

Why the Decades-Old Ruweng Genocidal Campaigns Have Gained Momentum: What the World Must Know

By The Voice of Ruweng

Executive Summary

Much as South Sudanese have achieved their long and hard-fought political freedom, this independence has heralded new challenges for the people of Ruweng Administrative Area (RAA). That is because South Sudan's independence in 2011 has presented three real and present challenges to the life, security, and dignified existence for the people of RAA who have come to consider these challenges to be existential in nature.

In the broader context of these **existential threats** to the life, security and dignified existence of the people of RAA, the first existential threat arises from the unconscionable environmental pollution that has engendered searing birth defects among human and animal populations alike. The second existential threat emanates from the yawning deficit in political leadership in RAA as majority of political appointees are fronted and manipulated by Bentiu political leaders. Most of these political appointees are, thus, intent on pursuing personal aggrandizement with the view to unjustly enriching themselves. The third and final existential threat to the life, liberty and security of the people of RAA is the sheer determination of Bentiu Nuer political leaders to undermine any progress in RAA. Their overriding object is to displace Ruweng. This vision is largely driven and inspired by the BANAFa Project in order to weaken, assimilate or even wipe out the Ruweng Ngok Dinka on the face of the Planet and take over their land. That is why both the National Government, and the international community should be put on notice in regard to the grave consequences of this political machination by Bentiu Nuer. The recent spate of violent events in RAA are a premonition for what is coming, even though they are only a tip of a very large iceberg, having regard to what the people RAA have had to endure for the last four decades and in light of what is yet to come.

The decades-old genocidal campaigns against the people of Ruweng was made manifest in the recent searing violence meted out to the people of RAA in June 2024. These malevolent campaigns are not novel. Rather, they are consistent with the decades-old crimes against the humanity of the Ruweng people. The major episodes of these violent campaigns occurred during the periods of 1991-1996 & 2013-2014 Ruweng Massacres. These campaigns were politically designed by BANAFa in general and Bentiu Nuer political leaders in particular. In essence, the inexorable attacks by elements of SSPDF's Division 4 at the behest of BANAFa, under the command of Gen. William Manyang Mayak and assortment of militias loyal to Riek Machar, Taban Deng Gai, Joseph Nguen, Tutkew Gatluak Manime, are intended to weaken and eventually eliminate the Ruweng Ngok Dinka in order to take over their land.

The claims by political leaders from Unity/Liech State that RAA has been established by annexing Nuer land are unfounded and **fictional in nature**. In dismissing these fictional claims, Ruweng has always presented incontrovertible evidence as to the existence of clear and indisputable administrative boundaries between RAA and the Unity/Liech State as per 1st January 1956 borderlines. However, political leaders from Unity/Liech State have willfully elected to reject evidence-based approach for resolving administrative boundaries between Unity/Liech State and RAA. Their safe bet is the use of armed Nuer youths and militias,

including elements of Division 4, to take over and occupy Ruweng land – a clear path of the BANAFa project that envisions a process in which the Ruweng Ngok Dinka can be displaced either to Bhar el Ghazel or Jonglei (the latter was most recently added). Else, the Ruweng people must be exterminated once and for all.

Finally, the inexorable Bentiu Nuer's violent campaigns against the people of RAA is exacerbated and inspired by the fact that Ruweng has no voice in the National Government due to, among others, their lack of meaningful representation in National Government. The highest-ranking government official from RAA is the Rt. Hon. Mary Ayen Majok, the 1st Deputy Speaker of the Council of States. The other ranking national government official is Hon. Simon Mijok Mijak, the Minister of Roads & Bridges. No other government official from Ruweng can be found in the rest of structures of the National Government. For instance, there has never been an undersecretary from Ruweng, just as there is nobody from Ruweng at Foreign Affairs in the capacity of ambassador, or police or the military. Similarly, Ruweng is not represented in independent commissions such as the Border Commission, Political Parties' Council, National Constitutional Review Commission, National Electoral Commission, or in all negotiations in which matters of borders, and oil resources are discussed despite the fact that more than 90% of crude oil produced in the GPOC concession areas comes from RAA.

In short, the recent attacks in RAA are part of the larger but decades-old political scheme against the people of Ruweng by Bentiu Nuer. Nevertheless, any attempt to forcefully occupy Ruweng land and/or annex it to different Nuer constituencies as BANAFa seeks to achieve, or any attempt to refer to the people of RAA as guests staying at the discretion of Bentiu Nuer or treating the residents of RAA as people whose rights to life and security are contingent upon what is granted at pleasure by Bentiu Nuer is to patently do that which is evidently inconsistent with the spirit of coexistence and the principles of natural law. Where human beings are treated with scorn, and spite or with no respect and consideration, they are ordained by natural law to have recourse to divine justice and do whatever they can in order to preserve their rights to life and dignified existence. The people of Ruweng are not exception to this natural precept.

In conclusion, it should be self-evident that the underlying cause for the ongoing violence in RAA is that, in addition to forcefully annexation of Ruweng land, political leaders of Unity/Liech State are determined to sabotage any political or economic gains by RAA. This is in view of the fact that the people of RAA have resolved to chart their own path and destiny after the region was established as an administrative area. The world must, therefore, pay very close attention to the endangerment awaiting the people of RAA in the months and years to come.

1. Introduction

Ruweng Administrative Area (RAA), which was formerly known as Ruweng State when the Republic of South Sudan was divided into 28 states, is one of South Sudan's 13 constituent units, comprising 10 states and 3 administrative areas. The region is located in the northwestern part of the Republic of South Sudan where it borders Abyei in the west, Warrab in the southwest, Unity/Liech State in the south and Jonglei State and Upper Nile State in the southeast. The region borders the Republic of the Sudan in the north. Indeed, considering that RAA's boundaries with the Republic of the Sudan run from the region's eastern frontiers to its northwestern frontiers (see **Figure 1 below**), it has one of the longest border lines with that country.

Other regions bordering the Republic of the Sudan are Western Bhar el Ghazel State, Northern Bhar el Ghazel State, Abyei Administrative Area, and Upper Nile State.

Figure 1: Tentative Boundaries of the 13 Administrative Units of the Republic of South Sudan. These boundaries are not official.

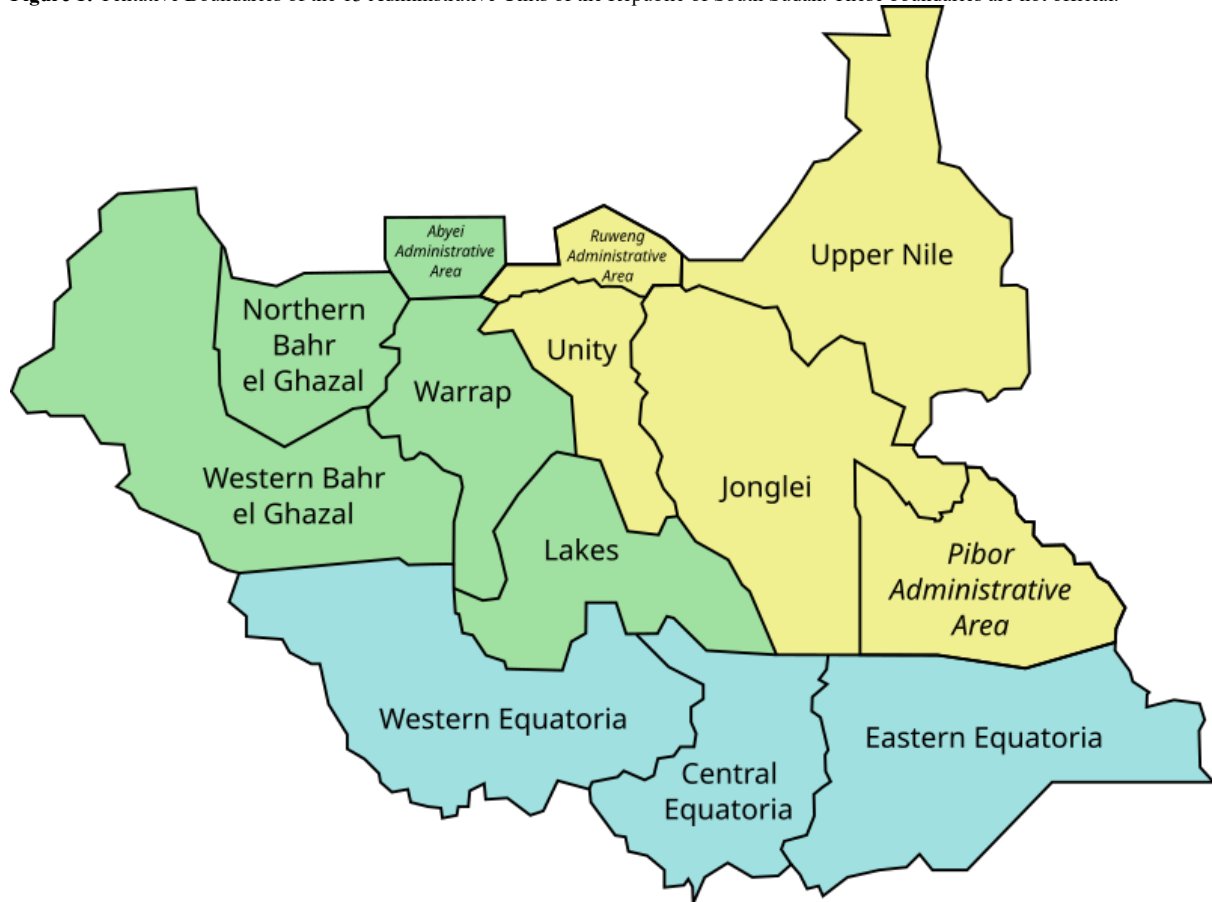
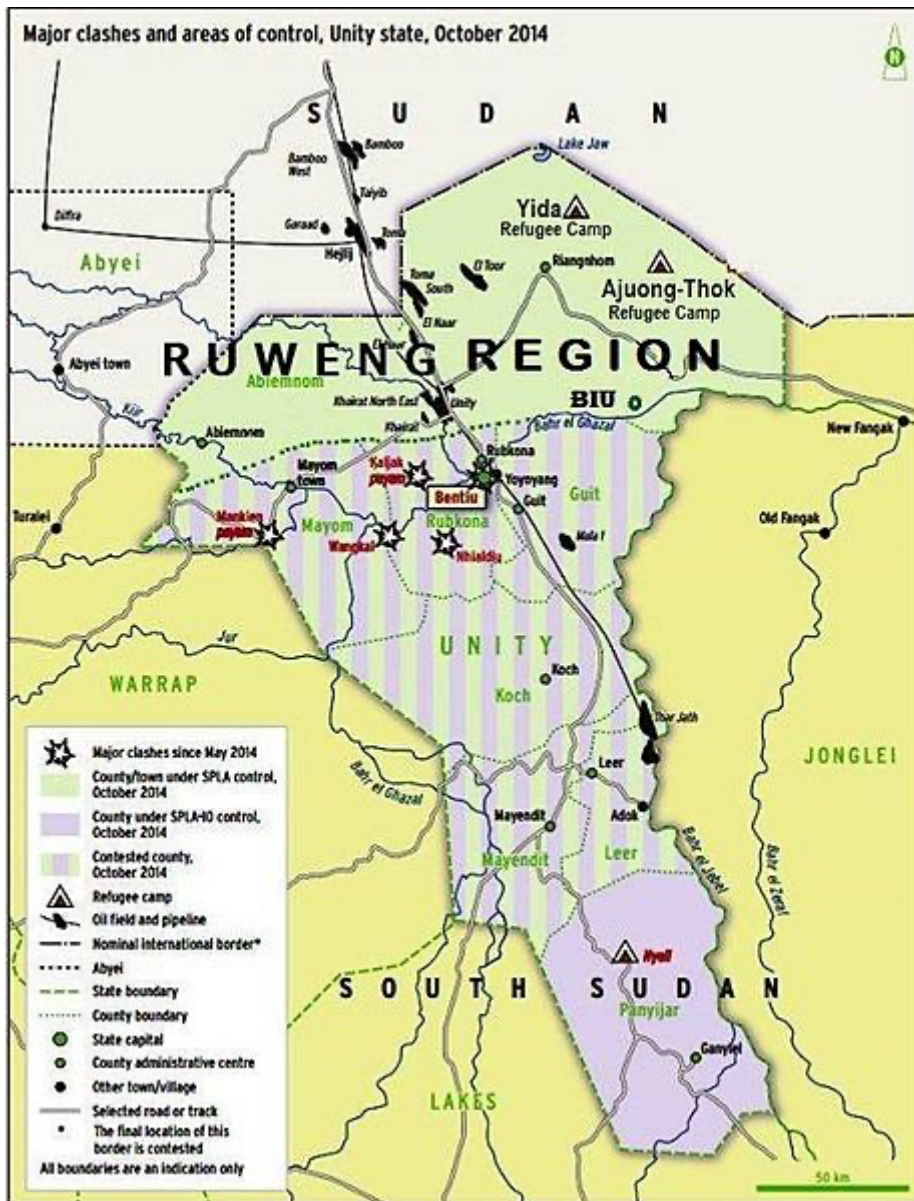


Figure 2: Map of Ruweng Administrative Area in Relation to Unity State.¹

¹ **Source:** HSBA, “The Conflict in Unity State” (2016), available online at: <https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/HSBA-Conflict-Unity-March-2016.pdf> (retrieved on July 2, 2024).



The life, security, and dignified existence of the people of RAA have been, since South Sudan split from the Sudan in 2011, imperiled by three real and present perils. These challenges are existential in nature, even when viewed from an objective scientific view. Without any particular order, the first peril is discernible from the unconscionable environmental pollution that has engendered abnormal birth deformities among human and animal populations alike. This social threat has also led to rising cases of infertility among men and women, has threatened wildlife habitats as well as population and drastically reduced crop yields in the Ruweng region. Part of the reason for the decline in crop yields is that most agriculturally productive areas have been abandoned out of the concern that they are the primary source of cross-contamination: chemical wastes pollute the soil and polluted soil, in turn, contaminate crops and plants which are then consumed by humans and animals. The second existential threat to the lives, security, and dignified existence of the Ruweng people arises from the yawning deficit in political leadership in RAA. It is not that capable leaders do not exist in RAA but the inability of political leaders to coalesce around a single political figure to provide political direction operate to generate enormous confusion. This is something that

those who do not want to see progress in Ruweng have come to seize upon with the view to festering it. The net result is one in which no single political leader is deemed to be first in line in relation to consultations on matters affecting vital interests of the Ruweng people, especially in relation to the economic, social, and political wellbeing of the people of RAA. This virtual leadership vacuum has consequently encouraged national authorities to appoint cadres, among the people of RAA, those whose ambitions are driven by personal—not the collective—interest. This means that the vast majority of governors/chief administrators who have come and gone from RAA as well as members of Parliament representing the people of RAA at the national level clearly operate in wanton disregard for the community's welfare. Most of these political appointees are, thus, in hot pursuit of personal aggrandizement or unjust enrichment. This is understandable having regard to the fact that majority of the members of Parliament representing RAA were virtually handpicked by political leaders from Bentiu in 2010. This confusion is exactly what Bentiu political leaders want to see in Ruweng as this state of affairs serves to further political divide and instability in RAA. The result has been catastrophic: there has emerged serious internal schisms among political leaders and people of RAA. Amidst all this confusion, the national leadership is to blame for being complicit in and even exacerbating what is ailing the people of RAA.

The third and final existential threat to the people of RAA is the sheer determination of Bentiu Nuer political leaders to displace the Ruweng people. This determination is largely driven by the BANAFAs² Project in order to weaken, assimilate or even wipe out the Ruweng Ngok Dinka on the face of the Planet and take over their land. Both the National Government and the international community should by now be aware of the grave and long-running consequences of this political machination by Bentiu Nuer. The world must, therefore, pay close attention to the endangerment awaiting the people of RAA.

2. The Decades-Old Ruweng Genocide Just Gained Momentum: A Historical Account

Since 2013, RAA has seen an uptake in political and communal violence principally from its southern and (occasionally) its southeastern neighbors in Unity/Liech State and Upper Nile State/Jonglei State respectively. Such violence is, for the most part, politically engineered from Unity/Liech State. While there was some respite following the signing of the 2018 peace agreement, known as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCISS), the frequency and severity with which political violence has surged in RAA since 2022 is a cause for concern. This paper seeks to, first and foremost, underscore the latest spikes in political violence in RAA as follows.

(a) What Exactly Happened between June 22 and, June 23, 2024?

Between **June 22 and June 23, 2024**, a series of deadly attacks on unsuspecting civilians, civil administrators and border police officers was visited upon Panakuach Payam of Aliiny County in the northern part of RAA. These heinous attacks began when **members of the delegation** (led by the then but slain Panakuach Payam's Executive Director) were

² BANAFAs is the organization that brings the Nuer communities in South Sudan together and specifically. The acronym stands for for **Bentiu, Nasir, Fangak** an **Akobo**. The organization was created in the 1970s and led by several Nuer leaders including by Riek Machar in Khartoum in 1990s. Today, the same organization is led by a ranking politician and current the Minister of Labor, Hon. James Hoth Mai, in Juba. Its aim is to promote Nuer hegemony and Nuer domination of the Upper Nile region with the ultimate aim of having to eventually declare a Nuer Republic in South Sudan.

dispatched by the Government of RAA (GRAA) to hand over a number of cattle (which were taken by Aliiny youths along with Ruweng cattle which were previously stolen by youths from Unity/Liech State). The cattle were to be handed over to the Government of Unity/Liech State. After meeting the Commissioner of Rubkona County to hand over these cattle at Panakuach, the Ruweng delegation members were indiscriminately sprayed with live bullets, several of whom were unalived on the spot by armed youths and heavy security force accompanying, **Mr. Clement Kasara Juol**, the Commissioner of Rubkona County.

What was surprising is that **the cattle, 43** in total, were being returned to their owners at an IDPs. As alluded to earlier, the cattle were advertently or inadvertently taken from two cattle camps belonging to individual IDPs from Unity/Liech State by some youths from Aliiny County, RAA, **on June 8, 2024**. The Aliiny youths sought to recover several heads of cattle belonging to late **Sultan Mawut Amuor Deng** who was executed by cattle raiders from Unity/Liech State, in **Adordit** village of Aliiny County, RAA, **on June 4, 2024**.

When the GRAA realized that Aliiny youths had advertently or inadvertently taken a number of cattle belonging to a **Mr. Gatiek** who is an IDP from Unity/Liech State rearing his cattle in Panakuach as an IDP, it immediately authorized their return to the Government of Unity/Liech State at Panakuach IDPs cattle camp. The return of these cattle by the GRAA was, in whole or in part, a gesture of peace, goodwill, harmonious relations between Unity/Liech State and RAA and more, importantly, as a measure deemed to be less impairing, especially amidst tensions which flared between Unity/Liech State's IDPs in Panakuach, RAA, and the youths of Aliiny, RAA. The cattle raiding at Adordit village by Nuer youths, on June 4, 2024, claimed the life of a local Aliiny chief, **Mr. Mawut Amuor Deng**. It follows that the **Executive Director of Panakuach, Hon. Nyok Miakuach**, and his unarmed; unsuspecting team members were only returning the cattle to Unity/Liech State's authorities when they were blindsided and sprayed with live bullets by armed youths and security forces accompanying **Mr. Clement Kasara Juol**, the Commissioner of Rubkona County.

Members of the delegation who managed to escape from this scathing bullet fire then fled to their residential quarters at Panakuach, but they were pursued earnestly. The armed youths, state security forces from Unity/Liech State, along with the elements of Division 4 of SSPDF descended on Panakuach Payam and border police station, killing over 15 civilians and 10 border police officers. They subsequently burned Panakuach civilian settlement and administrative structures to the ground.

The next day, **June 23, 2024**, thousands of youths, armed police and elements of Division 4, launched a serious and carefully designed military assault—using heavy artilleries and tanks—on southern **Kaloch (Hofra)**, northern **Kaloch (Toma South)** and western **Kaloch (El Haar, and El Naar)**, **killing all National Security officers** guarding oil facilities there, setting civilian settlements on fire, and destroying the computer wiring systems of oil facilities in these areas. Another assault was similarly mounted on the southern part of RAA, specifically at **Yaar** and **Maan-Awal** areas where they also destroyed civilian and police settlements.

All these attacks did not come by surprise, since the news of mass youth mobilization, with the full support of officials in the National Government and of Unity/Liech State as well as

with the overt support of Division 4 in order to attack RAA, had been circulating in the media. More importantly, such news was half-heartedly brought to the attention of the President in the Cabinet meeting **on June 21, 2024**, by Vice President Taban. Mr. Taban was, himself, suspected of being among the masterminds of this and many orchestrated forms of violence in the region, especially against RAA for years. While his announcement was, on his part, well calculated to show a spirit of concern—at least at first blush—it was essentially a diversionary tactics: it was intended to deflect suspicion away from himself, Mr. Taban.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the rumors of Nuer mobilization were circulated for over a week, this information was largely ignored in RAA. That was because this was not the first time that such rumors were brought to the public domain in RAA. For this reason, the people of RAA never took the latest rumors very seriously. Unfortunately, they did so at their own peril.

It is worth noting that the cattle raid on Adordit village **on June 4, 2024**, that killed Sultan Mawut Amuor Deng, was one of **four** cattle raids in RAA by Nuer youths in a span of two weeks. The first of these raids took place in **Agarak Boma**, in **Lake No County, RAA**, on **May 22, 2024, taking 167 cattle**. None of these cattle were recovered. The second attack took place on May 28, 2004, in **Taam village**, also in **Lake No County, RAA**. The raiders took over **200 heads of cattle among which 190 of them were recovered**. The third attack took place in **Kumagon Payam, Tuoch County, RAA, on June 1, 2024, taking 50 heads of cattle. All the cattle were recovered.**

This clearly indicates that the attack on Adordit village was the **fourth** in a series of attacks on various **Ruweng villages by Nuer cattle raiders** in a span of two weeks.

More importantly, the Nuer youth mobilization which culminated in the recent deadly attacks on RAA, **starting on June 22, 2024**, was not **only limited to Nuer in Unity State**. Rather, **hundreds of youths from Jonglei** had similarly been mobilized and crossed over to join forces with the youths and militias of Unity/Liech State. Other eastern Nuer youths had, at the time of this writing, been mobilized and stationed specifically at Wune-Mijak, Wunkur, and Araj areas, in the southeast of RAA, with the intent to attacking Ruweng from there. They were also fully embedded with SPLA-IO forces and associated militias which have occupied these areas for years.

(b) The History of Genocidal Campaigns Against Ruweng

The recent spate of violence in RAA is neither entirely communal nor entirely motivated by cattle rustling as often mis-reported. It is more significant and consequential. It was politically designed from higher up in the government, principally by politicians hailing from Unity/Liech State. It is also worth noting that these violent campaigns did not start in 2013 nor 2022. Rather, they are part of decades-old genocidal campaigns, largely by Bentiu Nuer and are aimed at displacing, disempowering, and assimilating or even eliminating the people of RAA in order to occupy their land. This is an open secret about which the Nuer mince no words. In this connection, the Bentiu Nuer have always stated in no uncertain terms that the **Ruweng Ngok Dinka must move to Bhar el Ghazel region or** (as they have most recently added) **to Jonglei State**. These are, therefore, part of the larger scheme by Bentiu Nuer political elites being executed by their masses under specific instructions.

(i) The 1991-1992 Massacre and Crimes Against Humanity of the Ruweng People

As alluded to earlier, reign of political violence in RAA is historically traceable. All this started in 1980s when the current **1st Vice President, Mr. Riek Machar**, was assigned as the SPLA Zonal Commander for the Western Upper Nile Region, precisely in 1985. At that time this region included what are known today as Unity/Liech State and RAA. It was shortly after this assignment that Mr. Riek Machar commenced his systematic, willful, and invidious campaigns involving mistreatment and discrimination against the Ruweng people. Such a melancholic design began during the outbreak of the pandemic of kala-azar (scientifically referred to as *visceral leishmaniasis*) both in **Western Upper Nile and eastern Lakes** regions in 1987. While international efforts to combat the pandemic were put in place, Mr. Riek Machar deliberately opted to locate all the three Kala-azar treatment clinics in Nuer land: one at **Bielbar**, another at **Duar** and the third one yet at **Leer**. He did this with the manifest intent to deprive the Ruweng people of the life-saving medicines against kala-azar. The locations of these three kala-azar treatment clinics only in Nuer land was deliberate, considering that, geographically, Ruweng is quite distant from each of these areas. Official requests to provide mobile clinical services to rescue people in Ruweng were treated with scorn and spite.

With no other options available for getting access to medical treatment, individuals in Ruweng had to carry their sick relatives on shoulders from various parts of the region to these farflung clinics to and from Nuer land. Consequently, since *kala-azar* is a contagious disease, those who helped carry their sick relatives ended up catching the disease themselves. Since this disease was 98% fatal, almost all Ruweng patients met their fate in Nuer land. Meanwhile, Riek continued to rebuff requests for alternative mobile clinical services to Ruweng community in spite of his awareness as to the gravity of the pandemic. To add more fuel to the flame, patients from Ruweng were admitted in separate wards from their counterparts. Survivors recount that they had never seen any doctor the whole time they were there nor given any other clinical care, like their Nuer counterparts. Because of this deliberate neglect by the leadership of Riek Machar, the *kala azar* pandemic had more devastating consequences on Ruweng than their counterparts from Bentiu and/or Lakes. Indeed, between 1987 and 1997, more than 30% of the resident population of today's RAA were estimated to have died of *kala azar*. Such a conduct constituted a crime against humanity. It was a deliberate machination against the Ruweng Ngok Dinka.

Matters got worse when Riek opted to stage his infamous Nasir Coup against Chairman Garang in 1991. Just like it was seen in 2013/2014, no person of Ruweng descent—civilian or soldier—was spared. All were mercilessly butchered, some on their hospital beds or residences. Forces loyal to the Nasir Coup leaders then descended on Pariang with vengeance never seen before. It was a devastating destruction. The 1991-1992 Ruweng slaughter was more vicious than any other ethnic-based targeting that happened ever after, including what happened in 2013/2014. Indeed, eyewitnesses argue that what happened in Ruweng was worse than the Bor Massacre. Yet, considering that all this took place away from media coverage and spotlight, it was neither in the domain of non-Ruweng Sudanese public nor of the world. As such, the severity of such a slaughter remains untold, until now. This was the time during which those of **Sultan Arop Dude**, the father of the current South Sudan's Minister of Youth and Culture, Nadia Arop, was killed along with his entire family: wives and children, except those who were outside the scenes of this slaughter.

This searing slaughter by forces loyal to Riek Machar would continue unabated even after Riek and his team surrendered to Khartoum following the signing of the so-called Khartoum Peace Agreement (KPA) in 1997. Riek and his militia continued to wage relentless violence on Ruweng. In fact, when Taban Deng Gai was made the governor of Old Unity State, between 1997 and 2001, more than 27 military expeditions descended on various villages in Pariang wrecking unimaginable havoc. The bloodletting flowed like never before, until 2002 when Riek rejoined (actually surrendered to) the SPLM/A, upon having come to the realization that el-Bashir was only duping him as a tool for advancing Islamic agenda.

(ii) The Bentiu Nuer Occupation of Ruweng Land from 2005 to Present

Between 2005 to 2013, Mr. Taban Deng Gai reigned supreme as an untouchable Governor of Old Unity State, a position in which he enjoyed and exercised unfettered political authority and influence. He lived an opulent lifestyle funded by the 2% oil revenue accruing to Old Unity State from Khartoum. He unaccountably used this fortune for self-aggrandizement, keeping himself in power through buying of influence and building himself vast mansions, both inside and outside South Sudan. Among such mansions was the one he built in the heart of Ruweng land at **Munga (Wanhedanluel/Minyang)**. Munga is located at the southern part of RAA, just on the northern part of River Bhar el Ghazel (which largely separates Unity/Liech State (to the south) and RAA (to the north)). **See Figure 4** below.

Mr. Taban did not just build his mansion at Munga using public resources. He also used the same petrodollars to encourage Nuer civilian and militia settlements in the area and finance the war that he would trigger in 2013. He subsequently renamed it as “**Kuer Boni Payam**” and annexed it to his native Guit County. In subsequent years, he would colloquially rename the place as “**Dual Jang**” (which literally means “**Dinka is Terrified**”). He was very strategic on how he sought permission to settle in Munga. He initially consulted with **Ngeer traditional leaders** (one of Ruweng’s 18 chiefdoms) with the view to giving him the requisite permission to build his mansion there. To persuade these traditional leaders, Mr. Taban invoked the provision in the South Sudan Transitional Constitution which entitles all South Sudanese citizens to live and work anywhere in the country. No one, as such, was suspicious as to his other plans. His request was, therefore, granted instantly. No sooner had he begun to settle in the area than he decided to station his own militia in the area. The militia comprised his tribesmen and some elements of Division 4 of the then SPLA. He provided them with sufficient logistics, food and arms, including military tanks. His overriding goal was now to stake a Nuer claim over this piece of Ruweng land and to thwart any efforts by the rightful owners, the Ruweng, to repossess the land.

When the people of Ruweng had realized that Taban had gaslighted his way to settling in the area, they brought the issue to his attention and to the attention of his Guity County authorities who now claimed that the area was theirs. Mr. did not hesitate to incite and mobilize his community against Ruweng. The Bentiu Nuer community was now emboldened. They had the tools, the power and undivided support from the governor. They cautioned the Ruweng community to never broach the matter ever again or else, dare take it back by force if they so wished. It is not in dispute that it was Taban who instructed his militia to take such a stark position and to say or do what they did, even though he had faked a trip to Juba at that time. This trip was a prelude to his defense in the event of any violent confrontations between the Nuer and Ruweng communities, which confrontations could possibly have ensued. The

Juba trip would provide a strong alibi. Indeed, the negotiations that ensued between the two communities in 2010 almost culminated in a bloody confrontation. Nevertheless, the Ruweng community was guided by the Dinka philosophy of “**kan kooc**,” a model of preemptive conflict resolution that operates to prevent any recourse to violence before such an eventuality is considered justifiable. The *Kan Kooc* Model operates in a way that favors an alternative conflict resolution mechanism deemed to be less impairing than taking matters into one’s own hands. It was for this reason that one paramount chief, **Mr. Malwal Minyiel Ayuel**, raised Mr. Taban’s deceptive occupation of Munga with President Kiir when the latter visited Ruweng County in 2010. The President directed that the matter be resolved by way of dialogue between the community and Mr. Taban who was then the Governor of Old Unity State.

While occupying this area, Mr. Taban embarked on terrorizing Ruweng civilians. He would promote low intensity violence through his ethnic militia, constantly attacking Yaar and Agarak Bomas of the then Ruweng/Pariang County. Countless innocent lives were lost as a result. Unfortunately, the National Government continued to ignore credible reports of egregious orchestration of ethnic cleansing. Such silence in the face of pressing concerns from Ruweng did not only perpetuate injustice but also goaded Mr. Taban and his tribesmen to claim the ownership of **Munga/Wanhedanluel**. Not only does Mr. Taban and his tribesmen claim Munga today. They also claim other Ruweng ancestral areas such as **Darbim (Unity Oilfields), Miadiing (Lalob)** and beyond.

It stands to reason that the violence that we see today against the people of RAA is part of the larger scheme and political efforts spearheaded at different times by different political leaders inspired by either personal pursuit or the BANAFSA Project (which is supported by political actors such as Mr. Taban) to further Ruweng land and displace the Ruweng. That is because the Nuer clearly know that facts and law are not on their side and have, thus, no legitimate claim to these areas. It follows that in order to circumvent the law and facts to achieve the same goal, the Bentiu Nuer political leaders have resolved to devise two main ways. The first is the presence of Nuer IDPs, who have been displaced by floods from their homes, who have taken up settlement at Miadiing/Lalob. The second way is by way of violence. The latter is their most potent strategy.

(iii) **The 2013-2014 Ruweng Massacre**

The circumstances that led to the outbreak of South Sudan’s First Civil War in 2013 proffered an opportunity for the Bentiu Nuer to relitigate their unfinished business in the form of political violence against the people of RAA. Consequently, a significant amount of violence, but on a smaller scale than that of 1991-992, occurred. Men and women of Ruweng ethnic origins were killed in cold blood. These included but were not limited to the killing of civilians who were living in Nuer areas in Old Unity State; the butchering of professionals such as the slaughter of 16 Ruweng engineers by their Nuer colleagues; the execution of countless number of military service members (SPLA soldiers), businesspeople as well as Ruweng women married to Nuer men. For the most part, the manner of killing was so barbaric that it can be described in no terms other than the fullest expression of contempt and animus toward Ruweng. Pregnant women were, for example, slaughtered and their bellies split open to remove fetuses. The fetuses were, in turn, chopped into pieces while outside their mothers’ bellies. This is how they ended the life of Ms. Arop Malith, the wife of **Mr.**

Ayok Chol Akot in 2013 in Akot, Lake No County of RAA. Similarly in 2022, Mr. **Wal Lengchuk** was attacked in his cattle camp near Maan-Awal area. A mob of militia loyal to Mr. Taban attacked and killed him in a close range. They then chopped off his head and his body hanged on a tree where it was repeatedly aimed and shot at with live bullets for training purposes. Such barbarism is contemptible and animalistic.

(iv) The Current Phase of Violence Against Ruweng: From 2022 to the Present

Like prior episodes of violence, the recent spate of violence in RAA were clearly politically designed in Juba and implemented on the ground by an amalgam of militias belonging to different factions of warlords from Bentiu (such as Riek Machar, Stephen Taban Deng Gai, Joseph Nguen Monyтуil, Bapiny Monyтуil, Gen. Matthew Puljang, Manyang Mayak, Makal Kuol, and Karlo Kuol, among others).

For purposes of further clarity of how it all unfolded, a chronological account of the preceding events is worth highlighting as follows.

First, on May 22, 2024, a group of armed Nuer youths from Unity/Liech State raided a cattle camp in **Agarak village** of Lake No County in RAA. The raiders took 167 heads of cattle. **None of these cattle were recovered.** Second, on May 28, 2024, another cattle raid by armed Nuer from Unity/Liech State took place at **Taam cattle camp** at **Wunrook Payam**, also in Lake No County, RAA. The raiders ran away with over 200 heads of cattle. **190 of these cattle were recovered.** Thirdly, on June 1, 2024, a third cattle raiding took place in **Kumagon Payam** in Tuoch County, RAA. The raiders took 50 heads of cattle, but **all of these cattle were recovered** by the youths.

Finally, on July 4, 2024, the fourth attack on a cattle camp took at **Adoordit village of Aliiny** County, RAA, by a combined force of armed Nuer youths and militias, taking with them **94 cows** and killing **Sultan Mawut Amuor Deng. None of these heads of cattle were recovered.** When the Aliiny youths followed the footsteps of the cattle, they were able to trace and positively identify them at **Panakuach cattle camps** belong to Nuer IDPs. The cattle had by then been distributed among the raiders and dispersed to two cattle camps at Panakuach. Following a positive identification as to where these cattle were being kept, some youths from Aliiny decided, on July 8, 2024, to forcefully recover these cows, which they did. They, however, brought along with these recovered cattle a number of other cows, estimated to be 400. These other additional cattle belonged to IDPs at Panakuach. Most of these cattle are said to belong to **a Mr. Gatiek** and his associates. As a consequence, the Government of Unity/Liech State, under the leadership of **Gen. Tor Tungwar** (the Deputy Governor); **Mr. Salaam Maluit** (the Security Advisor to the Governor of Unity/Liech State) and **Mr. Clement Kasara Juol** (the Commissioner of Rubkona County), all acting in cahoots with high-ranking Nuer political leaders from Unity/Liech State in Juba, encouraged and organized meetings of Nuer leaders to mobilize youths from all the 7 counties of Unity/Liech State. Together with the then **Commander of Division 4, Gen. Manyang Mayak**, these officials did everything in their power to organize the Nuer youths alongside various militia forces. A similar mobilization also took place east of the Nile River, particular among the Fanjak/Fangak (Lak and Gawar), some of whom crossed the Nile River to join forces with youths armed youths and militia from Unity/Liech State. Tensions followed as authorities from Liech State demanded the return of raided cattle by Ruweng youths while remaining of

oblivious of intentions to reciprocate and return Ruweng cattle stolen at various places such as Agarak, Taam, Kumagon and Adordit nor was there any mention of the killing of Sultan Mawut Amuor Deng on July 4, 2004.

It was in this context that, **on June 21, 2024**, Vice President Taban Deng Gai made an announcement in a Cabinet meeting chaired by H.E., President Salva Kiir. In this announcement, Mr. Taban claimed that he wanted to alert the Government that a mass mobilization by Bentiu Nuer youths was taking place in Unity/Liech State. He added that the pending attack on RAA was in response to what he referred to as a **revenge or a retaliatory attack** in relation to the raiding of what he called “**nine Nuer cattle camps**” belonging to Nuer IDPs at Panakuach. He further relayed that the Ruweng raiders took over 4,000 heads of cattle. He also stated that the planned attacks on Ruweng by “Nuer youths” were going to be deadly. In a related context, he stated that the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were contemplating attacking oil facilities in RAA. The President did not respond to this ostensible alert.

There is no doubt that Mr. Taban was part one of the said machination, involving mobilization of Nuer youth and the planned attacks on RAA in June 2024, just as he did in February 2022. His pronouncement in the Cabinet was only the typical Taban exacting his knack: being adept at gaslighting his way out of the brute disorder he engineers. Thus, while he cleverly portrayed himself as an objective observer, he plainly implicated himself, having clearly taking sides, including exaggerating the number of cattle camps allegedly raided by Ruweng youths to justify what he referred to as a “revenge attack.” Yet he willfully failed to mention the preceding events that triggered and eventuated in the raid on the IDPs cattle camp in Panakuach by some Aliiny youths.

The rumors of Nuer mobilization to attack RAA had been circulating for weeks. However, since this was not the first time for such rumors, the people, and the GRAA largely ignored them, leaving just a few on the fringes to monitor the authenticity of such impending attacks. Indeed, the attacks would later turn out to be deadly as alleged by Mr. Taban.

Following Mr. Taban’s announcement to the Cabinet concerning the then ongoing youth mobilization, tensions spiked. The GRAA ordered the youths to return the cattle. Consequently, **on July 22, 2024, 43 heads of cattle were collected**. To achieve this, the GRAA tasked late Mr. Nyok Mijok (then the Executive Director of Panakuach) to hand over these cattle to the authorities of Rubkona County. The Commissioner of Rubkona came to Panakuach, escorted by a military tank and a number of armored vehicles carrying over 500 armed youths and militias. As soon as Mr. Nyok Mijok sought to hand over the cattle to him, the Commissioner responded that he was not the owner of these cattle and that he was going to go back to ask his civilians whose cattle were stolen. The commissioner, therefore, refused to receive the cattle. He returned to Miading. 40 minutes later, a huge force of armed youths and militia came back to the very spot where the cattle were being handed over. They suddenly opened fire on the delegation members led by Mr. Nyok Mijok. A number of them were killed on the spot while some managed to escape. The attackers then followed them, and opened fire on civil administrative buildings. They also attacked the border police station at **Panakuach**, killing 10 police officers and wounding many. A count of dead bodies at that instance was later reported at 30 (including 10 police officers, civilians and civil servants, including the Executive Director of Panakuach, Mr. Nyok Mijok). The attackers subsequently

set on fire all civil administrative structures and buildings belong to the Ruweng border police at Panakuach as well as civilian houses. The next day, a full-fledged attack by thousands of armed youths and militias from New **Unity/Liech State advanced to Kaloch South (Hofra)** where they similarly set civil structures ablaze and killed more people including members of National Security. When they were repulsed, Division 4 forces did not hesitate to intervene with heavy **artilleries, including BMs and tanks. They then set Kaloch South oil facilities on fire as well as descended on Kaloch West (El, Naar, El Haar) and Kaloch North (Toma South)**. They also killed civilians and National Security Officers alike in these areas. They also destroyed the computer control system for oil facilities.

In this connection, it is important to emphasize that Vice President Taban was clearly in the know not only of the Nuer mobilization and the scope of attacks on RAA but also in relation to the subsidiary role of other allied forces, such as RSF. The latter was just on the standby to intervene, should the attacking Nuer forces be defeated. That is why he announced in the same Cabinet meeting that the RSF were also about to attack South Sudan at the same time. His announcement should, thus, be construed as part of the larger scheme to advance an ethnic agenda of terrorizing the people of RAA in order to occupy their land and part of the efforts to promote and achieve the BANAFa Project.

In February 2022, the violence that claimed tens of lives of innocent people of Ruweng citizens at Yaar near Munga was also orchestrated by a militia loyal to Mr. Taban who financed that violence, in cahoots with his other co-conspirators such as **Riek Machar, Angelina Jany** (also known as Anjelina Teny) and **Tutkew Gatluak Manime**, in the Government. The people of Unity/Liech State, in their ranks and file, have made it clear that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka must relocate to Bhar el Ghazel or Jonglei, as they have added that suggestion most recently. The BANAFa Project to get rid of all non-Nuer communities in Upper Nile Region. The people of Ruweng are the first in line, followed by the Padang and Ngok Dinka of Upper Nile, and Jonglei later. This is why mobilization of armed Nuer youths from many Nuer sections (both in the eastern and western side of River Nile) is gaining speed. At the time of this writing, thousands of armed eastern Nuer youths are stationed alongside SPLA-IO forces at Wun-Mijak, Wunkur and Araj areas in the southeastern part of RAA, ready to strike when the call to do so is made at an opportune time by their financiers.

3. The Distinct Territorial Boundaries Between RAA and Liech State Regions

Apart from the historical Dinka-Nuer dichotomous rivalry, much of the underlying Bentiu Nuer venomous violence in RAA is predicated on the continued Nuer's assertion that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka must relocate elsewhere, away from their ancestral land. They claim that the land that the Ruweng people currently occupy belongs to Nuer and that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka must physically relocate, either to Bhar el Ghazel or Jonglei. This argument is often anchored on a false map of 79 counties which Riek Machar himself drew up when he was Kiir's Vice President between 2005 and 2013. This map and its internal boundaries were recently rejected in the 7th Governors-Chief Administrators' Forum. The governors and chief administrators reasoned that this map was only useful for NGOs, having been unilaterally by a single office without involving all stakeholders including members of Parliament and traditional authorities. Mr. Riek drew up this map and distributed it to various development partners, NGOs, and government departments. The National Government has, therefore, made it clear that it does not recognize these boundaries, even though some government institutions tend to use them in

lieu of the official ones. Nevertheless, history, law, and facts prove to the contrary, the Bentiu Nuer's fictitious claim that RAA has been created by annexing Nuer land.

(a) Ruweng Administrative Boundaries Fixed Since Colonial Era: 1905-1956

The *Condominium Rule* in the Sudan took effect in 1899, following the military defeat of the El Mahdi army. As a result, the United Kingdom forced Egypt's Abass II, Tewfik's successor as Khedive.³ By 1905, the Colonial Administration had opted to transfer the Ruweng Ngok Dinka (Kwel, Awed and Aloor) alongside Twij Dinka (currently in Warrab) and Jok Ngok Dinka (of Abyei) to the northern Province of Nuba Mountains. As circumstances would later dictate, these four sisterly communities were subsequently transferred to Kordofan Province in 1913 when the Nuba Mountains Province merged with the region just north of it to form the Kordofan Province. However, in a decree issued by the Governor-General in 1927, the Ruweng Ngok Dinka and Twij Dinka were again transferred back to Southern Sudan, specifically to Bhar el Ghazel Province. The justification for their subsequent transfer was based on the complaints of the four paramount chiefs of Kwel, Awet, Aloor and Twij namely, Biem-Bilkwei (for Kwel), Jiel Koch (for Awet), Kur Kuot (for Aloor) and Ryan-Gorkwei (for Twij). These traditional leaders had wisely concluded that their true destiny was attached to Southern Sudan where they indisputably had (and still have) a natural extension of shared cultural heritage and identity.⁴ The Colonial Government understood the legitimacy of this complaint having independently concluded that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka could not "be administered satisfactorily from the headquarters of an Arab Province" (p. 306, *Upper Nile Handbook*). As a result, the Ruweng would be administered in Bhar el Ghazel from this time under Tonj District but on an *ad hoc* basis, subject to a final determination of their administrative district. Here, however, the colonial authorities would continue to face difficulties due to a myriad of factors including principally mobility to and from Tonj District. Roads were virtually non-existent. This culminated in the Governor-General having to issue yet another gubernatorial decree, in 1929, which effectively transferred Ruweng to Upper Nile Province, specifically to Bentiu which was a Subdistrict of Fangak. Bentiu became a full-fledged district in 1931. Meanwhile, Riangnhom (now known as Pariang) became a sub-district of Bentiu in 1941. Riangnhom was, thus, part of Bentiu District when the Sudan gained independence on January 1, 1956.

The successive Ruweng transfers to Bhar el Ghazel despite mobility difficulties was necessary for at least two main but interrelated reasons. First, as the then Upper Nile Province British Administrator, C.A. Willis, puts it in *The Upper Nile Handbook*, the British Colonial Administration thought that "it was unfeasible to administer them [the Ruweng] from Upper Nile" (p. 306) on account of their ethnic identity. Second, the British Colonial Administration was largely organized on ethnic or tribal lines. This is evident from the fact that administrative units had, according to Willis, "the foundation for an essential native [ethnic] character" (p. 306). This prediction proved accurate, considering that the administration of Ruweng and Nuer under one district continued to yield incendiary results.

It follows that what the British foresaw as materially relevant in terms of administrative inefficiency is even more compellingly today. What could, for example, explain Riek's gross

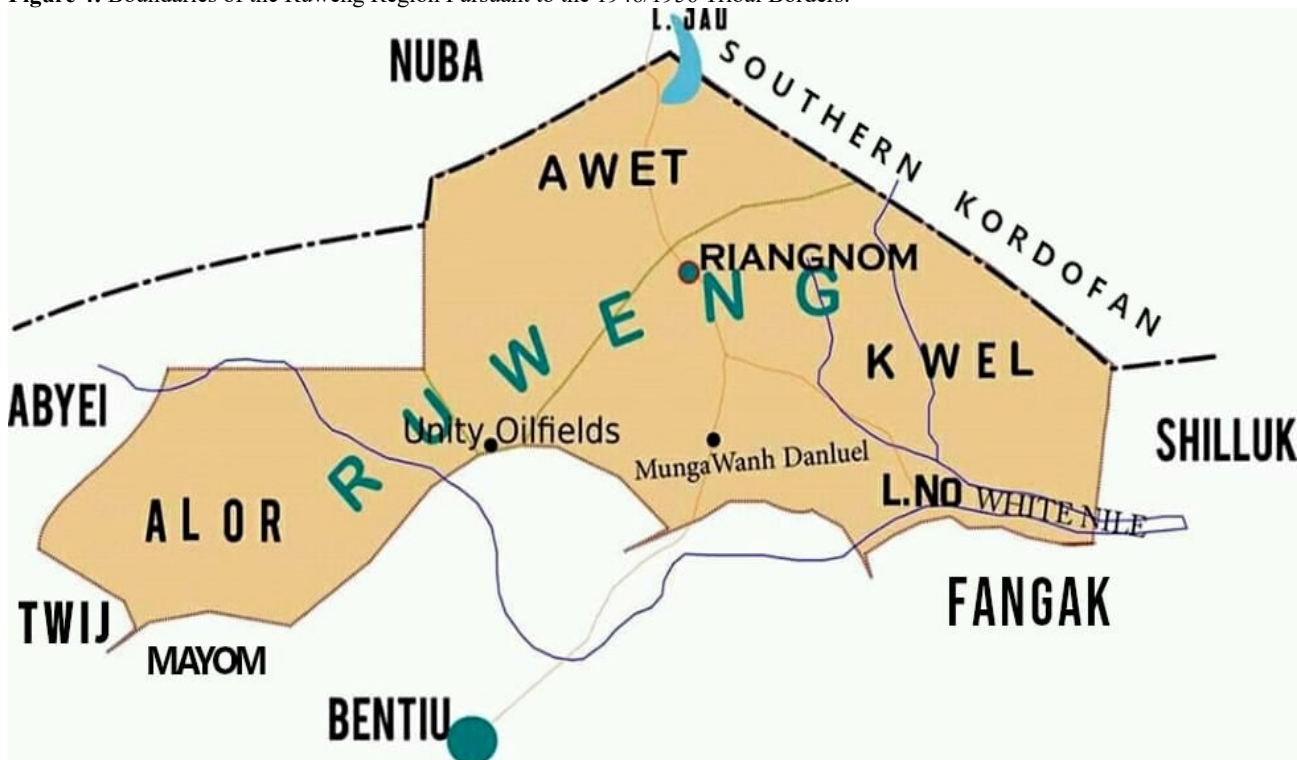
³ Gabriel Warburg, "The Sudan, Egypt and Britain, 1899-1916" (1970) 6/2 *Middle Eastern Studies*, 163-178.

⁴ P. Howell, "Notes on the Ngok Dinka of Western Kordofan" (1951) 32/2, *Sudan Notes and Records*, and F. Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial History" (1994) 5/2, *American Historical Review* XCIX (5): 516-545.

denial of life-saving kala azar medicines to Ruweng in the 1980s, or why would Riek continue to engage in egregious human rights violations or genocidal campaigns against the people of Ruweng, not just from 1991-1992, 2013-2014 and 2024? Did the massacres of the Ruweng Ngok Dinka in Bentiu and other southern parts of Old Unity State in 2013-2014 happen out of the trite chorus that Nuer reacted out of “self-defence”? Certainly not. The Ruweng community had, and still has, a history of unmanageable antagonisms with Bentiu Nuer. It is for the same reason that Old Unity State’s 2011 Transitional Constitution declared that “Unity State refers to the Territories of Western Nuer.” For the people of Ruweng such a constitutional declaration was a pure model of exclusion and deprivation. For the Nuer, however, this declaration was a clever design, well calculated to exclude and justify their efforts to achieve BANAFSA Project. This project begins with the displacement or extermination of the Ruweng Ngok Dinka.

The cardinal point, as this matter relates to the administrative boundaries between RAA and Liech State or the so-called Unity State is that the successive transfers of Ruweng from Bhar el Ghazel to Nuba Mountains, from Nuba Mountains to Kordofan, from Kordofan to Bhar el Ghazel and eventually from Bhar el Ghazel to Upper Nile, was accomplished with the Ruweng land indisputably remaining intact. When the Condominium Rule ended in 1956, the Ruweng boundaries with all its neighbors remain as shown by the map below. These were the boundaries left by the British Colonial Government on January 1, 1956. The map is also consistent with the map of successive Ruweng administrative transfers. One may want to verify the factuality and legality of this map using independent sources (be it the U.S. Library of Congress, British Library Archives, or *The Sudan Records*, at Durham University in the UK).

Figure 4: Boundaries of the Ruweng Region Pursuant to the 1946/1956 Tribal Borders.



In short, the territorial limits of the Ruweng region are clearly-both geographically and legally defined. For instance, during the final transfer of Ruweng to Upper Nile, the *Sudan Government*

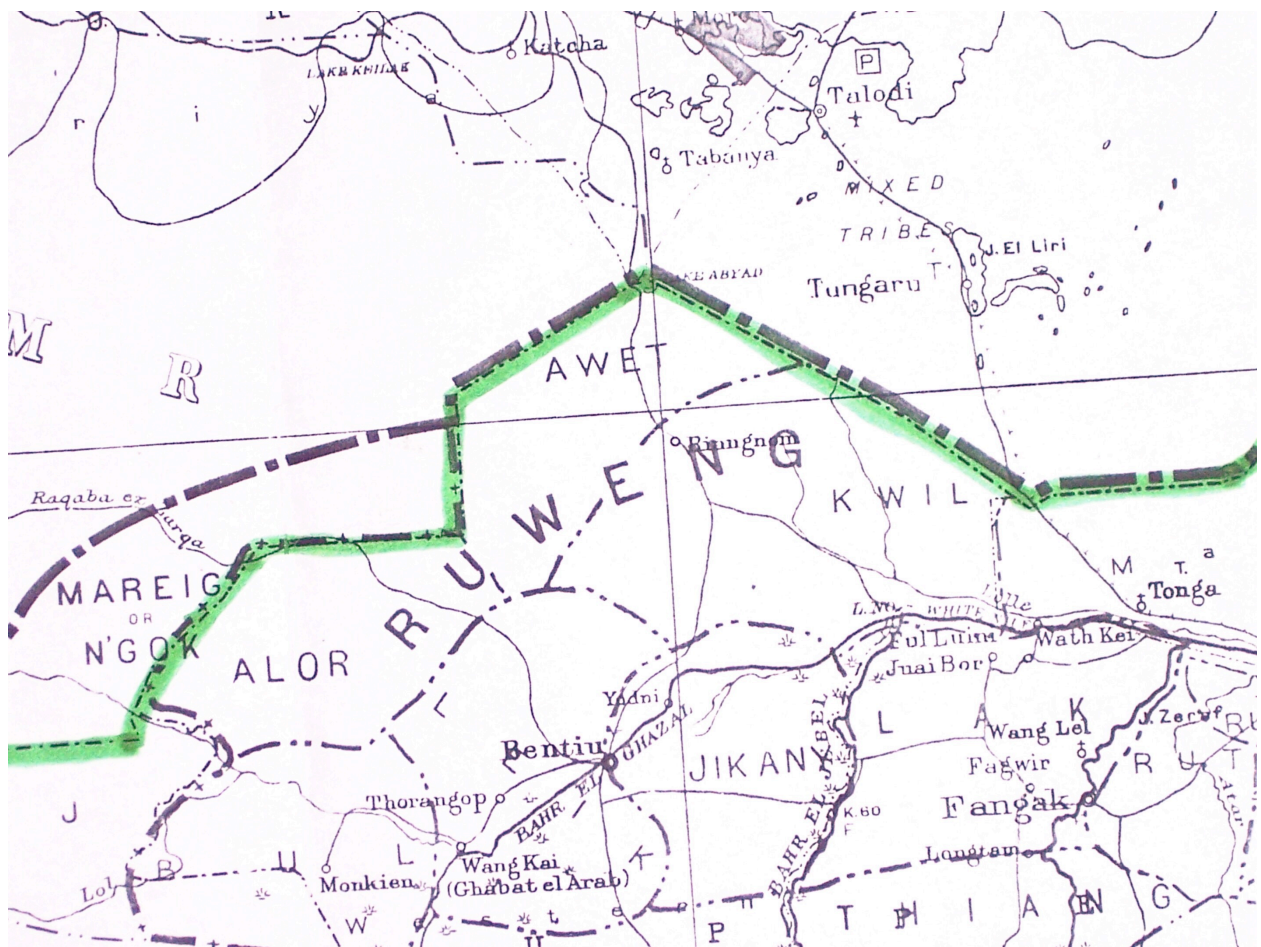
Gazette of May 15, 1931, described the northern geographical limits of the Ruweng territory in terms of latitudes and longitudes as follows:

Commencing from a point on the existing Province Boundary midway between Debba Mongok and Debba Karam Nyet (Lat. 9° 21' Long 28° 38') the boundary runs in an easterly direction until it meets Khor Amadgora. Thence northwards to the Bahr el Arab to the Raqaba ez Zarqa at a point ½ mile west of Tibusia, thence along the Raqaba ez Zarqa to 'Aradeib, thence eastward along Lat. 9° 45' to the old Kordofan–Upper Nile boundary, thence north along that boundary and continuing along the old Kordofan N.M.P. boundary to Lat. 10° 5' marked on the map 'Clump of Heglig' thence N. Easterly to a point 3 miles due west of the centre of Lake Abyad [Lake Jau], thence due east to the eastern shore of the Lake, thence S.E. through the Fed Abu Finyer to the Rest House at the point where the Tonga-Talodi road crosses the Haqaba south of Abu Qussa, thence up that Raqaba to where it joins the existing Province Boundary. (See Douglas Johnson's Note on Panthou, p.8)

Douglas Johnson notes that “this was the official provincial boundary line in effect when the Sudan became independent on 1 January 1956” (See Douglas Johnson's “Note on Panthou, “ p.8. See also the Annex herein).

The above description, nevertheless, deals mainly with the northern and eastern borders of RAA with contemporary Sudan's Southern Kordofan Province. The reason is that the southern borders of Ruweng with Nuer and Chollo (Shilluk) had already been fixed as of 1905 and reaffirmed in 1946. **The map** below shows the actual map which the British colonial authorities used during each administrative transfer of Ruweng: from Bhar el Ghazel to Nuba Mountains, from Nuba Mountains to Kordofan, from Kordofan to Bhar el Ghazel, and from Bhar el to Upper Nile.

Figure 5: The Ruweng Ngok Dinka sections (source: the Sudan Survey Department, 1: 2,000,000 Sudan Tribes Sheet 3 Map, 1956). This was the map accompany every Ruweng administrative transfer to various provinces during the colonial era.



(b) *De Jure* and *De Facto* Boundaries Between RAA & Unity/Liech State

The above description of the Ruweng boundaries map onto the concept of *de jure* and *de facto* boundaries. That is because, besides colonial administrative records, one may use two other means to determine the administrative boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State, namely, *de jure* and *de facto* boundaries.

(i) *De Jure* Boundaries

De jure boundaries are those whose existence are legally defined by either domestic or international legal instruments or both.⁵ In the South Sudanese context, *de jure* boundaries are boundaries that were delineated by the British Colonial Government on January 1, 1956, and are, therefore, the only boundaries recognized by the Transitional Constitution and ordinary laws of the Republic of South Sudan. So construed, the British colonial boundaries of 1946/1956 clearly define both South Sudan's international and internal/ethnic boundaries, including those of RAA and its neighbors such as Unity/Liech State, Warrab State, Abyei and Upper Nile State. While different communities and administrative units know the limits of their boundaries, their precision on the ground are yet to be physically determined by way of demarcation of such lines on the ground.

The legality of the 1956 boundaries has repeatedly been reaffirmed by various political actors in South Sudan, including the Government, various rebel groups and non-government actors alike. This clearly shows that the unfounded claim by political actors in Unity State that RAA

⁵ Kenneth A. Schultz, "What's in a Claim? De Jure versus De Facto Borders in Interstate Territorial Disputes" (2014) 58, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1059-1084.

has been created at the expense of Nuer land is certainly a political fiction intended to promote violence and deprive the Ruweng people of their land right and dignified existence. The issue of boundaries is, therefore, firmly settled. Those of Stephen Taban Deng, Riek Machar, Tutkew Manime, Joseph Nguen, etc., are therefore using political confusion to destabilize RAA and deprive the region and its people of the opportunity to shine a model of development in South Sudan.

(ii) ***De Facto Boundaries***

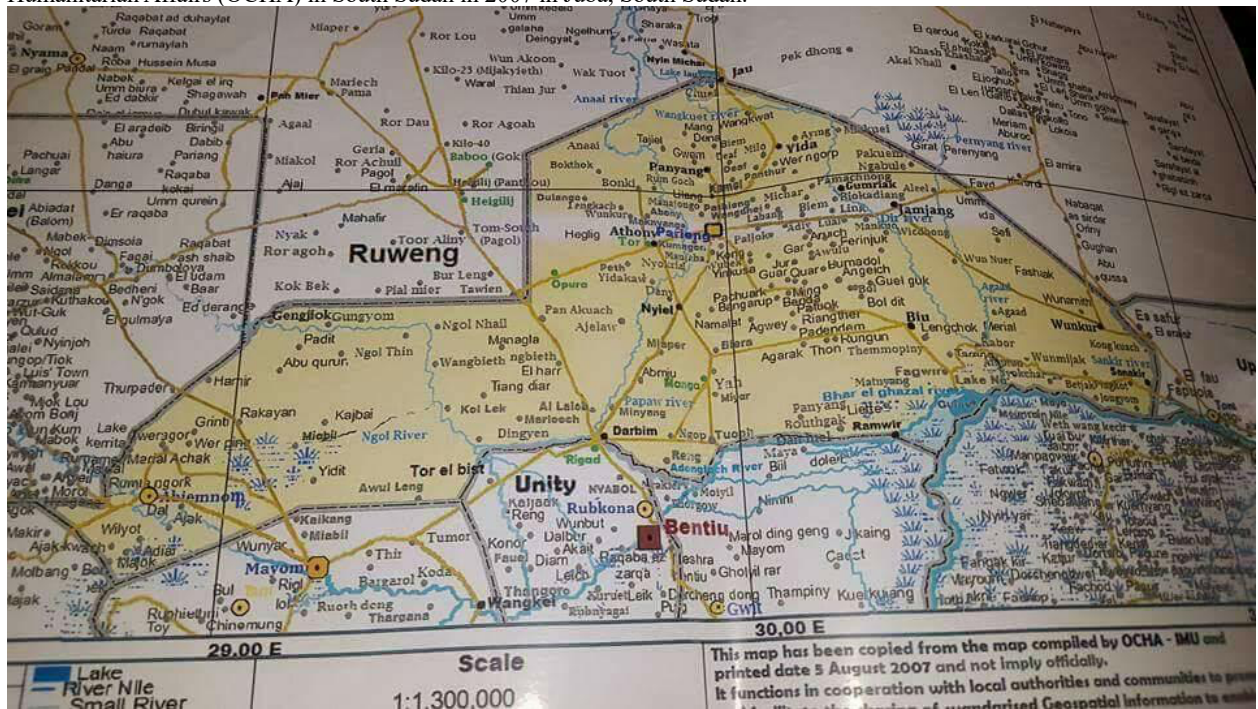
The second means of determining administrative boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State is by way of *de facto* boundaries. In theory and practice, *de facto* boundaries define the territorial limits of a given community in relation to its neighbors. Because *de facto* boundaries are not defined by legal instruments, they are usually referred to as **oral borders**. Their existence may not be in conformity with and, therefore, not recognized by law. Nevertheless, such boundaries are informally recognized in terms of their ability to delineate geographical limits of a given community since they enable each community and its neighbors to conduct themselves as if these boundaries were perfectly delineated by law.⁶

In relation to the boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State, *de facto* boundaries describe:

- a) The geographical expanse and/or boundaries of RAA as they are, or were, understood by the Ruweng people and their neighbors, both before, during and after the British colonial occupation.
- and,
- b) The way the Ruweng community and its neighboring believed and conducted their affairs in Southern Sudan, after independence in 1956. For instance, following the Sudan's independence from Great Britain in 1956, most road repairs in Southern Sudan were manned manually during dry seasons. For instance, in Ruweng:
 - (i) The **Kuok/Aliiny** Chiefdom was responsible for road repairs, starting all the way from **Menajong near Pariang Town** to **Panthou** in the north and south of **Darbim** (see **Figure 3** below) at its border with Rubkona in the south.
 - (ii) The Jau chiefdoms of **Aniek** and **Diar** were responsible for road repairs from **Panyang** to **Kur Ajith** located north of **Lake Jau**.
 - (iii) The **Ngeer, Bugo** and **Miorcigi** chiefdoms were responsible for road repairs from **Riangnhom/Pariang Town** to **Nyibol** Bride, near **Yonenyang/Rubkona** (shown in **Figure 3** below).
 - (iv) The five chiefdoms of **Kwocgoor, Agaany, Palei, Tungdiak** and **Bugo Bol**, were responsible for road repairs from **Ling** to **Jebel el Liir** to **Tonga** (in Upper Nile) via **Wunkur**.
 - (v) **The Bibiok** Chiefdom was responsible for road repairs from **Pachuak** to **Lake No** (locally known as **Miaaj**) via **Biu Town** at the confluence of **Bhar el Jebel** and **White Nile, precisely where River Bhar el Ghazel branches from the Nile**). For more geographical details, see the map below.

⁶ Kenneth A. Schultz, "What's in a Claim? De Jure versus De Facto Borders in Interstate Territorial Disputes"(2014) 58, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1059-1084.

Figure 6: Ruweng Tribal Boundaries: An OCHA Map. This map does not capture all the traditional boundaries of Ruweng State. It is only here for illustrative purposes. This map was compiled by the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in South Sudan in 2007 in Juba, South Sudan.



Accordingly, the concept of *de facto* boundaries would more accurately describe the limits of the Ruweng region and its boundaries as they were understood, both by the Ruweng people and their neighbors. Local knowledge about *de facto* boundaries has, thus, long persisted and cannot be denied by anyone or any credible authority, both in and outside the government in the Republic of South Sudan.

All this leads to the natural conclusion that the perverse claims by the Bentiu Nuer that RAA has been created by annexing Nuer land is a pure fabrication, one that is firmly founded on absolute falsehoods, patent construction of an alternative reality, illusion and manifest ethnic ill-will, all of which is intended to promote and political myth and sow violent discords in the country. Such a claim is only inspired by an expansionist tendency that has, for decades, kept afloat Riek's and Taban's (and now Nguen's and Tutkew's) political vision for an ethnic hegemony in the region.

Figure 7: The Dinka Tribal Map. Taken from Godfrey Lienhardt, in *Divinity and Experience*, 1961.⁷

⁷ See Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: OUP, 1961) at 8.

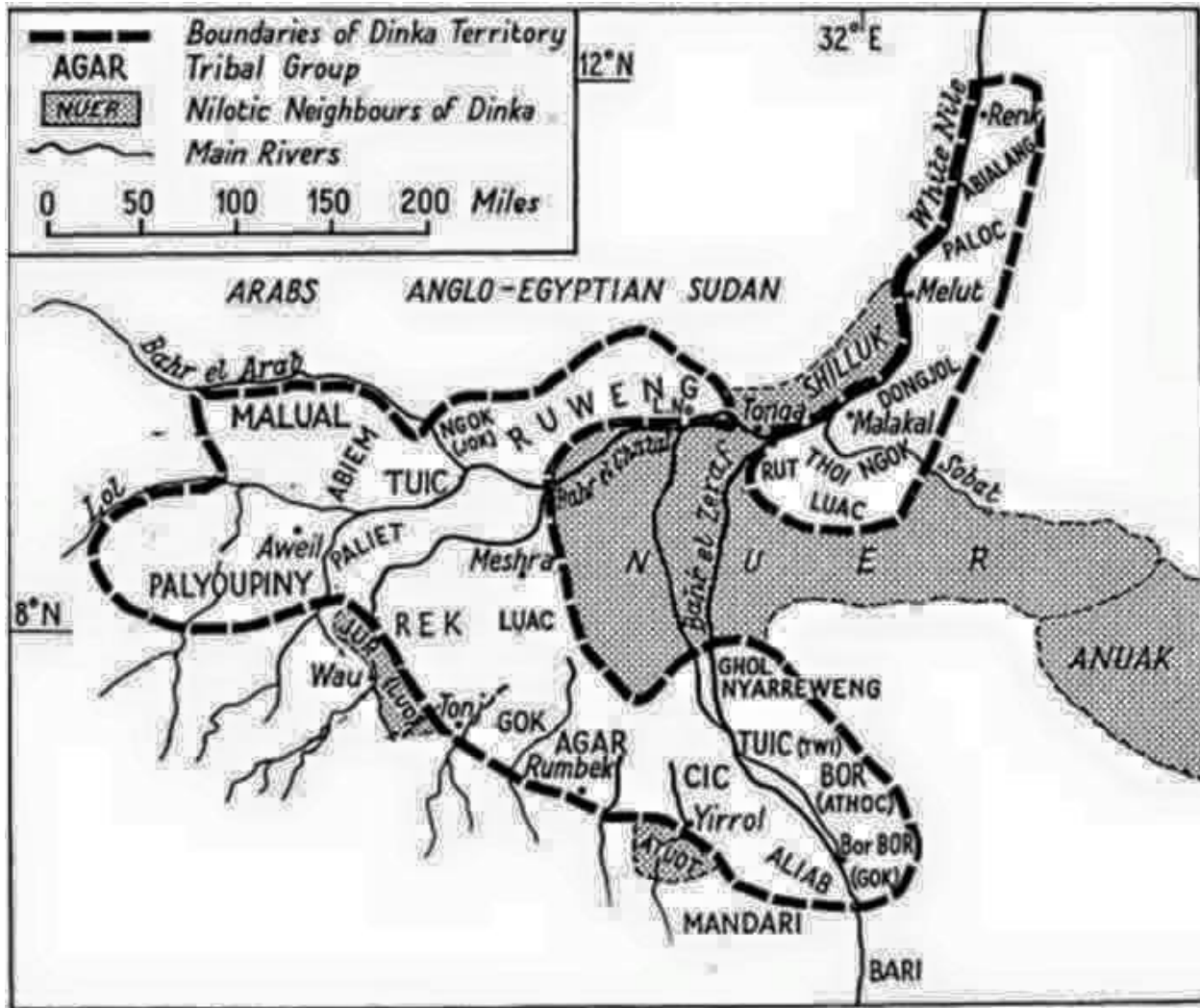


FIG. 2. The Dinka Tribal Groups

4. Moral and Legal Justifications for the Establishment of RAA in 2020

One may ask as to why, following the abolition of 28 states in 2020, Ruweng was established as administrative area. Were the Ruweng people's grievances or claim of injustice so unique as to warrant the establishment of RAA? While the answer to this and other related questions are resoundingly affirmative, this paper does not purport to exhaust the litany of such grievances or injustices. In the grand scheme of things, however, Ruweng's grievances against Unity/Liech State are undeniably manifold. Such grievances have also worsened over the decades under the ethnic especially under the ethnic "misleadership" of Riek Machar, Taban Deng Gai and now Tutkew Manime, Joseph Nguen with the tacit or express support of an assortment of militias with which the visit these injustices upon the people of RAA.

Nevertheless, the following discussion endeavors to provide the justification for the establishment of RAA in 2020.

- (a) The Ruweng region has historically been a separate administrative unit from what is now Unity/Liech State. This separateness is justifiable on the basis of both cultural incompatibility and ideological differences of leaders and people from the two regions.
- (b) The Ruweng region has inexorably suffered from a series of invidious ethnic marginalization by leaders from what is now Unity/Liech State. This marginalization

began shortly after Sudan's independence in 1956 but was further exacerbated by the political events and circumstances of the war during the liberation struggle.

- (c) Under Old Unity State, the people of Ruweng had continuously been subjected to egregious acts of violence, genocide and willful depopulation by Riek Machar, Taban Deng Gai and their allied forces, both new and old, in order to claim Ruweng land and promote the BANAFI ethnic vision and dream.

(a) Ruweng as an Independent Administrative Unit During the Liberation Struggle

Besides the shifting administrative status of the Ruweng people during the Colonial Era, the Ruweng Ngok Dinka is one of the communities that contributed disproportionately in terms of manpower during the liberation struggle (1983 to 2005) and was, therefore, adversely affected by both the conflict between the south and north as well as by vicious ethnic conflicts that ensued following the events of the Nasir Coup, staged by Riek Machar and his allies in 1991. Riek and his allies, including Taban Deng Gai (who was Riek's Emissary to Khartoum before the Nasir Declaration on August 28, 1991), defended the justness of their coup on two pillars, mainly, gross human rights violations, allegedly committed by the SPLM/A under the leadership of Chairman Garang and Garang's dictatorship in the SPLM/A. Their violent campaigns would later turn out to be a defection when they joined forces with Khartoum against the SPLM/A for more than a decade. Not surprisingly, these were the same justifications for his 2013 rebellion.

Following their failed coup attempt in 1991, both Riek and his tribal army embarked on mass ethnic cleansing against and mayhem that saw the entire Upper Nile region go up in flames. For quite some time, their forces managed to control much of Upper Nile region (including Bor) except Ruweng. The people of Ruweng were not to be beaten hands down. Rather, under the leadership of Commander Mayiik Jaw, the Ruweng forces comprising of Koryom's Hadid Battalion, Muor-muor's Goal Battalion, survivors of Koryom's Bilpam Battalion, Agreb Battalion, etc., teamed with Ruweng youths, and fought long, countless and difficult battles against the Marauding Nasir-based army, mainly from 1991 to 2002. The Ruweng people held their ground against the combined forces of Riek Machar and the main enemy from Khartoum, until the SPLM/A signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the National Islamic Front (NIF) in 2005.

From the time they staged their Nasir Coup until he surrendered to the SPLM/A in 2002, Riek's forces and his allied militias such as those of **Matib Nhial's** and **Arab Missirya** embarked on the mission of exterminating the entire Ruweng Ngok Dinka. What ensued for nearly one and half decades (from 1991 to 2005) and having regard to its viciousness and barbarity, coupled with the political and economic exclusion of the Ruweng community from governance in Old Unity State (from 2005 to 2015), would deeply widen the divide between Bentiu Nuer and the people of RAA. This would prompt the Ruweng people to call for a separate administrative unit from Old Unity State.

The circumstances of the difficult years, from 1991 to 2005, thus, automated the establishment of a separate and independent SPLA division known as **Pariang Independent Brigade**, sometimes referred to as **Brigade 20**, code-named as *The Winner*. This *nom de guerre* title was in reference to the Ruweng people's successful resistance against the combined genocidal forces of Riek Machar and allied forces, including the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). Because the entire Bentiu region under Riek's leadership was absorbed by the NIF, following the signing of the failed Khartoum Peace Agreement (KPA) in 1997, Ruweng was also established as an independent administrative area, separate and apart from any other region, save for its loose

affiliations with military zones in Bhar el Ghazel under Commander Daniel Awet Akot and Nuba Mountains under Yusuf Kuwa Maki. Since that time, Ruweng began to run its own affairs entirely separate and independent from Western Upper Nile. In hard and difficult days of such protracted internecine violence, the cumulative effects of the attendant political misgivings only operate to frustrate redeemable human qualities and nobility, deepen lingering local resentment and ferment political or natural differences and, thus, enhances separateness. This view perfectly captures what followed in terms of furthering the divide between Bentiu Nuer and the Ruweng communities.

It stands to reason that the creation of RAA is firmly anchored in the historical experiences of gross injustice and disproportionate sacrifices made by the Ruweng Ngok Dinka people during the liberation struggle under the banner of the SPLM/A.

(b) Marginalization/Exclusion of Ruweng from Governance in Unity State: 2005-2015

The justification for the establishment of RAA in 2020 also organically emanates from the fetters and patterns of systemic and repugnant nature of willful marginalization which the Ruweng people had to endure under successive ethnic administrations that came and went from Bentiu, since 1986, at the latest. This includes the exclusion of the Ruweng from fully participating in the political and economic life as well as from sharing of resources and opportunities in the Old Unity State. Indeed, various Bentiu Nuer leaders had long willfully and invidiously taken steps to ensure that the people of Ruweng did not take part in the political and economic life of the state, despite the fact that more than 90% of crude oil production in GPOC concession in the region came (and still comes) from what is now RAA. This egregious and unconscionable policy of exclusion has been self-evident in the leadership of Riek Machar since 1986 and, later, of Taban Deng Gai (from 2005 to 2013). Between 2013-2015, Mr. Joseph Nguen took a leaf out of the same playbook. This series of structural and systemic marginalization prompted the Ruweng Ngok Dinka to call for the establishment of administrative unit that is separate and apart from what is Unity/Liech State as early as 2009. Several petitions, some of which were open letters and are still available online, can attest to the endurance of this demand.

It follows that, in the main, governance in Old Unity State was one in which ethnic discrimination was promoted as an instrument of public policy. It served and promoted ethnic interests, much to the exclusion the Ruweng Ngok Dinka which, before Old Unity State was split into Unity/Liech State and RAA, made up more than 22% of the state population at the time. The idea that deliberate and willful patterns of systemic marginalization of the Ruweng people was the hallmark of governance in Old Unity State was evident in the Preamble of that State's Transitional Constitution which declares that **“Unity State and all its territories are Western Nuer Land.”**

Such is a reprehensible policy. Just imagine that the Revitalized Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan declares that **“South Sudan is a Dinka Republic.”** Not only would such a constitutional declaration be considered anachronistic and, therefore, morally and legally repugnant. It would also be a recipe for political instability in South Sudan. Such a constitution would seek to legally marginalize and exclude all non-Dinka communities from the political and economic life of the Republic of South Sudan.

In the same way, the administrative and legal structures of Old Unity State proffered the legal basis for marginalizing the Ruweng Ngok Dinka in the State. Such a constitutional declaration translated into practical programs on the ground including but are not limited to the fact that:

- (a) governance in the state only endeavored to serve the interests of Bentiu Nuer;
- (b) the Dinka Language was banned from being broadcast over the radio (because the state was exclusively meant for the Nuer),
- (c) parliamentary sessions were largely conducted in the Nuer language.
- (d) no single Dinka student was ever offered scholarship by the state government which provided hundreds of scholarships to Nuer students.
- (e) communication abilities or working knowledge of the Nuer Language was a *sine qua non* for landing state jobs;
- (f) policies that denied health services to Ruweng on account of their ethnic identity were promoted; and,
- (g) state apparatus (such as the police and military) was encouraged to terrorize and forcefully occupy Ruweng land.

This policy was predicated on the flimsy and indeed, frivolous claim that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka are mere guests in the region because they were only welcomed and hosted by Bentiu Nuer upon their arrival many centuries ago. As such, the people of Ruweng can only enjoy the right to land or dignified existence at the pleasure and discretion of Bentiu Nuer. Indeed, between 2005 and 2015, almost all positions in police service, wildlife, security services etc., within Ruweng areas were occupied by Nuer, just as Payam Administrators in Biemnhom and Ruweng counties were often deputized by Nuer. The intent and purpose of all this policy was to effectively make the Ruweng people as subhumans who can only thrive under the tutelage of Bentiu Nuer. All this speaks to the fact that Old Unity State used discrimination against the Ruweng Ngok Dinka as an instrument of state policy.

Against this backdrop, it is evident that Bentiu Nuer's political leadership and their people have long sought to subject the Ruweng people to a perpetual state of neglect, marginalization, exclusion, instability, poverty, depopulation, forceful displacement and all forms of dehumanizing treatment that the people of RAA had to endure for decades under Old Unity State.

Yet, as alluded to previously, these examples are just a tip of the iceberg. What happened prior to 2005 was even graver and more unconscionable.

(c) The Potential Ruweng Genocide: What the World Must know and Prepare for

(i) Why Ruweng Genocide is Underway

In every practical respect, the people of Unity/Liech State have patently left no doubt in the minds of fair-minded observers that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka must vacate their currently ancestral land. They suggest that the Ruweng people must move, either to Bhar el Ghazel region or—most recently—Jonglei State. This is something that political and community as well as youth leaders of Unity/Liech State have not minced words on. This view is inspired by a false conviction that the Ruweng Ngok Dinka are guests to their current homeland where they were allegedly welcomed by Bentiu Nuer, around 1730 AD. Indeed, in 2021, a member of parliament representing Unity/Liech State declared, during a parliamentary proceeding, that there are no Dinkas and no Dinka land, north of [now new] Unity State. Such a mindset presupposes Bentiu Nuer's unwillingness to recognize the Ruweng Ngok Dinkas as humans deserving of equal respect and consideration. However, since it is virtually impractical for the Ruweng Ngok Dinka to leave their ancestral land, there is only one practical way by which Ruweng can leave RAA: expulsion or genocide. This is the underlying cause for the spate of violence against the people of RAA by Bentiu Nuer. Thus, in addition to the litany of

oppression, historical injustices and dehumanization meted out to the Ruweng people as underscored above, there is every reason to believe that a dreadful level of bloodshed is underway against the people of RAA by Bentiu Nuer and their allies. This is something that the world must know and should prepare for. It should and must not be ignored.

To reiterate, the recent spate of attacks in RAA (specifically from 2022 to the present) is not part of spontaneous inter-communal violence that South Sudan has gotten used to, thanks to many years of internecine conflict in the country. Rather, just like it was the case between 2013 and 2014, 1991 and 1992, among others, this violence was orchestrated by people holding political power at the national level. These political authorities were and still are responsible for financing the mobilization of youths in Unity State, supplying them weapons and all kinds of armory and instructing SSPDF's Division 4 and affiliate militias to fight alongside the youths. All this is part of concerted efforts to promote war of attrition and stymie any endeavor by RAA to develop their region in peace and harmony. Indeed, part of the resentment by Bentiu Nuer is the incremental progress that RAA has made since 2022. That is why they are determined to wage even more deadly violence on RAA. What is yet to come is not going to be limited to the 7 counties of Unity/Liech State. It will involve other Nuer communities east of the Nile River. In fact, some eastern Nuer youths and militias have already crossed to the westbank of the Nile River and taken up stations at Wunemijak, Wunkur and Araaj in the southeast of RAA, all with the view to mounting violence in RAA.

(ii) **Unity/Liech State Rejects RAA's Calls for Dialogue on Boundaries**

The perverse claim on the part of the leaders of Unity/Liech State that RAA was established by annexing Nuer land is patently founded on sand. The current geographical expanse of RAA is based on the boundaries between Ruweng and Nuer territories as they stood on January 1, 1956. But the people of Unity/Liech State continue to entertain falsehoods. They have embarked on promoting void propaganda through a series of the fruit of reconstruction in order to promote alternative realities. Despite repeated calls by the leaders of RAA for dialogue for border dialogue between RAA and Unity/Liech State, political leaders from Unity/Liech State have constantly rebuffed efforts to promote friendly dialogue on the issue. For instance, the former Governor of the Defunct Ruweng State, Dr. Lawrence Mabok Wuor (from 2019 to 2020), initiated such dialogue with the governor of Unity/Liech State, Dr. Joseph Nguen, the former Governor of Unity State (from 2013 to 2024) with the view to resolving the matter, once and for all. Dr. Lawrence had written to the President, bringing to the latter's attention that **Unity State was creeping on Ruweng land at Darbim (Unity Oilfields), Miadiing (Lalob) and Munga (Wanhedanluel)**. Gov. Lawrence implored his counterpart to discourage his people and government from settling in these areas. When Nguen ignored his request for such a forum, Dr. Lawrence opted to submit a petition to the Council of States and the Presidency on the same. The President requested for a sit down between the two governors, but Nguen obstinately ignored such as requests, obviously on the advice Mr. Taban Deng Gai who is deeply implicated in this matter, having occupied Ruweng land at Munga. Similarly, Hon. Stefano Wieu, the former Chief Administrator of RAA (from 2022 to 2024) submitted a similar petition to the President, requesting the Government of Unity/Liech State for dialogue. Nguen also refused. Finally, the 6th Governors/Chief Administrators' Forum organized by UNDP in 2023 passed a resolution to the effect that RAA and Unity/Liech State needed to conduct a dialogue on border issues. Hon. Stefano took

that resolution very seriously. Development partners were ready, willing, and able to sponsor such a forum. Yet, as usual, Nguen vehemently ignored such calls.

It follows that the political leadership in Unity/Liech State has repeatedly demonstrated a malevolent spirit of confrontations instead of a civilized dialogue with AA. That is because facts and law are not on the side of Unity/Liech State, insofar as their claim is concerned. That is why they often contend that the said boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State were the work of colonial government and have, therefore, no basis for acceptance. They prefer to use force to occupy Ruweng land with the support of Division 4 under **Gen. William Manyang Mayak** (who was an SPLA-IO “general” absorbed into Division 4 in 2016) and assortment of militias. This is something that the world must know. What is in the offing can be quite catastrophic. The authority for the existence of incontrovertible administrative boundaries between RAA and its neighbors, as of 1956, can be found at the following link for the British Library: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/maps/africa/largeimage136644.html>. The same map, showing clear and indisputable administrative boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State, has been reproduced in **figures 4 and 5 above**.

(iii) Key Players of the Impending Ruweng Genocide

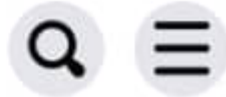
The potential Ruweng genocide is being masterminded by a number of political and military actors in Unity/Liech State. These include but are not limited to the following:

- **Riek Machar Teny:** Mr. Riek Machar is the 1st Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan and the Chair of Governance Cluster. Since 1986, Mr. Riek has been determined to promote Nuer hegemony and mistreat non-Nuer citizens of Old Unity State. He has endeavored to ensure that Ruweng does not exist and sworn to use violence as a policy for achieving his malevolent vision. In 2023, his SPLA-IO forces indiscriminately opened fire on members of the Ruweng Peace Mission at Wunkur, RAA, which has been occupied by the SPLA-IO since 2014. He was in the know in relation to the plans that resolved to kill all members of the Ruweng Peace Mission. The plan succeeded, having killed six people, wounded several others and captured 3 vehicles that are still being used today by his SPLA-IO forces, notwithstanding that Mr. Riek is the 1st Vice President. Mr. Riek is the pillar around whom all forms of destruction and violence in RAA revolve.
- **Taban Deng Gai:** Mr. Taban currently serves as one of South Sudan’s five vice presidents and is the Chair of Infrastructure Cluster. He has been one of the most instrumental and lead masterminds of previous massacres against and the ongoing destruction in RAA. His diabolical plan has been decades-long. It all started when he the Governor of Old Unity State between 1997 and 2001 (under el-Bashir Government), and from 2005 to 2013 after the signaling of the CPA in 2005. His announcement (on June 21, 2024) in the national cabinet’s meeting, concerning the mobilization of youths in Unity State to attack Ruweng, was part of his attempt to wash his dirty linen in public. Indeed, Mr. Taban currently occupies Munga (Wanhedanluel) Port and its surrounding in the southern part of RAA. He occupied this area when he was the governor of Old Unity State (from 2005 to 2013), after requesting the Ngeer section of Ruweng community to allow him to settle there as a free citizen of South Sudan. As soon as he was allowed to settle in the area, he

embarked on the project of resettling his Jikany Nuer community there. He subsequently declared it as a Payam of his native Guit County. Attempts to dissuade these efforts fell on deaf ears. He would later colloquially rename the place as “**Dwal Jaang**” (This literally means “Dinka is Terrified”). He has his own militia under command of **generals Makal Kuol and Karlo Kuol. Mr. Taban** was one of the masterminds of the June attacks in RAA, just as he was the principal of the deadly attacks at Yaar, RAA, in February 2022. He is in for the worst yet to come.

- **Joseph Nguen Monytil:** Mr. Nguen was the longest serving governor of Old Unity State (2013-2015) and Unity/Liech State (2015-2024). He has long inspired the Nuer dream of occupying Ruweng land. It was under him that the 2022 Yaar Massacre took place. Along with Mr. Tutkew Manime (mentioned below), he is a co-commander of the notorious Nuer Terchuong militia, which he helped arm to the teeth. It was previously known as Special Force and commanded by Gen. Matthew Puljang.
- **Tutkew Manime:** Mr. Tutkew Manime is a long time NCP stalwart and a newfound ally of President Kiir. He currently serves as President Kiir’s Advisor on Security, a position from which he enjoys unfettered influence, including unlimited access to arms for Terchuong and affiliate militias. He provides these militias with all forms of logistical support in the region. He is an accomplice in the ongoing violence in RAA.
- **Gen. William Manyang Mayak:** At the time of this writing, Gen. Manyang was the commander of Division 4 and a fierce loyalist to Governor Joseph Nguen. He was the one who provided the mobilized Bentiu Nuer youths with logistical support including artilleries and tanks to launch the June 2024 attacks on RAA.
- **Gen. Tor Tungwar:** Mr. Tor was, at the time of this writing, the Deputy Governor of Unity/Liech State and was, alongside the Commissioner of Rubkona and Gen. Manyang, who led the June, 2024, attacks on RAA. He oversaw the killing of border police officers at Panakuach and Kaloch and of setting oil facilities ablaze in four different locations in RAA. He is a staunch BANAFAs extremist who firmly believes that, through coercive violence or war of attrition, the Ruweng Ngok Dinka must be removed from what he calls “**Liech land.**” He hails from Rubkona County.
- **Mr. Clement Kasara Juol:** He is the SPLM-IO Commissioner of Rubkona County. He is a renowned anti-Dinka extremist who, like Tor Tungwar, comes from Rubkona. He was the one who provided the mobilized Nuer youths with logical support in June, 2024. This is the guy through whom the mobilized resources to execute the BANAFAs Project flow to the youths, militias and elements of Division 4. Indeed, two weeks later after the June attacks, Mr. Kasara continued to incite violence against the people of RAA. One sample (posted on July 11, 2024) of his many inciteful written words include the following:

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Rubkotna County Press Unit**

36m · 🌐

Rubkotna County Office.

11/07/2024 AD .

Hundred of RAA Youth gathered in Bongki Payam to launch massive attacks on Payangay Boma of Rotriah Payam this evening.

Hundred of youth from RAA prepared to attack the Rubkotna Youth in Kat-Nar and Payangay Boma this evening .

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- **Mr. Salaam Maluit:** Mr. Salaam was, at the time of this writing, the Security Advisor to the Governor of Unity/Liech State, Hon. Riek Biem Tap. Mr. Salaam believes in the use of force to exterminate the people of RAA. He has repeatedly been said that the last Nuer man standing will fall and be buried in Panakuach, suggesting that having occupied Darbim (Unity Oilfields) and Miadiing (Lalob) is not enough. They must also control Panakuach. While he acknowledges that both Miadiing (Lalob) and Panakuach are part of RAA, he strongly believes that landownership is solely a determination of the use of force to assert control.
- **Peter Lam Both:** Mr. Lam is the sitting SPLM Secretary General. He rejoined the SPLM in 2000s in Canada following the disintegration of the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) under Riek Machar. While in Canada, he was a staunch supporter of Talisman Co., the Canadian company that was once in the news for acting in cahoots with the NIF Government in Khartoum to execute a scorch earth policy that sought to clear the oilfields of human existence or settlement is what is now RAA and part of Unity/Liech State. Mr. Lam is a well-known opportunist who only seeks self-aggrandizement and more importantly, advance the narrative and vision of BANAFa. He is an SPLM-IO-in-SPLM where he is clandestinely doing the bidding for BANAFa. Lam has faked his CV, including claiming that he has a PhD from Canada. He does not have a PhD from any recognized university. He also claims to be a member of the SPLA-Red Army. Yet he has never been trained with SPLA. He has citizenship for three countries namely, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Canada. Lam has been meeting Bentiu Nuer communities on the issue of land and has on a number of occasions threatened several chief administrators from Ruweng on the issue of boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State. Ironically, Lam comes from Upper Nile State and has no idea as to the boundaries between RAA and Unity/Liech State. He is currently looting the SPLM to advance the BANAFa agenda.

5. Bentiu Takes a Leaf Out of the National Government's Book of Marginalization.

The continued effort by Bentiu Nuer to marginalize or exterminate the Ruweng people is an extension of the decades-old systemic marginalization of the people of RAA by the center. This was the case under the SPLM/A during the liberation struggle and from 2005 to the present. The fact that the Bentiu Nuer are determined at all costs to marginalize or even exterminate the people of Ruweng is not by happenstance. They have borrowed and benefited from the conduct of the National Government which has, advertently or inadvertently, marginalized the people of RAA. It is, therefore, lack of a meaningful representation of the people of RAA that has long bolstered the resolve of Bentiu Nuer to mistreat them.

Currently, the highest-ranking government official from RAA is the Rt. Hon. Mary Ayen Majok, the 1st Deputy Speaker of the Council of States (in the National Legislature). The other ranking national government official is Hon. Mijok Mijak, the Minister of Roads & Bridges. No other government official from Ruweng can be found in the national Government. For instance, there has never been an undersecretary from Ruweng, just as there is nobody from Ruweng in foreign affairs in the capacity of an ambassador, or police or the military. Similarly, RAA is not represented in the Border Commission, Political Parties'

Council, National Constitutional Review Commission, National Electoral Commission, or in all negotiations in which matters of boundaries, and oil resources are discussed despite the fact that more than 90% of crude oil in the GPOC concession areas comes from RAA. This marginalization has been lingering since 2005. When *The Citizen* Newspaper asked Taban Deng Gai in 2009 why the Old Unity State had marginalizing the Ruweng people under his watch as governor, Mr. Taban's response to Mr. Nhial Bol Aken, his interviewer in that case, was typical. Instead of answering the question, he retorted that Mr. Nhial should first ask himself why the people of RAA were marginalized in the National Government. Mr. Taban's response suggested that there is something about the people of RAA that automates mistreatment by either the national or state government. It stands to reason that the Bentiu's Nuer's intent to marginalize or wage violent campaigns against the people of RAA is a conduct directly taken out of the playbook of the National Government.

6. Conclusion

The people of RAA are existentially threatened by at least three real and present perils. The first of these perils is the environmental pollution that has given rise to (a) searing birth defects among humans and animal populations alike; (b) high rate of infertility and (c) drastic reduction in yields in the region.

The second real and present danger or challenge to the basic survival of the Ruweng people emanates from extant confused political leadership in RAA. This, some would argue, is the most challenging predicament. That is because leadership vacuum clearly undergirds all other problems that have blighted the people of RAA in their efforts to rebuild their community after many years of political marginalization and, some would say, dehumanization. This state of affairs has given rise to serious internal squabbles that operate to worsen the situation for a community that has long sought to recover its shattered soul following many years of being left to fend for itself on the margins. This is why political leaders in Unity/Liech State have, due to their sheer amount of political power and unfettered access to financial resources, been able to set rift among political leaders in RAA. The result has been one in which no leader is deemed to be first in line in terms of consultations on matters affecting vital interests of the Ruweng people. Indeed, a majority of members of Parliament representing RAA, in the National Legislature, governors, or chief administrators, Ruweng youth leaders, etc., have often been bankrolled and supported from Bentiu in order to bring political confusion and instability in RAA. This has eventuated in internal political fragmentation among the people of RAA. This puts the people of RAA in a vulnerable position since they can only ensure their collective survival if they understand how vital their unity is, especially in the face of such serious external threats.

Finally, the third existential threats to the people of RAA is the determination of Bentiu Nuer leaders to deprive the former of their land right or seek to wipe them out on the face of the Earth. This is a given, having regard to many practical examples provided in the foregoing.

In fact, Riek Machar's vigorous opposition to the establishment of 28 states in 2015 was essentially not about the creation of more states, considering that he was the champion of creating more states in South Sudan. Rather what undergirded his opposition to more states was the creation of a separate administrative unit for Ruweng. That is because the

establishment of Ruweng State—and later RAA—that is separate and apart from his own ethnic bastion is a plain threat to his myth that Bentiu produces the largest amount of oil in South Sudan. More importantly, the creation of RAA operates to stifle his expansionist policy of establishing a monolithic ethnic empire in the region and beyond. Indeed, Riek's conduct in the past 33 years is clearly part of his manifest intent to achieve this vision at the expense of the Ruweng Ngok Dinka community. The continued unfounded claim in Bentiu that RAA has been created by annexing Nuer land is only a feigned justification for violence, considering that the 1956 boundaries establish otherwise. In fact, this falsehood is provided for in the Transitional Constitution of Old Unity State which states that all the territories of Unity State are part of Western Nuer Land. This is just one reason, in a litany of reasons, why the establishment of RAA is defensible and tenable. Indeed, there exist irreconcilable differences between the people of RAA and of Unity/Liech State that make the establishment of RAA, both morally and legally, legitimate.

It is worth noting that the people of RAA are ready, willing, and able to welcome all people from any part of the Republic of South Sudan to make RAA their permanent home, irrespective of their regional or ethnic differences or origins. This view is consistent with the spirit of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan which provides that every South Sudanese citizen is entitled to live, work, and even run for an elective office anywhere in the country. It stands to reason that if one elects to live in RAA permanently, he or she is entitled to exercise all the legal guarantees in the form of civil, political, and economic rights, just as a native-born RAA citizen is.

Finally, the people of RAA have made it clear that in order to resolve the border issue between RAA and Unity/Liech State, there are less impairing and more civilized means to do so. These include but are not limited to community-to-community dialogue, adjudication process before the Supreme Court of South Sudan, or such other court of competent jurisdiction including the EAC Court of Justice. In the event that all local remedies (such as above) have been exhausted, the final remedy would be to lodge a case with an international tribunal.

Unfortunately, efforts to resolve this enduring border issue between RAA and Liech State have often been rejected by the latter, which prefers the use, or threat of the use, of force to occupy Ruweng land. This is a recipe for disaster. Nobody has monopoly over the use or threats of the use of force. Yet, the maxim that anyone who lives by the sword inevitably falls by the same cannot be exaggerated.

End!

ANNEX

Annex: Longitude and Latitudes Describing Administrative Ruweng During Colonial Era:

-Source: Journal of East African Affairs online at <https://paanluelwel.com/2020/02/16/historical-borders-of-ruweng-report-on-the-panthou-oil-dispute-between-sudan-and-south-sudan/>

Commencing from a point on the existing Province Boundary midway between Debba Mongok and Debba Karam Nyet (Lat. $9^{\circ} 21'$ Long $28^{\circ} 38'$) the boundary runs in an easterly direction until it meets Khor Amadgora. Thence northwards to the Bahr el Arab leaving the village of Rumla Ngork to the Upper Nile. Thence in a N. Easterly direction to the Raqaba ez Zarqa at a point $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of Tibusia, thence along the Raqaba ez Zarqa to 'Aradeib, thence eastward along Lat. $9^{\circ} 45'$ to the old Kordofan – Upper Nile boundary, thence north along that boundary and continuing along the old Kordofan N.M.P. boundary to Lat. $10^{\circ} 5'$ marked on the map "Clump of Heglig" thence N. Easterly to a point 3 miles due west of the centre of Lake Abyad [Lake Jau], thence due east to the eastern shore of the Lake, thence S.E. through the Fed Abu Finyer to the Rest House at the point where the Tonga-Talodi road crosses the Haqaba south of Abu Qussa, thence up that Raqaba to where it joins the existing Province Boundary.

This was the official provincial boundary line in effect when Sudan became independent on 1 January 1956 (see Figure 1).

The Sudan Survey 1:250,000 maps 65-H and 65-L on which this boundary was marked (see Figure 2), and on which all subsequent maps of the area are based, was last updated for topographical detail in 1937. The area bisected by the line is mainly a blank space. It is a dry season grazing area shared by the Alor and Awet Rueng, and the Ngok Dinka.⁹ Aside from marking some water sources and the occasional clump of heglig trees (*Balanites aegyptiaca*: *hijlij* in Arabic and *thou* in Dinka) no villages or annual cattle camps, no place names of "Panthou", "Aliiny" (the Awet name) or even "Heglig" are recorded. The reason is that this area lay outside administrators' usual



Figure 1. Rueng Dinka sections (Sudan Survey Department, 1:2,000,000 Map Sudan Tribes Sheet 3, 1956). The highlighted dashed line shows the provincial boundary. The heavy black broken line represents an alleged dividing line between Arab and African peoples.