

Displacement and Oil

We were naturally interested in people moving, or being moved, because of oil development, which led us to travel outside Khartoum, once to the north, along part of the pipeline route to the new refinery being built mainly by Chinese contractors, and once to Dilling, in the Nuba Mountains, to the site of a pumping station on the pipeline. On each occasion, we were assured that local people who had to be moved because of the pipeline were given compensation.

We were also interested in the non-Arab peoples who lived near oil development, and we learned that in Khartoum there is a Pariang Association. Pariang, sometimes known as Faryang or even Panriang, was described to us by Talisman Energy Inc. as a Dinka village located on the eastern edge of the GNPOC concession.

The Pariang Association represents people, mainly Dinka, displaced from the Pariang area and now living in the camps for IDPs near Khartoum, camps such as Mayang. The major displacements, or what some have referred to as forced removals, for one part of Unity State, the Pariang area, coincided with the outbreak of factional fighting around the state capital, Bentiu, in May, 1999.

Ruweng County/ Pariang Province

UN Special Rapporteur Leonardo Franco wrote of this area being assaulted in May 1999, with villages on the eastern edge of Heglig being attacked and burnt to the ground. He said that as many as six thousand homes were destroyed, along with 17 churches, all leaving 1,000-2,000 people displaced.

We visited Ruweng twice. The first visit, made possible by Talisman, was to Pariang village, under GOS control. Here, the surrounding territory is not known as Ruweng County, but rather as Pariang Province. The second visit, facilitated by Operation Lifeline Sudan, was to Biem, some distance east of Pariang village. This is an area nominally under SPLA control.

Adding all of our visits and talks together, a composite picture emerges which we believe puts the Franco report in better perspective. But whereas Leonardo Franco focused only on May, 1999, the story begins much sooner, and it has not ended yet. The claim has been made by Talisman Energy Inc. that the "oil field area" has never known permanent habitation, always being the scene of widespread flooding in the rainy season, and of cattle drives and nomad camps in the dry season. But Heglig used to be known by its Dinka name, Aling, and may, before oil exploration in the 1980's, have been home to permanent settlement by the Dinka Panaru. The area to the east of Heglig, towards Pariang village and beyond there into the depths of Ruweng county, certainly was.

Maps made in 1954, prior to Sudanese independence, show that Ruweng County and the area westwards to Heglig and south towards Rubkona and the Bahr El Ghazal River was home to the