Between the Town and the Cattle-Camp: Paravets in Lakes State, South Sudan.

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Introduction

This paper is about the experiences of 'paravets' in Lakes State, Southern Sudan in the context of the wider questions the panel is seeking to address about the nature of state-society relations in Sudan. My paper, based on interviews and participant observation carried out as part of my masters fieldwork in March 2010, focuses on the narratives and experiences told to me by individuals employed at the lowest rung of the veterinary service in this predominantly pastoralist area. I suggest that 'paravets', of which there are several hundred in Lakes State, are individuals who inhabit a boundary and act as intermediaries between urban and rural areas and as such can provide a lens on to how the state is imagined in a part of Sudan normally considered to be on the periphery of State power.

My argument is that in moving between urban and rural areas, para-vets both construct and cross a border between the state, which is spatially and ideologically located in the town, and rural areas that are outside the reach of the 'hakuma' (government). In doing this my paper will, following from Deborah Poole's work in Peru, argue against a straightforward political geography of the state's centres and peripheries by showing how people living in the 'periphery' create their own model of the state and their own ideas about themselves in relation to the state. (Poole 2004: 37-8) I want to challenge the idea that the state is necessarily something alien and foreign, by showing how it is constructed locally.

This paper discusses a discursive border between 'state' and 'society' and urban and rural life, which is embodied and crossed by paravets as they move between urban and rural areas to distribute veterinary services and seek to reimagine themselves as townspeople and state employees. The paper relies on an unfashionable dichotomy between 'urban' and 'rural'. This is in part an analytical device, but primarily, it is a very important local distinction that I have frequently observed while doing my

fieldwork. Anthropologists and other scholars have repeatedly shown how, in reality, dichotomies between 'urban and rural' are much blurred and cannot be neatly separated. However, a binary between urban and rural is remains a very important in Lakes state and has been frequently expressed to me (and to other researchers in South Sudan). I wish to take it seriously for what it can tell us about local perceptions of the state and explore its role in the experience of para-vets and other people in Rumbek. The distinction between rural and urban is powerful both because there are stark differences between the two (rural life is about the routine of cattle-keeping, there are few roads, commodities, schools or healthcare). And because in this distinction is important discursively and ideologically (a framework within which people learn to speak about things like their relationship to the state and learn to understand themselves as 'cattle-keepers' or 'townspeople'. (cf.Tsing 1993)).

Structure of the paper

I will start my explaining further who paravets are and what they do, including some short biographies of individuals paravets. I will then discuss how they saw themselves and how they were perceived by the rural cattle keeping communities where they worked. Crucial to paravet subjectivity was the idea that they had become town/government people. I then examine the historical associations of Rumbek and government and the conflation of 'town' and 'state' in South Sudan more widely. I then look more closely at some points that came up in para-narratives and experiences – their views about education, scarification and how they managed cattle herd ownership while living in town. In doing this I am arguing that

Who and what are Paravets?

In Lakes State primary animal health services are organised through a 'paravet' system of former and current cattle keepers (also called Community Animal Health Workers - CAHWs) who have been trained to diagnose diseases, prescribe and

administer drugs and vaccinations. Paravets are supervised by more senior veterinary staff, who are literate in English and control supplies of drugs, monitor disease outbreaks and report to government authorities. In Lakes, when it started in 1993, the paravet system was originally managed by Oxfam as a livestock development programme and as part of a regional Rinderpest eradication campaign. After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, and the establishment of a semi-autonomous government in Southern Sudan (GOSS), Oxfam handed executive control of veterinary projects over to GOSS, although they still provide technical support. The GOSS, through the Directorate of Animal Resources, runs the services through a local body called the Lakes Livestock Development Organisation (LLDO), which represents livestock owners and veterinary practitioners.

The veterinary education that paravets receive is the defining point of entering the formal veterinary service and a crucial part of their narratives of the transformative aspects of work in the veterinary service. Training consists of a two-week residential training course usually in Rumbek. When they have completed the training, paravets receive a certificate and a set of overalls to wear while working. As paravets are cattle keepers, they are already considerably knowledgeable about the health of cattle and recognizing disease and ill health. What they acquire in the training is formal technical training: aetiologies of disease and organ systems displayed and named in technical scientific terms.(VSF-S 2004) They are given practical vaccination training, in which they are taken to cattle-camps to perform inoculations. (OxfamGB: 1) After training, they return to the rural area with a new position and relationship to the “community” and with a sense they have acquired a new, unique knowledge.

These biographies of paravets show the range of experiences of being involved in the veterinary service

> PV11 was trained in 2006. He lives in Rumbek town but he is a paravet in Rumbek North. Before training he was a cattle keeper. He is uneducated. He owns cattle that his brother and father look after. He spends about 1 month of the year with the cattle, combining going back to the cattle-camps with doing

his veterinary work. He has young children; he plans to send some to school and some to look after cattle

PV7 was trained in 1996. Before that he was a cattle keeper and a famer. He had a small amount of schooling in Arabic before the war started in 1983, but none since. His father was a *gol* leader He has two houses, one in Rumbek town, where he lives in the dry season and one in a village where he lives in the wet season to cultivate. His children go to school in Rumbek but look after cattle in the holidays. He owns cattle, which his brother looks after. He plans to continue to live in Rumbek when he is old, supported by his educated children who he hopes will get office work.

PV5 was trained in 1996 and has been a team leader since 1998. Before becoming a paravet he was a cattle keeper and an *atet* ('traditional' veterinary specialist). His father was an executive chief. Although he often comes to town to collect drugs he lives in the village. He sees the benefits of town (services, the market) and feels he has adopted some of the ways of town, but thinks rural life is more honest and fair. Some of his children are in school and some of them look after cattle.

PV9 was trained in 2009 and works in Abriru, Cuibet county. Before becoming a paravet he was a cattle keeper. He is uneducated and his father also kept cattle. He did not use to come to town but now his work necessitates it. He still lives in a village but spends all day in town. He considers himself to be 'townese' despite not living in town. His children are young but he plans to educate them all.

People in the rural areas also saw a kind of transformation in paravets, as this man at Langcok cattle-camp remarked

although they still interact with us and know us, they are different. They have become civilised, they have become those of town[1]

A group interviewed at Langcok cattle-camp identified four types of people according to their living arrangements and degree of education and status: those

[1] Interviewed 19.03.10 at Langcok

living “outside” in cattle camps; those living in town who are educated – who had been sent to school as children; those living in town because they are in the SPLA, but are not necessarily educated; those living in town because they are livestock traders – who are cattle-keepers and uneducated. Paravets were not seen as a discrete category of town dwellers, but they were nonetheless seen as people of the town because they had had veterinary training (a form of education) and people perceived that they had adapted to life in the town.

At Langcok, paravets were well known and people expressed general satisfaction with the animal health care system. They seemed pleased that the government was involved in the treatment of animal diseases and held paravets in a high regard. At Jou, a considerably more remote cattle-camp, perspectives on animal health services were notably more ambivalent, an older man explained:

> *Government people come and say we will treat your cattle. They come and tell us* [but then no treatment is delivered] *we are sad for the lies that people tell us and then don't implement*[2]

People here were not against the principle of animal health workers (from the community or outside) but their experience of them had been very peripheral. They felt the services they had been promised were not delivered and the government had failed to properly organise the system.

One word that was repeatedly used in my interviews was ‘townese’ to describe people who live in town. A strong distinction was drawn by my informants between the world of the town (with explicit connections made to modernity and civilisation) and the rural areas – villages and cattle camps (also explicitly connected to tradition and backwardness). It was not only my informants who drew a distinction between rural and “townese” people, it was a frame that was used frequently in Lakes state (and perhaps further afield). In a collection of short stories written by pupils at Rumbek Senior Secondary school (edited by Carol Berger), a 19 year old man from Aweil in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal writes the following:

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[2] Interviewed 1.04.10 at Jou

If you are living in a rural area there may be conditions which prevent you from visiting a town, When you do finally go to town you may be surprised to see some different cultures or ways of living that are present in town. For example people in town enjoy parties, watch videotapes and television…However, “townese” girls may not respect people from the rural villages as well as they do outside the town. Girls and boys may not be happy unless they can settle in town for some months of the year, and then they become addicted to being “townese”. Some cultures are hated by the villagers. Likewise, townese also can be very astonished, if time allows them to come out for a look at the rural areas, because people living outside the town may not dress as well as the townese…In terms of general conduct, villagers are the most honest people who respect each other. For example if a girl or an old lady is to give food to her husband or any other elderly person she has to kneel down to give food to show her respect. This is very important to rural people. This practice is not, however, done in the town.” (Joseph Khon Ajith in Berger 2010: 84)

Another word often used, *tueny*, an apparently respectful way of describing anyone in a position of authority, hinted at some broader connections between town, the government and forms of power. In the late 1940s on a trip to Lakes State, the anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt recorded in his diary that Agar Dinka used the work *Tueny* to refer to British Officials.[3] Today, *tueny* typically refers to someone educated or working for the government, but could also refer to someone in the SPLA or a cattle trader. This person would typically live in town, be clean and dressed in western style clothes. The key condition for being *tueny* is having formal knowledge or authority. paravets are considered, by themselves and others, to be *tueny*. Paravets, as lifelong rural people, now being drawn in to the town and a formal system of veterinary care had to negotiate a powerful local distinction between the town and the cattle-camp. Although the majority had come to see themselves as partially or fully “townese”, the intermediary role was clearly ambivalent as they moved between town and the cattle camp in their personal and professional lives.

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[3] Godfrey Lienhardt’s Field Diary, Agar Notes 22nd December 1950. PRM Box 2/8

Urban vs Rural?

In making a distinction between town and cattle camps, my informants were drawing on a set of overlapping and mutually reinforcing constructions about the nature and meaning of towns, the government, modernity and related forms of authority. These contrasted with an opposing set of associations around rural 'traditional' (but not necessarily idyllic) life and cattle-keeping. Treating the town and the rural area as a dichotomy is partly a local distinction and partly an analytical construct. It is only useful as long as we recognise the ways the boundary is worked on and compromised. Studies of urbanisation and rural-urban distinctions come with intellectual baggage. Influential earlier work saw urbanisation in Africa as a teleological process towards, eventually, Western industrial modernity. (Ferguson 1999: 5) Much of this scholarship centred on a dualistic paradigm between the rural (tribal) and the urban (modern) which was taken as unequivocal. Ultimately these theoretical frameworks have not stood up to examination, as scholars have increasingly argued that traditional cultural forms are not necessarily in opposition to industrial society, and furthermore, that society does not make an evolutionary transition from one clear cut type of society to another. (Ferguson 1999: 91) Studies have also shown that the rural and the urban cannot be treated as clearly separate entities.(Gugler 2001: 22) Ethnographers have studied circumstances, like bars in Harare, where the rural and the urban are held in a single social and geographic space by their informants (Andersson 2001: 84), while others have rightly asserted that rural village life is just as "modern" as town life. (Piot 1999: 178) It is no longer viable to see societies governed by essentialising and over-determining binaries and many scholars have moved away from such rigid dichotomies. But at the same time, we need to take local distinctions seriously, even when they are framed in highly dualistic terms. For example, James Ferguson's informants in the Zambian Copperbelt extensively used a clichéd binary stereotype between urban and rural life that he argues was "not simply *compatible* with the modernist meta-narratives of social science; they were a local version of them". (Ferguson 1999: 84) Where the urban/rural distinction has considerable local meaning attached to it, this must be

accounted for, while at the same time we should be sceptical of the teleological image of modernisation it implies.

Scholars working in Lakes State and other Dinka speaking areas of Southern Sudan since the 1950's have recorded a local division between town and the rural areas and used a similar analytical distinction of their own. A brief overview of perspectives on town and the recent violent history of Rumbek during the second war shows that we need to treat town as a contested and ambivalent space.

The numerous small towns, like Rumbek, in the Nile flood plains of Southern Sudan have had significant transformative effects on the social and physical environment. (Burton 1988: 51) Their place in the history of Southern Sudanese is complicated, partly because their creation facilitated the exploitation and control of rural areas.(Burton 1988: 57) From the 19th Century, outposts for trading and raiding of slaves and ivory, called *zeriba*, were constructed by merchants in Southern Sudan – as far South as Gondokoro, near to the present day capital, Juba.(Burton 1988: 52) Rumbek town was originally a *zeriba* – established by the French explorer de Malzac – and had an estimated population of 2500 in 1880.(Burton 1988: 51,2) The traders who established these towns are recorded as being "virtual rulers of the districts in which they traded" and essentially proto-colonisers (Schweinfurth 1874:47Burton 1988: 52) By 1902, the British, who had captured Sudan from the Mahdists established military (and later administrative) centres at former *zeribas*, including at Rumbek. (Burton 1988: 53) Rumbek itself was the location of one of the earliest revolts against Anglo-Egyptian rule in the South: in 1902 Scott Barbour, the Anglo-Egyptian commander in the area was killed by an Agar Dinka ambush. (Mawut 1983: 21) Rumbek was the site of the only secondary school in Southern Sudan at Independence, a fact that is often used as an example of the underdevelopment and neglect of the South during the colonial period. (Poggo 2009: 29)

The Dinka scholar Francis Deng comments on a more historical division between the town and rural areas in very ambivalent terms.

> Before independence brought a more intensive relationship with the outside world…leaving the tribe was viewed as reckless self-exile, while migrating into town was a shameful act that invited slanderous songs against the person leaving. (Deng 1984:13 Burton 1988: 58)

Lienhardt asserts that by the 1950's towns and participation in urban life had been accepted, but only as a necessary evil

> [Dinka] saw that they needed enough of their own people capable of thinking in foreign ways, of meeting foreigners on their own ground while remaining Dinka in their loyalties, to understand and circumvent encroachments on their autonomy. (Lienhardt 1981: 86)

In the 1970's Burton, who conducted fieldwork in Yirol (Eastern Lakes State) saw towns as a microcosm of unequal power relations in Sudan. He describes Northern merchants verbally abusing Dinka and Atuot residents, who in turn did not engage with the market. The link between town and state was evident. An intriguing remark by one of his informants that, "the writing of the government does not go away" (Burton 1988: 57) indicates the long term implications of formal education, codification of customary law and literate bureaucracy centred in town.

The second war created yet more ambivalence around towns in the South. Different towns, at different points in the war periodically became places of refuge and places of danger. In Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, in the context of fighting, raiding and famine in rural areas, huge numbers of people were displaced to garrison towns. 150,000 went to Wau town in 1988, enduring terrible conditions and very high mortality rates. (Keen 1994: 86-7) Rural parts of Lakes were controlled by the SPLA since the early years of the war and did not suffer the level of fighting that had affected other parts of the South. However, the area was cut off from government services while restrictions on movement from government garrisons further South made these areas virtually inaccessible from the outside.(Duffield et al. 1995: 158-9) Unlike towns in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, which were awash with displaced rural people (Keen 1994: 86-7) Rumbek was almost completely deserted of civilians. A World Food Programme field team in 1993 was told by the Military authorities that only 16

civilians remained in town. The team itself counted 6 (WFP 1997: 10). Paravets also reported the total abandonment of Rumbek town during this period. In 1997 Rumbek town was taken by the SPLA, which was then controlled by the SPLM as *de facto* government. (UNICEF 1999: 12) Although fighting continued (SRRA 1998: 2) civilians began re-populating Rumbek town at this point. This history adds an extra layer of complexity and ambiguity around towns. To understand how paravets negotiate town must recognise the frequently violent history of Rumbek, as an official and symbolically important place of governmental and military power.

The town and the state

Induction into the service of the State is a crucial part of the background for Paravets' articulations of 'townese-ness'. Part of the ambiguity around the position of paravets is that as well as entering 'town' they have become part of the state. Both in the sense that town and the government are linked and that they are part of the veterinary service, which for most of its history in Southern Sudan has been a government institution. It is only possible to grasp the ambivalence of urban life by following the linked processes of becoming 'townese' and exposure to the state and the inherent contradictions negotiated by these cattle keepers as they move between town and cattle-camps in both professional and non-professional capacities. This allows us to consider how paravetss might be embodying or domesticating the state in a "peripheral" region of Sudan normally considered to be beyond or at the margins of the state.

Observers often characterize the State in Sudan is often as brutal and extractive, sometimes as absent all together. In Southern Sudan, the government has been frequently understood with considerable ambivalence: a powerful, but exploitative and untrustworthy outside force. (e.g.Mawson 1989: 73) Godfrey Lienhardt recalls that in the 1950's

> Southerners who had not received a European-style of education, and many who had, retained the image of 'the Government' as a foreign, oppressive organization imposed

> on them by force…Government itself…was some sort of mainly incomprehensible abstract entity really located in a distant place…which sometimes interfered in their lives (Lienhardt 1981: 190-1).

It is revealing that the Arabic word *hakuma* meaning government is used all over the South to mean *not only* the government but also the military, literate and bureaucratic cultures of schools and government offices. This sphere of government is seen as contrasting with an opposing social sphere – which Leonardi has dubbed "home", referring to rural life, private, family associations, or what would be thought of as "traditional" way of living. (Leonardi 2007: 394) Leonardi also suggests that since the 1970's the boundary between these two moral worlds has become increasingly unclear, as people move between then, moving into town, working for the government, joining the army etc. (Leonardi 2007: 395)

The state is institutionally and morally situated in town and the two are closely connected. Paravets become oriented towards the town in the training, and towards the state (they do, after all, work for the state veterinary service). They have to work through contradictions in their personal and professional lives that their positions entail, between culturally constructed ideas of town and rural life, concurrently within and outside the state.

Paravets Narratives and Experiences

Next I discuss paravets' perspectives on education and initiation, which where both used in the construction of difference between town and the rural areas. Being educated and unmarked are strongly associated with being 'townese'.

Education

> *A person cannot be educated and then go backward*[4]

[4] Paravet from Matangai Payam, interviewed in Rumbek town 26.03.10

Being educated is almost a defining feature of being "townese". Paravets are not educated but their veterinary training means they have obtained formal knowledge. Some paravets had enrolled in primary education since their training and they all sent all or some of their children to school. In this section I will discuss some of the meanings given to education and how it intersects with notions of urban life and the government.

Sharon Hutchinson records how Nuer informants in the early 1980's saw literacy as an important way to access and negotiate the powers of the government. For many to whom she later spoke in 1992, the most distressing consequence of civil war had been the breakdown of the local educational system. Without access to education her informants felt vulnerable to manipulation by the government and inherently inferior and ignorant. (Hutchinson 1996: 285) Education had similar associations in 2010 Lakes, and it was an important way through which paravets were constructing a boundary between the town and rural areas and defining themselves as "townese". Being educated exposed an individual to a broader formal world of government and town. It had transformative effects and afforded an individual social mobility and security, unavailable to those in rural areas:

> *Since my children are studying, when I will be old they will be working in offices so we will always stay in town. But rural people just keep on visiting the cattle camp till they are old*.[5]

Another way that education was contrasted with rural life came out when some Paravets took the transformative idea even further. Referring to recent cattle-raids they suggested that education would solve problems of insecurity as people would know the law and would not raid (PV9). Obviously, it is important to put these sentiments in perspective – and not necessarily take them literally. However, they are speaking to a set of ideas about education as a 'modern' and 'civilising' project, set against the idea of the rural, which for those in town, is becoming a 'backwards' and often violent and dangerous place.

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[5] Paravet from Mayom Payam, interviewed in Rumbek town 26.03.10

Education was seen by some Paravets as an explicitly political project. They saw how Southerners had been marginalized in colonial and post-colonial Sudan, and partly connected this to a lack of education. They closely linked education with aspirations for the political future of Southern Sudanese, implying it was partly a nationalist project and also reinforcing the connection between education, the government and political power. As one paravet put it:

> *My children and all Southerners want education. We want to educate our children so they won't suffer like we did. Our children will be educated then we will govern ourselves*[6]

Education is closely associated with the town. There are practical reasons for this as there are very few schools in rural areas. Evidence of general trends in education in Southern Sudan seem to correlate with the testimonies I collected that education is becoming an increasing priority. GOSS statistics record that in Lakes State the number of pupils enrolled in primary education has risen to 110,315 in 2009 from 54,136 in 2007. (GOSS 2009: 15) Rumbek Senior Secondary School is currently full to capacity. Teachers estimate that 700 new pupils will register for the next academic year, when they could comfortably take 250. Some teachers I spoke with thought students at RSSS primarily saw education as a way of gaining authority and were mostly hoping use education to attain office and white-collar jobs, which they saw as routes to money and leadership.[7]

But education also raises problems of balance. How do you ensure your children are *schooled* as well as being *educated* in a broader sense about keeping cattle? Many Paravets had some children in school as well as some looking after cattle. A common strategy was to start children at school older, when they have already spent time in cattle-camps

> *If people take their children to schools when they are very young then the culture will be lost. But if you keep the children in cattle camps until they are 15 or 18 they will not lose the culture*[8]

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[6] Paravet from Amonypiny, interviewed in Rumbek town 31.03.10
[7] Interview with Rumbek Senior Secondary School teachers, Teachers residence, Rumbek town 30.03.10
[8] Paravet from Matangai Payam, interviewed in Rumbek town 26.03.10

Some figures showing that only 2% of children actually *complete* primary education (SCUK 2010), suggest the balance of education is hard for many people to attain. Teachers at Rumbek Senior Secondary School complained that many students did not seem to them to take school seriously and often returned to rural areas.

Being educated is an important element in the cluster of factors associated with being "townese". Their own training allows Paravets to define themselves against those in rural areas and their commitment to educate their children (although they face a dilemma of schooling children or having them learn about cattle-keeping) is testimony to their re-orientation to the town

Scarification/Initiation

The practice of scarification, part of initiation into manhood and the age-set system (Hutchinson 1996: 270) and the removal of the lower incisors of both male and female children, were both rejected by paravets (although had undergone scarification themselves). paravets were not the only people rejecting the practice of scarification, and debates about the relevance of this institution have been going on in Southern Sudan since the 1940's.(Hutchinson 1996: 271)

One thing that is particularly relevant for being 'townese' is a connection made between education, life in town and the move away from scarification - which paravets strongly connected with backwardness and life in the rural areas. The most extreme comment on this was made by a paravet in Abriru. He had theorized that nerves are cut during the scarification procedure, rendering those who are initiated mentally impaired, which he suggested explained the propensity for raiding and general backwardness he saw in rural communities (PV9). No one else suggested anything as radical as this view to me. But a standard answer was that now they had learnt about town and the benefits of education they knew that scarification was unnecessary or "*means nothing*".

Informants didn't see being initiated and being educated as mutually exclusive. But, they did find it preferable not to mix the two. In discussions the assumption was that those children who would be educated would not be marked. For children who would be sent to look after cattle (and then perhaps sent for education later) the answer was not so simple. Informants remarked that they would not have those children marked either, but this required a bit more deliberation. As one paravet explains:

> *For me personally, I don't agree* [with scarifcation]. *My sons are not marked and their lower teeth are not removed* [neither are daughters]. *We were marked because we were not knowing the importance of town, but now we do. I was marked but I will not allow my children to be marked*[9]

One reason for not marking children, as the quote above exemplifies, there was a sense that people have moved beyond and learnt that they do not need to mark, especially if they are in town; and this is combined with an association of marking with ignorance. Paravets spoke of initiation as an aspect of Dinka culture, but it was something they associated with rural people – not with 'townese'

> *Some outside* [i.e. rural people] *are still being marked because to keep our culture...*(PV4)

Another significant reason for not marking is a conviction that in the current local political climate of Southern Sudan it is dangerous to be marked because it makes you easily identifiable as from a particular tribe or section. Scarification identifies origin to a particular Dinka section. Individuals fear going to big towns with their sectional identification prominently displayed on their foreheads incase they become victims of vengeance attacks. This is part of the reason they not want to mark their children for this reason.

Cattle Ownership and relying on relatives

[9] Paravet from Thou-Adual, Rumbek East interviewed in Rumbek town 24.03.10

So far I have spoken about the discourses and practices of paravets that drew sharp distinctions between the town and cattle-camp. But these two spheres are in other ways, considerably integrated, despite the initial sense of separation a foreign researcher has on visiting them and despite the discursive elaborations of difference. For a start, many paravets are on the periphery of 'townese'. They are not educated and many do not live in town all year round, as they go to villages to cultivate (C6). They also spend time in rural areas to carry out veterinary work. Paravets' grasp of town is actually quite compromised in this regard and they are negotiating a much more ambiguous subject position.

Ownership of cattle is an important way through which their connection to the cattle camp is materialized. All paravets I interviewed, even those that have taken up permanent residence in the town continued to own cattle. Take these cases:

A paravet supervisor from Rumbek centre payam; he is educated and lives in town, although as a child he lived in a cattle-camp. He is 27. His father is dead and as the eldest son he has assumed responsibility over his younger unmarried siblings. He has one brother at school in Rumbek and the other brothers and sisters look after his cattle in the cattle-camp near Rumbek. He is responsible for the cattle, although he does not look after them himself. He will make arrangements for bridewealth cattle for his brothers and allocating cattle when they start their families. He will distribute the cattle that come from the bridewealth of his sister's marriages among relatives and friends. When all his siblings are married he will send some of his own children to look after the cattle

> *because cattle are the source of everything and even though we are living in the town and being town people we cannot stop having cows*[10]

If his younger siblings need anything, like vaccinations or medicines for the cattle, extra food or clothes they will come to him. He will help them or instruct them to sell a goat or a young bull to get some money. They cannot sell any of the cattle without his permission. Although the milk produced does belong to them independently, they are at liberty to drink or sell it as they wish. During my stay in Rumbek 3 cows

[10] Paravet supervisor interview 31.03.10 at Oxfam, Rumbek Town

owned by this veterinary supervisor were 'lost', presumed stolen. He felt that he and other people who lived in town were particularly vulnerable to stock theft because they were absent from the cattle camps.

Another case in that of a female paravet originally from Jonglei state but now living in Rumbek town. She had been given some veterinary training before the second war by the old government system; although not trained by Oxfam she was assimilated into the system with the other paravets. She was managing the veterinary pharmacy at LLDO. She is one of the few people who receives a salary from the ministry for her work. She was originally from a rural part of Jonglei State but moved to Wau (where she received veterinary training) and then Rumbek in 1997 after the town was liberated by the SPLA. Her husband is a soldier in the SPLA and she has moved with his work. He was not receiving payment at the time and her salary was their main source of income. She is uneducated and illiterate, but two of her children are currently studying in Uganda. When asked if she depended on cultivation and cattle keeping she explained:

> *I am still carrying two sides because we cannot only practice town life, you go to the rural area to cultivate*[11]

She spends 20-30 days each year in a village just outside of Rumbek to cultivate. This is also the place where her cattle are kept, looked after by an uncle's son. The uncle's son has his own cattle and cannot sell her cattle but can consume or sell the milk they produce.

Through continuing cattle ownership, paravets living in town have a material and economic link with the cattle-camps. The material connection to the rural areas also continues through cultivation, as many paravets move out of town in the rainy season to plant. However, this connection, through cattle, to rural areas is more than just a material connection. Cattle have significance – and a depth of meaning that goes beyond a straightforward financial resource. Cattle are deeply embedded in social relations, as they are used for bridewealth payments and a range of other

[11] from an interview in Rumbek town 30.03.10

obligations. Owning cattle means more than just having material wealth, it is also about building and maintaining links with the family and community (Ferguson 1985:662). The continual negotiations, visits and independences that this system of cattle ownership entails

Conclusion

The position of paravets is complicated by a constellation of factors. On the one hand, their opinions about scarification and their commitment to education orient them towards being 'townese'. On the other, the reciprocal obligations of rural life are evident in the organization of cattle ownership. Through their discourse of urban and rural difference paravets are involved in creating and maintaining the distinction between the state and the community beyond the state. Because of their work, they are almost inescapably caught up in this binary as they become transformed, and are complicit in their own remaking as 'townese'. However, their experiences also help to show how this distinction is porous, as the continued economic and symbolic rural connection through cattle ownership shows. Ambiguities are exacerbated by the nature of the work itself: when seen in terms of a socially constructed binary, *veterinary work itself*, symbolically, becomes a challenge to the boundary between town and cattle camp. It is *both* about exposure to technical knowledge and modernity *as well as* rebuilding and maintaining the health of the rural community through animal healthcare. We could go further and say that for paravets, moving into town is paradoxically both an act of co-optation by, and reclamation of the state. Ultimately it is through their mobility, crossing the 'border' between state and society that they construct the local reality of the state

Paravets provide exciting possibilities for thinking about these broader political issues. It is precisely because they work on the interstices between different forms of power and knowledge that they generate creative responses to managing the state in local life.

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