



Sudanese Tribes Confront Modern War”

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- Madut Atien is a member of the SPLA, which provided security for the peace conference. (Michael duCille, Washington Post)

EXCERPT 1:

1. They are the Dinka and the Nuer, the largest tribes in southern Sudan. Both greet the dawn by singing. Both live in square huts with round, uneven roofs. Both walk the roadless plain split by the White Nile. And both honor their scrawny, hump-backed cattle as the center of the temporal world, at once wealth on the hoof and a mystical link to the spiritual plane [level].

2. The Nuer word for “thousand” means “lost in the forest,” because that’s where your cattle would be if you had that many of them. Almost no one does, however—in no small part because Dinka and Nuer have been stealing cattle from each other for as long as anyone can remember. Cattle **raiding** is a **hoary** [old, ancient] tradition of **pastoralists** [farmers] throughout East Africa, as natural here as a young man’s hungering for enough cows to pay the bride price for a wife, as normal as a neighbor striking at the **intruders** he sees hogging prime grazing land.

- With a partner, reread paragraph 1 out loud. What does the word “both” refer to? Why does the author use the word “both” four times?
- In paragraph 1, what do you think the word temporal might mean?
- In paragraph 2, reread the last sentence, and explain it to your partner in your own words.
- In paragraph 3, what does the word phase mean? When did things begin to change?





<p>3. If people died in these raids, it was “maybe one, two or three,” said Madut. And the victims were almost always warriors, slain with the spears that were still the weapons of choice in southern Sudan in 1983, when the war against the Arab north entered its current phase. That year, the Khartoum government imposed [forced on others] Islamic law on the entire country, including the parts that were not Muslim, like the south, where people mostly adhere [stick to] to traditional beliefs or Christianity. Rebellious southerners formed the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army, and young Dinka and Nuer began to carry AK-47s.</p>	<p>STOP here for Lesson 10</p>
<p><b>EXCERPT 2:</b></p>	
<p>4. Until 1991, the guns were used mostly against northerners. But that August, there was a split in the rebel army. The fault line was tribal. A Nuer rebel officer, Riek Machar, tried to topple the rebels’ supreme commander, a Dinka named John Garang. When the coup failed, the rebel escaped with forces loyal to him, mostly Nuer. The war had entered a new phase. Southerners started killing each other.</p>	<p>e. Talk with a partner: In paragraph 4, how does the second sentence help you understand the phrase “the fault line was tribal”?</p>
<p>5. “I used to be living here,” said Peter Wakoich, a Nuer in Dinkaland. “The Dinka and Nuer were one. It all went bad overnight.” Shortly after the rebel leaders parted ways, the man from the next hut stole all of Wakoich’s cattle and slit the throats of four of his children.</p>	
<p>6. Children, women and the elderly used to be off-limits during raids, traditional set-piece battles in which women waited at the edge of the fight to tend the wounded and retrieve lost spears, said Sharon Hutchinson, a University of Wisconsin anthropologist who lived with the region for most of a decade. Now 110 were killed in a village attacked precisely while its young men had gathered elsewhere.</p>	



<p>7. Tradition in both tribes held that causing a death created “spiritual pollution.” A bit of the blood of any man a Nuer speared to death was thought to be in the slayer, and had to be bled out of the upper arm by an earth priest. To drink or eat before reaching the priest was to die.</p>		<p>f. Talk with a partner: In paragraph 12, the text says “The elders, however, could.” What could the elders do? (Hint: reread paragraph 11.)</p>
<p>8. But that was for a death by spear, pressed into victim by one’s own muscle and bone. What to do about death by bullets—“a gun’s calves,” as the word translated from Nuer? Rebel commanders argued to chiefs that a gun death carried no individual responsibility, that traditional belief did not apply in a “government war.”</p>		
<p>9 And the guerrillas came to see it the same way. “They believe, “The ghost of the deceased will not haunt me, because I did not kill with a spear,” said Telar Deng, an American-educated Dinka judge.</p>		
<p>10. Once removed from its moral consequences, killing became easier. Jok Madut Jok, an assistant professor of history at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, returned to his native Dinkaland last summer to research the culture of violence. He found armed youths running roughshod in a society whose dysfunction paralleled that of inner cities 8,000 miles away: Arguments once settled by fighting with sticks were now being decided with assault weapons.</p>		
<p>11. The warriors, Jok said, were simply too young to remember any power but the kind that came from a gun.</p>		
<p>12. The elders, however, could.</p>		

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