict, which forced Latjor to take decision and led some Jikany youth and leaders to migrate to east, and his followers became known as Jikan. According to this opinion, remnants of Lou went along with Jikany, until they met again in an area called Wei-Bel (Bukteng), now located in exact cave between Nasir and Akobo.

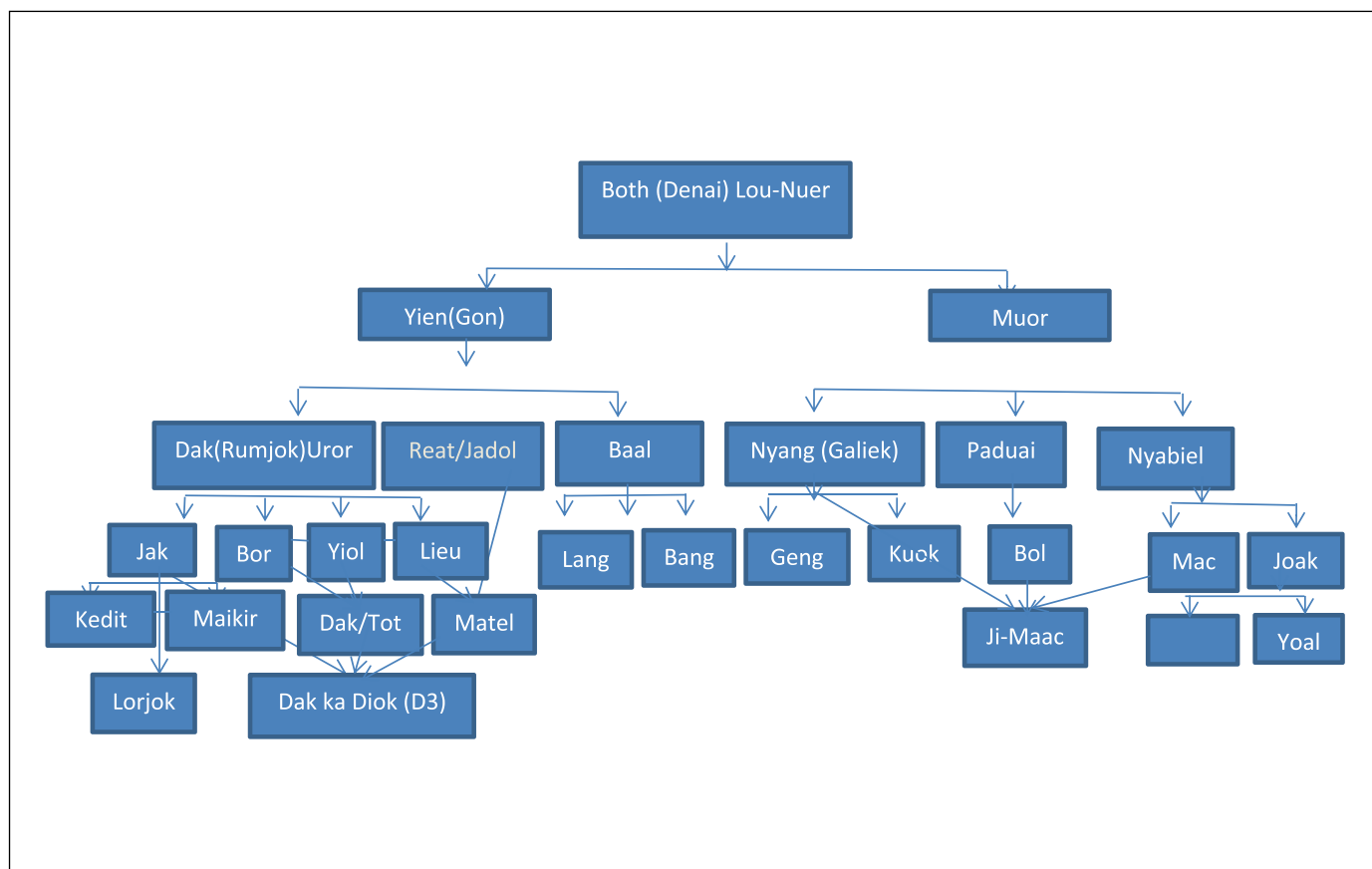
This theory confirms Jikany migration together with some Muor who remained behind in Chieng-Tang. However, Sharon Hutchinson in her article (*A guide to the Nuer of Jonglei State*) asserts that: Gaawar and Lou were the first groups to cross the river, where they settled on the peripheries on Zeraf Island. According to her, the groups of Lak and Thiang followed around 1840s, and pushed the Lou and Gaawar further east. In addition, Jal (2013, P. 93), describes that, the Jikany have followed the Lou in Buongjak in 1850, for distance of 100 miles (160 kilo meters) as an aiding force during their first war with Openo-Anyuaa.

## 6.0 THE LOU SETTLEMENT IN WEI-BEL (BUKTENG)

The area of Wei-Bel is a hill located in cavern swampy south western confluence of Pibor and Sobat Rivers. The area from the Lou-Nuer perspective has many historical stages which shaped the life of its inhabitants. Therefore, it was given some names; Wei-Bel, Bukteng and Makak island or swampy.

According to the Lou tradition stories, Wei-Bel has three important memories; (1) it was the first assembly locations for the Lou since they left the Zaraf Valley. (2) It was where the Lou met with Jikany for the first time after their separation in Chieng-Tang. (3) It was the start point where they moved to Bungjak. (4) It was where the diviner Ngundeng Bong, who combined both clans; Lou his maternity, and Jikany who his father came along with them from the west, wanted to build his pyramid (Bieh) from the beginning there considering it the centre. But the area was too swampy, and became inaccessible, especially during

While the Lou were settling in Bukteng, and fishing in Makak swamps, the legend relates that one of Beliew Yol under leadership of Nyiel Beliew, with nick named *Nyiel Chot-Wea*, met strange beautiful girl with long hair. The girl used to come out from the water and sits at the bank, but jumps into the swamps whenever she is seen by anyone. As a result, Nyiel and his group planned to catch her alive, but they could not succeed, till one day she came out while they were hiding. When they failed to catch her, they decided to spear her. But after she was wounded, she pulled out the spears, through it behind to them, and jumped into the water. Later on the three men saw a brown cow with white colour on its fore head grazing nearby. They tried to collect it, but failed, therefore, they decided to kill it too. However, the same scenario of the girl had happened with the cow throwing back the spear with high blood pressure, and went again into the river. It appeared later on that, the girl and the cow are the same spirit appearing in different images. This spirit appeared later on causing diseases to death of the family of Beliew Yol. Hence, some rituals and sacrifices were offered, and the spirit became their god calls *Biel Nyan-Jut* (the spirit of the virgin). It's occasionally, on yearly basis being worshiped in Makak swamps. The spiritual dedication included naming the children after it. The boys were called Biel, while the girls are called Nyabiel. The area became known as *Toich Nyiel Belieu* or (Nyiel Chut-Wea). In addition to Makak incident, the swamps called *Toich Kuelida*, or *Toich Nyan-Jut* the cow or virgin's swamps.



The following is Denai or the Lou-Nuer family tree structure.

Figure 1: The Lou-Nuer family tree structure

## 7.0 LOU TO BUONGJAK AND REPATRIATION TO PIBOR

The settlement of the Lou-Nuer people on the Sobat-Pibor areas faced lot of climatic challenges. The low swampy areas were being over flooded in rainy seasons which limited the living opportunities. Therefore, the search for better place continued. About 1845-1850, an area of Buongjak in northeast of Boma plateau, was identified by the explorers to be a good place with three theories. The first theory says the whole eastern Nuer combined of Lou and Jikany from Bukteng followed their way till they reached the sacred rock of Abula, and never got separated till they return back to Pibor and Sobat.

The second opinion believes that, those who left for Buongjak in 1840-1845, were the Lou only. They went as far as sacred rock of Abula and settled there for a while and soon after that the Lou-Nuer faced strong resistance from the Openo-Anywak. Therefore, around 1850, the Jikany followed the Lou as an aiding taskforces (Jal, 2013).

The third opinion says the Jikany did not go as an aiding taskforces only, because they went with women, children and cattle, rather, they were following the Lou in the same manner searching for better land, and

faced war with the Anyuak together. It seems therefore that the third opinion is more logical and acceptable to both Lou and Jikany.

While in Buongjak, two major circumstances occurred; (a) The Anyuak resistance having failed in pushing the Nuer, they cried out unto God for refuge (Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 132-3). (b) The thick forestry in the area caused human and animals' sleeping sickness of Tse Tse fly, followed by outbreak of smallpox (Jal, 2013).





The effect of smallpox was worldwide outbreak disease which had spread in that period of time in 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian Smith (1991, p. 12; Mading, 2018)).

## 8.0 THE LOU-NUER MIGRATION TO MUN-LOAL

The current country of the Lou-Nuer people was known as Mun-Loal (Lol-Land), initially used to be inhabited by the Padang-Jieng before they quit it, as a result of climatic reasons. Thus, reaching the Mun-Loal was another risk for similar reasons. After the Lou returned from Buongjak, they settled in BilKei (now Akobo town) and the areas surrounding along the Pibor river and Khor Geini. However, the same reasons forced them to leave the Pibor area again.

- 1). The outbreak of smallpox disease followed them at Pibor, and killed big number. That is why the area in the northwest of Khor Geini mouth is called Wuth-Piny to date. This means, the land had opened its mouth and swallowed the people.
- 2). Lou are pastoralists people, Pibor was not suitable for their settlement. (a) Its soil was too muddy in wet season, and became another disadvantage for their cattle. (b) In dry season, the land gets crack with many dangerous holes breaking the legs of their cows and kids as well.
- 3). The river has a lot of crocodiles and hippos, which attacked and killed many of them.



Figure 2: Sample of Pibor area in the wet season



Figure 3: Sample of Pibor Soil during the dry season

Later on, from Bilkei in Pibor, a young man called Kuoth Both led an expedition to the west searching for better settlement till he reached a certain pool which later on he named Padoi. Kuoth got amazed by the beautiful sandy land with good soil and plenty water. From there, Kuoth and his group met with some Dinka-Padang men probably from Abwong or from Duk. In fact, the communicating language was still very similar. Therefore, he was told about a big poisoning serpent living in the pool, comes out every seven days. The snake poisons through smell come out from it, and by seeing from very far distance, and they show him the road that it goes and comes back through. After confirming by himself, Kuoth performed some protection rituals and collected huge fire woods and assembled them on the snake's road. When the specific day came for the snake to go out, he fired them. Because the fire was strange for the serpent, it could not avoid it and therefore, it was burnt and died at last. That area became known *Chow-Loa*, means, bones of the snake up to this time. Hence, Padoi was dedicated and named *Pul-Kuoth*, meaning the Lake of God.

The report was positive for majority of Lou specially the youth in Bilkei. But some elders who felt that the river was the source of life, opposed the migration. An old man called Bei Chuol nick named *Bei Chot-Lieth* was an important leader of the whole Lou community, he rejected the idea of leaving Pibor. But majority of youth imposed their will upon the assembly supporting the migration. Chot-Lieth told them that, the small swamps you are moving to will dry up just in few years to come. Therefore, when they started their new journey, Bei who became an old man was carried along, and requested that, his head should be turned to the east at Pibor River. And told them that should he die, they should bury him with his head to the east for the same reason, an advice which became their burial ritual and culture, meaning they will come back to the River.

**After about three decades, the population have quickly increased and their cattle got multiplied. The water in those small streams began to decrease during the dry season, and were not enough for people and animals. Fishes, which were the secondary food supply got disappeared.**

Guinea warm disease began to affect people negatively, and the same problem which displaced the Padang now in turn became the Lou problem. The lack of central government to enforce the rule of law, made some strong clans to control the water points. Thus, Pibor and Sobat rivers which are far distance of about 100 kilometres, the Lou did not have another choice than returning there for grazing and fishing opportunity in the dry season.

Hence, the search for water and other supporting food supplies like fishing, made the Lou to be in contact with Jieng of Duk, Twich and Bor in the southwest, Gaawaar in the west, Luach and Ngok Dinka in the north and the Jikany, with whom they separated after returning from Buongjak, going back to Pibor and Sobat, made them to interact again. The contact with the Ciro-Anyuak along the Pibor River as well continued, especially when they were displaced by the Turks along the Sobat around 1870s. The contacts with Murle along Pibor, Kongkong Rivers, and Biem swampy were not cut off since returning from Bungjak.



## 9.0 THE LOU IN CONTACT WITH THE MURLE

Besides the earlier contact with Anyuak in Buongjak, the Lou met the Murle who were advancing from the highlands under pressure from Jiye, Toposa and Turkana. The Murle in turn pushed the Anyuak to the north, along the basins of Abara, Kongkong, Agwei, Kengen, Pibor and Akobo Rivers (Lewis 1972, p. 22; Southal, 2010). The Murle continued moving northwards to the upper Pibor until they met with the Lou (Willis, et-al, 1931; Johnson, 1993).

**The Lou oral stories relate that they met with the Murle on a mountain along the Kongkong River. After the two groups failed to communicate, the Nuer gave a name *Jabe* to the Murle means a person who is short with strong body build. The Murle gave to Lou the name *Jongkoth*, which means hot temperature.**

Because the name given by each sounds negative to other side, they don't want to hear or being called with it.

As time passed, the contacts with the Murle continued in many areas particularly along the Pibor River. The Murle as well managed to occupy Nyandit, a small Lake along the river between Burmath and Lekwangole. The Lou called that lake *Pul Kuoth* meaning, the lake of god, which the Murle traditions say they adopted that spirit and became their god. The contacts continued annually during the dry season on Khor-Geni at Biem/Nanam swamps.

In 1936, the two tribes went into serious conflict which became the marking point of their traditional conflict to date. The oral story relates; two bulls fought, one belongs to the Lou-Nuer man calls Nyuot Deat another belongs to the Murle man. The Murle bull was injured and died. The owner in high anger took his spear and killed the Lou bull, and the reaction was the war. This led the Government in Upper Nile Province in Malakal to redraw the boundary and separated them. The Murle have to camp up Kadhage in the south, and the Lou to camp in Matyiel to the north with distance of 17 mile (27 kilo meter) in between as no man land (Mading 2018). This remained the legal boundary to date.

## 10.0 WEI-DENG AND ITS ROLE IN THE LOU AFFAIRS

Wei-Deng which is located in Rim north of Waat town located at the middle of the three Lou-Nuer divisions: two sections of Gon (Dak and Baal) plus Muor which now became the three counties (Akobo, Nyirol and Uror).

**It became more important in 1860s when Ngundeng built a pyramid/Yik and named it Bieh Deng-Kur. This happened when Ngundeng, who was Thut age set claimed that he has been possessed by spirit of Deng-Kur (god). His mother was Nyayiel Malual from Lou and his father was Bong Chan an Earth-Master from Chieng Leak of Bul section. Bong crossed the White Nile in Maluth (Malute) together with the migrants Jikany led by Latjor. Bong became the earth-master carrying out duties of the earth mastership such as resolving blood feuds, mediating disputes and other societal functions.**

When Bong died, Ngundeng initially was entrusted with the same responsibilities and was seized by a powerful spirit, which was recognized and praised by his disciples *Dayoms* as *Deng-Taath*.

Some argued that after the death of his father, Ngundeng preferred to go to where his maternity household in the Lou country. Some stories say, Bieh supposed to be dedicated and build in Wei-Bel/Bukteng as the first meeting point of Lou and Jikany. But due to its climatic location, Rim was identified and dedicated for *Deng Kur*. Thus, Ngundeng reputation quickly got spread and became famous and powerful prophet with double abilities of both blessing and curse to overcome magicians and witchcrafts. Hence, Wei-Deng became the spiritual centre.

The traditional stories revealed that, visitors came from many areas including Murle, Anyuak, Dinka and Ethiopians looking for personal blessing, and others were representing their nations. The Murle participated in placing the two ivories on top of the pyramid. The Jo-Ciro Anyuak chief Owar Nyigwo made the famous silver pipe *Tony Lang*. The Nuer traditional stories believed that, this gave the Anyuak power of defeating the Lou and Jikany from years 1902 till 1924 from Pibor and Baro basins through massive operations carried out by the king Cham War Akwei (Kelly, 1986).

For the Dinka, the oral stories relate that, Ngundeng blessed the Dinka for leadership in famous song which says "*E Mut Jaani Wani Koam*" literally means; let the Dinka spear reaches up to the seat. The fulfilment seems to have appeared several times; the Lawyer Abel Alier replaced Joseph Ukel Garang from Jur-Chol (Bahr El-Ghazal Luo) in 1971 as a Minister for Southern Affairs after being convicted of coup attempt. Alier as well became the first President of the High Executive Council of Southern Sudan after the signing of Addis Ababa agreement in 1972 instead of General Joshep Lagu the leader of Southern Sudan Liberation Movement

(SSLM). The same repeated itself during establishment of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army SPLM/A in July 1983 when John Garang managed to Kill Samuel Gai Tut and took over the leadership up to 2005. General Salva Kiir continued to lead up to independence of South Sudan in 2011.

## 11.0 NGUNDENG AND THE ETHIOPIAN EMPEROR

The Ethiopian Emperor Menilik II born in 1844 and died in December 1913, during his reign went under heavy pressure and attacks from France and Italy. This was during the Europeans occupation of Africa in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Emperor heard of Ngundeng and sent a delegation to Wei-Deng. According to the story, Ngundeng knew that the Emperor delegation was on its way and told the followers about brown people coming from the east who greet by bowing down their heads. He instructed for their reception with good hospitality, and they were accommodated in an area calls Wei-Noori. But, after their accommodation, the area's name was changed into Wei-Thonyini meaning area of circumcised people, based on their cultural status.

However, after reception, Ngundeng gave to the emperor Menilik II a colourful bull with red, white and black calls *Tut mi Ker Nyang*, and nicknamed him *Jiath-Nyang* based on the bull's colour<sup>1</sup>. Jiath means wood which is strong like pillar. Ngundeng was criticized and blamed for giving the unknown visitors who was in need everything free; bull and high hospitality. But, Ngundeng, replied in form of song addressed to the people and the bull, *Thon Ker Nyang Ba Ji Guor, Nyoaka Je Ke Lar Ye*. Meaning, you bull, my people will follow you, I repeat and telling you my people. However, no one understood this proverb. Later in time, everything was remembered by the Nuer in early 1960s when the war of liberation which started in August 1955 was about to fail due to lack of appropriate support from other African countries surrounding South Sudan. Ethiopia became the only refuge, and continued during the long struggle till South Sudan achieved sovereignty in 2011, and Ethiopia remained for the past 60 years the only major source of support for the South Sudan liberation movements and refugees. This story is believed by the Nuer as a reminder of Ngundeng's gift of *Tut-Ker-Nyang* to the Emperor Menilik II. Moreover, Ethiopia is the only African country survived the colonial domination, and became the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), currently African Union (AU).

The history further tells that, the Abyssinians under Minelik II defeated the Italians in famous battle of Adowa in 1896 (Shugeir, 1981, p. 882; Jal, 1989). Hence it was confirmed and believed that, it was a result and blessing of that visit and gift. In the same year, the British government while preparing for occupation of Sudan after capturing Dongola and Berber from El-Mahdiyya Islamic government sent a high delegation to Ethiopia led by Sir Rink Ruud and General Wingate who later on became the Governor General for Sudan. The visit of the British delegation was aiming at cooperation of the two countries and was the first time for the preparation for negotiation of the borders agreements, which were later on signed in 1902 and 1907.

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*Jiath Nyang means Wood which comes in the meaning pillar, and the emperor was blessed to be strong pillar.*

## 12.0 WEI-DENG AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF ANGLO-EGYPTIAN

Ngundeng in his lifetime did not have much contact to the Turko-Egyptian condominium, which ruled the Sudan from 1821 to 1885. In fact, the Turko-Egyptians reached the South in 1840, and remained active in some areas along the major rivers; white Nile, Sobat, and Bahr El-Ghazal. However, the invaders reached only areas of Mogok, Nasir and Pul-Real along Khor Nyirol around 1870s. Some religious men who were in spiritual and leadership conflicts with Ngundeng tried to bring them. But when those leaders realized that government basic interest was only random taxes collection and enslaving of the indigenous, they reunited with Ngundeng. Therefore, the area reached by the Turks was renamed Pulturuk to date.

Due to rise of El-Mahdiyya movement, which expelled the Turks out of Sudan in January 1885, the Lou-Nuer area, like other parts of the South, before occupation of the British in 1898, did not have other invading foreigners. Ngundeng as well became in his last years because he died in 1906. Therefore, there was a silent period between his death and the rise of his son Gwek, who appeared in early 1920s, claiming to have been

possessed by the same spirit of his father *Deng-Kur*. In other dimension, this silent period experienced the defeat of Lou and Jikany by the Anyuak along Pibor and Baro rivers (Mading 2018).

Johnson (1993) said Gwek Ngundeng came from eastern Jikany country to rebuild his father's pyramid. When Percy Coriat was assigned in 1922 as Assistant District Commissioner (ADC) for the Lou-Nuer and Gawaar administration, he went into conflict with Gwek. In 1923, he made Ayod the headquarter of both Lou-Nuer and Gawaar, and made Dual Diu the paramount chief. But in 1926, he divided Gawaar transferring the Lou-Nuer from Ayod to be managed in Abwong, and wanted to appoint Gwek to be the paramount chief (Johnson 1993). Dual Diu became the paramount chief for the Bar Gawaar, managed as part of Zaraf Valley District (ZVD). The conflict started practically when the assistant district Coriat requested Gwek to go to Abwong in order to participate in reception of the Governor General Sir John Maffey's visit (Johnson 1993). Gwek was focusing on rebuilding his father's pyramid, and Coriat was establishing the government and wants all the leaders' submission. Thus, the two men Gwek and Coriat did not understand each other. Therefore, Gwek was accused of (1) refusing to go to Abwong, or opposing the government and detained the Muor chiefs under the pyramid who were on their way for Abwong for the same reason. (2) He was accused of planning to raid the Dinka of Duk and Twic. (3) He was refusing his people to pay taxes to the government (Johnson 1993).

These accusations were connected with that the government all over Sudan was fighting and targeting all the traditional men who were claiming of being possessed by some kind of spirit *Kujurs/Witcrafts* and others (Mohamed 1969). Coriat has taken Gwek Ngundeng in particular the direct enemy mobilizing the Lou-Nuer against his government. Therefore, he immediately decided to launch an attack against him and the entire Lou-Nuer in 1928 using all the available powers and forces, especially the British Royal Air Force (BRAAF) till Gwek was killed in January 1929 (Johnson 1993).

In fact, although not all the Lou have participated in war, but most of the powerful leaders assessed to be 43 persons, were totally Gwek supporters (Mading 2018). But majority of them were playing role of double agents, too suspicious of the Turuk motives. Later on, the facts were realized that, interpreters who were from the neighbouring tribes have used the government as an advantage in order to harm Gwek and his tribe. Therefore, Gwek was not given a chance to negotiate with the government. Furthermore, the history had it that, Gwek and his father Ngundeng never carry out any raid against the Dinka or any other

neighbouring tribes, except the Pading incident which was justified as self-defence when the Luach-Dinka invaded his camp during the dry season.

Though the British managed to control the whole South Sudan, the Lou area up to 1930, remained the major obstacle. That was why the government intended to squeeze them, preventing the Muor from Pibor River in a distance of four miles, and Gon were prevented to settle in their traditional grazing land at Biem. At the same time, they were used for free laboring to clear the road till the boundaries were demarked again in 1942 after the heavy war broke out between the Lou and the Murle along Biem swamps (CNDL/66. B. 2 on 12/1/1948).

When the Anyuak population reduced from 30,000 to 3,846 with 580 only taxes payers, the government decided to merge the Anyuak with Murle to be govern together in Pibor which was upgraded into district. Hence, on 7/12/1953, the Civil Secretary in Khartoum (CSK) and A. C. Beaton the Upper Nile Province Governor signed a document dividing Central-Nuer District into two. On 28/12/1953, the Pibor District (PD) was renamed the Lou-Nuer District (LND) with headquarter in Akobo.

### 13.0 THE LOU-NUER'S ROLE IN SOUTH SUDAN

The name Lou-Nuer after the final settlement got developed to become the identity combining both land and the people. This turned the unwilling migration to be the best, not for them alone. For example, starting from early 1960s when the mood of liberation became the priority for the South Sudanese, the Lou-Nuer country became one of important stations in the eastern frontier. The wide cavern of the western Sobat and Pibor rivers enabled the cooperation between the Lou-Nuer and Jikany to recruit other tribes to join forces. One of the practical roles was the Akobo mutiny in 1975. This became the real spark which was crowned by the independence after 35 years of struggle. It's fair also to mention that majority of those who pioneered the liberation from Lou Nuer did not see this glory, but lived it by faith till it was achieved.

The Lou-Nuer land and the people had a direct contact with Jikany with whom they share common history settlement and national liberation history. The Anyuak as well, were in good relationship with Lou along Pibor and the Sobat rivers before 1900. Both tribes got intermarriage, adopted and exchanged each other traditions and lifestyle. This good relationship was however, interrupted when the Anyuak acquired fire arms from Ethiopia in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The new war style enabled the Anyuak to drive out the Lou and Jikany from Pibor and Baro basins till the government of Sudan intervened by establishing the Pibor River District in 1911 on the lower Akobo river at the western mouth confluence of the lower Pibor (Kelly, 1986; Johnson, 1993).

However, the Lou-Nuer migration played positive role of refuge and enabled many mutineers to get their supplies during the long wars of liberation.



## 14.0 CONCLUSION

The historical roots of migration of the Lou-Nuer people related to internal conflicts that occurred between two brotherly clans of Denai Geaka. The conflicts forced the Lou to avoid what may cost them death. Therefore, desperate adventured migrating to eastern White Nile leading to their settlement in the area which later on was them, Lou-Nuer.

Although it is not always the absolute solution for the all the communal conflicts, for the Lou-Nuer, migration was the right option to solve that particular problem. It helped them to acquire new lands and enabled them to integrate other nations into their community and the Lou-Nuer country became one of important refuge lands for liberation of South Sudan.



*Bieh in Wei-Deng. This picture believed to have been taken in 1929 by Percy Coriet the assistant commissioner who killed Guek Ngundeng.*



*Figure 4: The Lou,Nuer Community logo in Diaspora, Australia.*

S/N	NAME OF THE MARK	MEANING	INTERPRETATION
1	Woch Dhool	Boy no more	He has taken oath to be a man not a boy any longer
2	Nyon Yang	Not milking a cow into his mouth	This is culture for the pastoralists, that a boy feeds himself by milking the cow direct into his mouth. But from the day of marking he has to stop.
3	Kuiit Pic		Should not eat food while being cooked
4	Bel Tuok	Not to eat remaining in the plate	Naath marked male not eat what remained in food plate.
5	Tuer Dhaar	Not to eat remaining in the cocking pot	A marked male should not eat remaining foods in the cocking pot.
6	Nguot	Oath	He is now under the law as a man eligible for any consequences.
7	Rich	Means generation	This mark is given only as an addition conditionally when younger brother wanted to be marked with his elder brother.

Figure 5: The Nuer tradition marks, names and their meanings

S/N	WESTERN AND CENTRAL NAATH	EASTERN NAATH: LOU AND JIKANY	YEAR OR DATE OF INTIMATION
1	Riak		1765
2	Juok		1775
3	Chot-Bora		1785
4	Ger-Loch		1795
5	Yoach-Nuach		1805
6	Yil-Bith		1815
7	Ngompiny		1825
8	Chuet-Chuor / Tharpi 1830		1830
9	Lajak		1845
10	Thut		1855
11	Buoi-Loch/ Wor/ Wuor		1860/65
12	Lailek 1870	Maker	1875
13	Dang	Luach	1885
14	Lier	Dang-Guonga	1895
15	Dal/Yaal	Char-Buoi/ Guong	1905
16	Kiech/ Pilual/ Goong2	Lith-Gai	1915
17	Pilual/Kei	Chayat	1925
18	Chot-Jiok/Kac-Lou	Rial-Mach	1930

Johnson 1993, P. 14.

19	Guoluong	Reang-Gach/Kuek	1940
20	Koryom	Lit-Jang	1945
21	Garaang/Yaat-Jaani	Thok-Thok/ Sudan	1955
22	Tang-Nyang	Jak-Gach	1957
23	Pilual/	Tui-Tui	1960
24	Pilual	Loke-Leat	1965
25	Weah	Put-Chot-Gier	1970
26	Weah	Lunge/Pathayiot	1975
27	Louk	Nyang-Lek/Malicha	1980

*Figure 6: Names and the meanings of Naath marks*

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CS/16.A.8. 26<sup>th</sup> December 1953

CS/16.A.8on 26/12/1953

UNP/16/B.22, on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1954. On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1954, F. D. McJannet UNP/16.B.22.No.UPN/57.D.7 and LND/8.B.1.5/51954 for the years 1933-1971.

(UNP/16.B.22). 23/9/1954

5<sup>th</sup> May 1954, he stated it clearly that, the mentioned boundaries are for the Lou-Nuer District as it appeared in documents (LND/8.B. UNP/57D-7) reports of (1933-1971).

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