

Between War and Peace. An Anthropologist in South Sudanese Juba

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Africa looks completely different nowadays than ten years ago. Enough to say, many protracted conflicts came to an end. Not a few countries became more democratic. Africa is not only stabilizing, but it is intensively developing. These processes can be seen the strongest in urbanized centers – the places, in which postwar life is being concerted. War past and multi-dimension modernizing changes are responsible for specific, ephemeral climate of such places, in the processual sense very close to the third phase of Arnold's van Gennep rites de passage – “trespassing rituals”. In this case there is also the association which another grand ethnologist: Victor Turner, and his theory on the ritual of the liminality.

Juba is a “luminal” city, always hung somewhere between crisis and stabilization, war and peace, chaos and order. In the case of this particular city, the so called “liminality” is being constantly intensified by very vivid urban development. Juba is currently in the phase of creation. During the recent civil war in Southern Sudan, Juba was a wretched town inhabited by a few thousand poor people. Now, on a daily basis it is transforming into a big city, the capital of autonomic South Sudan. Furthermore, It is also a place of intensive influence of my phenomena of transforming nature – e.g. globalization or informal commercial exchange.

In my paper I will present some reflections on my field researches in postwar Juba (2007-2008), including specificity of local culture, being

generated by multi-dimension liminality. This is highly important and influent for everyone nowadays living in Juba town – not excepting myself – an anthropologist undertaking an individual research. Because of this I had to correct the aims of my studies. Decadent, anty-structural reality had also a significant impact on my methodology. In my speech I will present, how cultural reality characteristic of postwar cities effects the anthropologist and his work.