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Conflict and social change on the south-west Ethiopian frontier: an analysis of Suri society

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This article examines changing configurations of regional conflict in south-west Ethiopia around the Suri people, a “beleaguered” ethnic group of about 24–25,000 people living on the Sudanese–Ethiopian border. The question will be asked around why the Suri, a small agro-pastoral people at the margins of state power centres, failed to develop solutions to growing problems of group conflict, challenges of state policy, the spread of small arms (since the late 1980s), and the lack of forming new local alliances with neighbouring groups. Social and cultural effects of violence are fragmenting Suri society and their regional position is weakened, in contrast to, for instance, the Nyangatom or Anywaa, neighbouring ethnic groups of comparable size, but who are more successful in the ethno-federal political structure of post-1991 Ethiopia. In addition, while the Suri are affected by new globalizing influences like tourism and evangelical Christianity, there is only a very slow movement towards, respectively, more inclusive identification – e.g., by religious conversion – or through the incorporation of new elements into their mode of life. The reasons for the present crisis of Suri society, which is partly one of livelihoods decline, failing identification and insecurity about the future, will be explored and the conditions of inter-ethnic instability in the region described. The role of the Ethiopian state as a political model largely incapable of accommodating difference and diversity will also be discussed in assessing the “fate” of smaller ethnic groups such as the Suri in politico-economically marginal zones with high levels of insecurity.

Keywords: conflict; agropastoralism; ethnic relations; Suri people; group alliances; violence

This paper addresses the challenges of survival and socio-political change among neighbouring ethnic groups in the Ethiopian borderlands, notably the Suri agro-pastoralists, amongst whom fieldwork was undertaken. While the emphasis of the account is ethnographic, general issues in the political ecology of “marginal” groups in autocratic states and in conditions of economic competition are also touched upon. The Suri1 people in south-west Ethiopia are one of the minority groups (about 28,000 people) that under Ethiopian federal electoral law have automatic representation in the Ethiopian House of People’s Representatives (HPR, the parliament) because they do not form a unit large enough for an electoral constituency. I begin with a telling incident that illustrates several key points of this paper.2

Since 1995 the seat for the Suri constituency in the HPR had been occupied by Guldu Tsedeke, a promising young Suri man and well accepted among the people themselves. He was re-elected with a large majority in May 2000 as an independent candidate (i.e., not

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affiliated with the ruling party), although he was later forced to become a member of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in the new HPR. In early January 2002, this MP was killed in a shoot-out in Suri country, when he had gone with a few friends to negotiate with a wanted Suri murder suspect. This was also the man who shot him. The usual taboo around not touching a mediator was flouted, and the family of the killer did not cooperate in apprehending him. The death of Guldu Tsedeke, an emerging Suri spokesman and the first one to more or less successfully mediate between the Ethiopian state and Suri society, is indicative of the unpredictability and the challenges of conflict and ethnic group survival in Ethiopia. While there was no political background to this killing, despite rumours that Guldu “was punished” for his opposition to the ruling party and his protest against local vote-rigging, it shows that insecurity and internal conflict in this small-scale, autonomous society is significant. With some local friends Guldu had set out to try and reason with the killer about the customary compensation payment for homicide that was due to the family of the victim. Instead, he was shot and the culprit fled.

The Suri, a peripheral group not well connected to the national state either politically or economically, show serious internal discord and social upheaval. They have not found an effective way of dealing with problems posed by increased group conflict and the influx of small arms, processes of authoritarian state formation, modernity, and locally manifested forms of globalization. Here I focus not only on the state impact on local societies like the Suri but also on the ramifications of changing alliances and identifications among and within the groups themselves. A debate on such changing realignments of small and “peripheral” groups in “ethno-federal” Ethiopia is timely and challenging. In the southern Ethiopian regional state (the “Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State”) there are, apart from a few large groups like Sidama, Wällaitta, Gamo and the Gurage, dozens of numerically smaller groups that form an essential part of the dynamics of the multi-ethnic heritage and current politics of Ethiopia. This paper will discuss the impact of conflict on a local society both ethnographically and in a wider perspective addressing the socio-political setting of conflict relations.

In the past fifteen years or so, a notable increase of violent local group conflicts has been evident in south-west Ethiopia: incidents have been recorded not only between certain ethnic groups and the state (like with the Hadiyya, the Maale, and the Me’en), but also among and between groups, for instance Anywaa (Anuak) and Nuer, Gedeo and Guji, Bodi and Dime, Mursi and Aari, Boran and Hamar, to name but a few. A number of these conflicts – which have left many hundreds of people dead – relate in part to customary patterns of rivalry and raiding that existed in the past. This link, however, is always made by government administrators and power holders to excuse their own inaction or inability to de-escalate the problems. It does not provide an explanatory argument for current fighting and the new forms it takes. First, the nature of conflict has significantly changed: more arms are involved, more people are being killed, and the rules of engagement are changing and those of reconciliation deteriorating. In addition, army or police in Ethiopia are rarely sent to contain the problem, and people know this, so fighting escalates. Thirdly, partly due to post-1991 state policies, there is an essential difference in the conceptualization of and response to conflict. Current group differences and disputes are now referred to, also by many local people, as being “ethnic”. This line of thinking is predictable and easy to resort to but, as a kind of cultural-essentialist argument, it is not convincing. People seem to fall unwittingly into the trap of adopting the state-sponsored discourse on ethnicity. While not denying the great importance of ethnic belonging and its social, emotional, and cognitive roots in the habitus of people, I contend that it neither constitutes
people’s entire social identity, nor provides a full explanation of their (political) behaviour and their choices.  

The basic theoretical question is always how and why conflicts of interest come to be seen exclusively in terms of “ethnic antagonism”, and whether it is helpful to act on such a perception. Cultural-essentialist views have been discredited in anthropology for quite some time. So this paper ties in with a theoretical debate on the dynamics of ethnicity and conflict, a field where several theoretical traditions dominate: the resource competition theory; symbolic theories referring to pre-existing cultural differences (the Geertzian approach in anthropology); and perhaps theories of hegemonism as a socio-cultural phenomenon. I would opt for the last line of thought, but would plead for extending it with what I would call humiliation theory. Here, prestige, honour, and identity issues are seen as cultural or social constructs that, though based on material differences and conflicts of interest, are the cultural-psychological models on which humans act and which become engaged in inter-group relations. Often images of stigma are involved: perceptions of low status that become structurally attached to certain communities. The above models of, and for, action are related to questions of belonging, of autochthony, and of survival, and as such obviously are also important in the dealings of local groups with the state. Especially in this context, where a new hegemonic state project is in full swing in southern Ethiopia, there is a need for a systematic analysis of the construction and dialectics of humiliation in the settings where it is produced.

Among the disturbing local conflicts in southern Ethiopia one can now also count those between the Suri and their neighbours. In these conflicts, no political-ideological agenda is evident. They are about survival, resources, local rivalries, and prestige. In this intricate dialectic, seen from the Suri viewpoint, there are several categories of problematic outsiders with whom they have differences: firstly, the Suri distinguish between the Dizi, the Me’en, and Ethiopian government representatives, and a second category of people who they consider to be their “real enemies”, like the Nyangatom, the Toposa (who are Sudanese), and the Anywaa. Quite another third category includes people related to them through language, culture, marriage bonds, and ritual relations: the Mursi and the Baale (which is not to say that they do not have problems with them).

In what follows, I briefly discuss the various levels of conflict and see whether there is a process of identity (re-)definition and of (re-)alignments going on, and whether there are prospects for a more peaceful development, whereby issues of sharing – of resources, peacemaking procedures, and ideas of development – can be encouraged. On this basis, it is possible to venture an answer concerning the future identity and patterns of alliance of minority groups like the Suri. The question is urgent because people are being threatened, wounded, or killed almost on a daily basis, and there is a deep feeling of insecurity in the Maji area.

**Suri society and economy**

The Suri live in a sensitive border area of Ethiopia and Sudan which has been a major venue for arms, cattle, slave, and ivory trade in the past. Even in recent years, Suri have purchased or traded arms from across the Sudanese border, and Ethiopian lands are subject to frequent raids from Sudanese ethnic groups like the Toposa, who wreak havoc among Suri cattle herds and have forced them to migrate to the north-east. The presence of an Ethiopian Fet’no Derash army contingent – a kind of rapid reaction force, initially of about 50–60 soldiers in 1997 and by 2004 raised to some 150 – dispatched by the central government a couple of years ago ostensibly to “protect” Suri from attacks from
neighbouring troops and keep the peace, has not made much impact. It seems more concerned with gathering intelligence and keeping the Suri in check, rather than moderating the actions of foreign invaders.

The Suri are an ethnic formation that, according to their oral tradition, emerged some 250 years ago in the Sudan–Ethiopia border area. Historically, the Suri were located around the Shulugui mountain (also known as Mt Naita, which is not a Suri name) on the border with Sudan, an area now occupied by the Nyangatom. Here their most important ritual places are located: the burial sites of their ritual leaders (the komorus), and the places of initiation of age-sets (done approximately every 25–30 years). Suri also used to get several vital ritual materials (plants, ritual paint, and coloured stone) from this area. The Suri see this place as the “stomach” (in Suri: kyengo) of their country; it forms the core centre of their cultural space, and now is also a lieu de mémoire. Their area of settlement is now about 50 to 60 kilometres to the north, close to the Dizi mountains and the western Akobo valley (see Figure 1). Their society is an agro-pastoral adaptation to a savannah lowland area of insecure rainfall. The Suri have mixed origins, with ancestry from neighbouring groups like Dizi, Me’en and Baale and perhaps others in the Sudan (Murle). The two sub-groups of the Suri – called Tirmaga and Chai – again have divergent stories of origin. The language of the Suri is a Nilo-Saharan one (from the “Surmic” sub-group) and much different from that of most of their neighbours. (Only Baale and Mursi have a similar language.) The Suri are historically also related to the Didinga, Narim, and Murle in Sudan.

The Suri form a kinship-ordered society, with an important role for patrilineal clans (for marriage exchange and ritual functions). Political authority is vested in a senior age-grade of elders, and in a ritual leader without executive power, the komoru, whose function embodies values of community peace and communication with the supernatural. Territorial organization is in the form of villages and of trans-clan herding units with cattle camps. Suri economic activities are rain-dependent cultivation, hunting and gathering, trading of alluvial gold, and especially livestock herding. The management and expansion of cattle, which is individually owned (although lineage agnates have a claim to it as well), but herded collectively, is the generative social mechanism and ideal in their society, explaining much of Suri behaviour. Cattle take a prominent place in daily life as a medium of exchange, as well as in cultural representations. Historically, the Suri have always practised cultivation and herding as complementary activities. In addition, they have practised hunting and gathering. They also trade, on a small scale, in livestock, pottery, gold, and game products with the people around them, including the highland villagers. They are therefore partly dependent on contacts with these neighbouring groups, more than they would like to admit.

In a cultural sense, Suri are acutely aware of their being different from other groups. They also cherish their virtually autonomous situation in a marginal border area. They have never felt stigmatized or inferior. Their cattle-herding way of life is preferred by them above, what they see as, the dull and toiling farming life of their highland neighbours like the Dizi and the villagers in Maji. There is an enduring resistance among the Suri to becoming settled peasant cultivators as the Ethiopian government would like to see. The Suri cherish egalitarianism and personal independence. Women are prominent in social life and can own cattle and small stock, but never participate in herding.

There is a discourse of “culture difference” between Suri on the one hand and Dizi and other highlanders on the other, which has become more influential in the past years. The Suri regularly express disdain for the “short-statured, toiling highlanders”, and for the absence of any aesthetic body culture among them. They see no charm in a lifestyle
Figure 1. Approximate location of the Suri and other groups in the Omo and Akobo Valleys.
without ceremonial duelling and, above all, without cattle and the entire cultural complex related to it (naming, cattle songs, dietary customs, ceremonial initiation, etc.). The cultural representations involved here also constitute Suri notions of personal dignity and achievement.

The Suri tend to act proudly and self-consciously, and as a rule shun the highland areas and state control as much as possible. They have some respect for the Me’en people and for the Nyangatom, although the latter are their traditional enemies. The greatest contrast and antagonism that they experience is with the agents of the state. This dates back to the moment of their incorporation into Ethiopia in the early twentieth century. In the imperial era they were seen as “roaming nomads” in far away borders areas, without much interest to the state. Under the Derg regime (1975–91) this perception did not change much, despite a new revolutionary rhetoric of equal rights, as they were considered part of a “primitive-communal” society with many “harmful customs” and a “lack of education and knowledge”. Actual contact with the government was not conducive to development and rapprochement. The last army post in the Suri area was abandoned in 1988, and the two primary schools were closed shortly after. In the later years of the Derg, the Suri became embroiled in conflicts of various kinds with virtually all of their neighbours: Me’en, Dizi, Anywaa and Nyangatom. There was only an uneasy alliance, or at least tolerance, with the Mursi on their eastern border.

Under the present EPRDF (Ehadig) government since 1991, the Suri have been redefined as a minority in need of development and education. But they continue to be seen as a group with “harmful customs” and a violent disposition. Their agro-pastoral way of life is considered inefficient and backward. Suri at present have been given their own woreda (district) within the Bench-Maji Zone. In the woreda they from the large majority, although in the south several thousand Nyangatom people have settled, notably around Mt Shulugui and to the east in the plains. Since 1994, there has been a local “Surma Council” (Surma Mikir Bet) with eleven Suri members and a changing membership. The places on this council are coveted because of the government salary they bring. Since 1994, the woreda has some government offices in the small village of Kibish, near an old airstrip dating from the late 1960s when several foreign missionaries lived there. Non-Suri do not like to serve in this zone and especially in the woreda, nor is it without risks. In the past eight years, several police officers, teachers and agricultural agents have been killed in shootouts and brawls in the Suri area, and this is not even counting those killed from the local Suri, Me’en, and Dizi people. Transport facilities are bad, the climate hot and malarial, and remuneration is not noticeably higher than elsewhere in the country. The only attraction is that it facilitates (illegal) trade in alluvial gold (sold in Addis Ababa via middlemen), which the Suri pan from local rivers and sell locally to outsiders.

In the last decade, the groups in the Maji area were more drawn together in a common political arena, confronted with a new regional policy and a formal recognition of “ethnic rights” by the new government. But this has led neither to visible socio-economic improvements nor to a more peaceful settlement of disputes. In some cases even the appeal of people to their own presumed ethnic identity and rights has tended to reinforce conflict, and in some respects becoming “too equal” with others has generated more problems itself.

External conflicts
In southern Ethiopia, the Suri people take an exceptional place. Living in a remote border area, as largely autonomous agro-pastoralists, they have built up a “reputation” of trouble
and violence among their neighbours. Suri feel that they are masters in their own land – the lowlands south-west of Maji town, extending into Sudan – and they recognize no overlords. They know that the Ethiopian government and its army are powerful, but also that it is difficult for the state to control the Suri in their own remote lowland region. Neither do all Suri pay taxes, nor is it possible for the government to maintain the strict monopoly on the use of violence. The Suri self-perception of independence and autonomy is the basis of their vigilant self-defence and of their preparedness to use force. In this, they are not exceptional compared to many other East African pastoral groups. The nature of the pastoral economy almost by definition brings them into conflict with neighbouring groups, notably the Nyangatom and Toposa. But in the past there used to be social contacts with these groups, bond partnerships, some trade, and a code of fighting. This pattern of interaction is now gone: Nyangatom and Suri do not meet, except for some of their young (zonal) leaders in Awasa (the capital of the Southern Region), when they are called there to attend policy meetings. These young leaders, who are drawn into the agenda of the ruling party, do not yet have much influence on the rank and file of their peoples, although the zonal and the regional authorities have been able to call several peace meetings.

At present, group relations in the Maji area are marked by tension and violence. This holds for: a) Suri–Nyangatom (aim: territory, guns, cattle); b) Suri–Toposa (aim: territory, cattle); c) Suri–Anywaa (aim: gold, money); d) Suri–Dizi (aim: territory, cattle, girls, clothes, money); e) to a lesser extent the Suri have problems with the Me’en people, who live on the escarpment east of the Akobo Valley and Maji – the aim here is also to get cattle, guns, or girls.

In the conflicts with these groups there are obvious material interests, but also immaterial ones like “prestige” and fighting feats to attain “status” within their own peer group. I do not elaborate on this, but it is an element not to be neglected in a complete analysis of Suri (and other groups’) violent performance. In their conflicts with Me’en, villagers, and especially Dizi, the aim is also to intimidate. In their confrontations with the Toposa, Nyangatom, and often also Anywaa, the Suri are usually the losers. I will comment on two of the most important conflictual relations: between Suri and Nyangatom and Toposa; and between Suri and Dizi. I also discuss in more detail the relations between the Suri and the state.

**Suri and Nyangatom and Toposa**

The Suri call the Nyangatom and the Toposa both “Bume”. The latter are two allied peoples and speak the same East Nilotic language. They have, since the mid-1980s, been encroaching on Suri lands. Nyangatom have driven the Suri out of their core area at the Shulugui (Naita) and the T’amudir hills and usurped their best pastures and water holes. Before the early 1980s, the Nyangatom (some 13,000) were at the receiving end of Suri violence. The Toposa (about 75,000 people) were located further west in Sudan and, before the 1980s, were not much engaged with the Suri. The migration of Kenyan Turkana up north, as well as the chaos of the Sudanese civil war, has pushed the two groups into Suri country. In the early 1990s, the Toposa obtained a regional edge as they were formed into a so-called “tribal militia” and were well armed by the Sudanese government. Toposa raids occur almost every one or two months in Suri country. In recent years, the Nyangatom are less involved. The regional Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People’s Region (SNNPR) government has stimulated efforts to arrive at reconciliation between these two Ethiopian groups. A first effort was made in December 2000 in Mui Park to get people to stop mutual raiding and killing, but it was without success. Another big meeting was organized in May...
2005 in Dirga, an area between Suri and Nyangatom settlements, where a peacemaking ritual was held and speeches and peace promises were made. However, the deal was broken again by a raid in December 2005, probably by Toposa (seen by Suri as one and the same with the Nyangatom: both are called “Bume” by them), and everything reverted to its old state. But other efforts at peacemaking in 2007 and 2008 did lead to a significant change of relations on the ground, and thus the pattern of enmity and distrust is diminishing.

Due to the change in alliances, there is pressure on Suri “resources” related to the pastoral economy which was not there before. But it is not only resource pressure that causes problems for the Suri way of life. The Chai Suri (the largest group) have been robbed of their prime ritual places around Shulugui and also feel thwarted and impoverished in a cultural sense. Indeed, when talking about the recent past, almost all Suri recall with nostalgia the life at Shulugui, and in public debates and private conversations express their frustration at not being able to go back. The loss of their ritual heartland to a major competitor, the Nyangatom, has had an effect on Suri identity: as they can no longer bury their chiefs (komoru) in the traditional areas of burial and can no longer initiate their age-grades and komorus in the traditional (uninhabited), places that were seen as barari – having a certain power and awe – they feel their group continuity and way of life is under threat. This loss has led to a persistent feeling of “exile”, notably among the chiefly Komorteni clan (although the younger generation of Suri leaders, who are much closer to the new state authorities and are being educated in state schools, are losing this feeling).

Suri and Dizi
For about eighteen years, there has been a notable increase in violent incidents with the Dizi. Dozens of Suri and hundreds of Dizi (a population of some 26,000 people) were killed in armed incidents. Some of the worst of these were a massacre of 43 Dizi people in the village of Kärsi, in 1990, as revenge for the killing of a Suri man in a fight with a Dizi, and a similar killing in Kolu in 1993, with 35 Dizi killed including the chief of Kolu. The murder by Suri youngsters of three young women, later in 1993, was also deeply resented by the Dizi. The same year the Suri raided the big Dizi village of Jeba and killed 23 Dizi and three policemen. In recent years, attacks on Adikiaz, Jeba, Kolu and even the outskirts of Tum, the former district capital, have left dozens of people dead. For example, in November 2003, six Dizi people were killed by Suri near Tulgi. In recent years, more violence occurred within Suri society, such as at markets, where alcohol consumption leads to frequent shootouts and deaths. The list is long, and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice. State violence has also increased since 1991, with a major event occurring in the shape of a retaliatory attack by the EPRDF militia on the Suri after two soldiers were shot in a fight near Mui in the Omo Park: in October 1993 more than 200 Suri, mainly women and children, were killed. Since that incident, many other conflagrations occurred, but mainly against Dizi, Anywaa, Me’en, and inter-village traders. Until today the basic problem of inter-group relations and state–local community relations has not been properly addressed. The rapid reaction force that was stationed near Tulge in the Suri area since 1998, in a bid to establish the “state monopoly of violence” and supposedly to defend them against attacks from (Sudanese) Toposa and Nyangatom, did not function as such, and meanwhile soldiers are often simply a nuisance to the local population. There are also indications that these soldiers are engaged in illegal trade in (alluvial) gold and other items. Some improvement has been achieved in the past three years through increasing the number of Suri in the local police and militia force. In addition, the repeated attempts at state mediation between the groups may result in better relations on the level of the new
leadership, as they are in more frequent contact in the regional government and parliament.

The increased tensions with the Dizi (and also with Me’en) are directly related to the breakdown of the Suri–Nyangatom relationship that occurred in the last years of the Derg regime in 1988–90. It appeared to be a case of displaced aggression. No longer capable of properly retaliating and regaining their cattle from the “Bume”, the Suri sought replacement from the Dizi. As the Dizi are an ill-armed sedentary population and have some cattle, they are an easy target for Suri raiders. Dizi do not venture into the lowlands in pursuit of the Suri. They are a very frequent victim of cattle theft, raids on houses and fields, and ambushes on the roads. In view of the past relationship between Suri and Dizi, this development is alarming. The Dizi are ancient settled cultivators in this area with a hierarchical chiefly society. Suri arrived later from the south and entered into contact with them. Both Dizi and Suri traditions maintain that their leading families share common descent and cannot intermarry, although the common people could. Historically, both groups had a kind of ritual alliance whereby the Dizi chiefs were recognized as having rainmaking powers. In times of drought the Suri went to the Dizi chiefs to plead and pray for rain, and a ceremonial sacrifice of a black ox was offered. When the Suri had a food shortage, cattle disease, or other problems, they were permitted to enter the Dizi areas. Both groups still have economic exchange (cattle, pottery, iron products, grain, and garden crops), but relations have steeply deteriorated in the last decades. For example, inter-marriage has virtually stopped and the ritual alliance was no longer upheld. The Suri also see the Dizi as too closely allied to the state. Numerous efforts at mediation, including a few ceremonial reconciliation meetings – with a cattle sacrifice, cutting of the peritoneum and a joint meal – have been tried in the past fifteen years, but none has held for long. A new approach in recent years has been to work through local Suri and Nyangatom representatives employed by the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) authorities in the regional capital Awasa and with Suri, Nyangatom, and Dizi members of the national parliament in Addis Ababa, and this shows some success.

Suri and the state

Apart from the tension with neighbouring groups, it is thus obvious that Suri still have serious problems with the state, which means specifically with local administrators and government agencies. This relationship has been tenuous for most of its history. Suri first met representatives of the Ethiopian state in the form of the imperial troops entering the area in 1898 under ras Wolde-Giorgis Aboyye, one of Emperor Menilik II’s generals, but did not enter into contact with them. Under the rule of this emperor (1889–1913), the autonomy of the Suri area was condoned, although Ethiopian northerners who came to settle in Maji and Jeba villages made excursions into the Suri territory for hunting, trading, and occasionally for raids of cattle and people, especially from the Tirmaga sub-group. Under Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–74), a cautious policy of rapprochement was started. Some administrative posts and primary schools were set up and, for a few decades, most of the Suri paid taxes. In terms of group relations, this period was relatively quiet, apart from the usual cattle raiding.

The Derg period is universally seen by local people as one of crisis and violence. The 1970s and 1980s, however, saw the emergence of wider regional tensions in northern Kenya and southern Sudan, as well as drought and food crises. In other words, certainly not all problems were due to government policies, although group relations between Suri, Nyangatom and Dizi deteriorated during the Derg era, and there was an increase in
armed incidents. Government efforts to mediate did not succeed, and its drive to recruit local young men for the Derg army fighting in northern Ethiopia–Eritrea was deeply resented. Suri people were also victims of occasional violent reprisals from government forces, which deepened distrust toward the state.29

Under the EPRDF regime since 1991, efforts were made to mediate in local conflicts,30 in combination with an increased army presence in the area. EPRDF forces in 1991 and 1992 took a cautious approach and tried to negotiate and create a dialogue with the people. They did not take punitive action after cases of Suri–Dizi violence (leading the Suri at first to qualify the soldiers as “women”, of whom they should not be afraid). But a series of incidents in 1993, in which Suri launched significant attacks on Dizi settlements in Kolu, Dami, and Adikyaz and, more importantly, killed several EPRDF government soldiers in the Omo National Park and in Kibish, led to strong retaliatory action by the army. I have already mentioned the confrontation in October 1993, in which an estimated 220 Suri died. Subsequently the violence diminished, but did not disappear. Suri antipathy and indifference toward the government (any kind of government) remained strong, although several young Suri males have been successfully coopted by the government in new administrative structures and played a role in peace negotiations.

Since 1995 the Suri have had their own local council, and political cooption and negotiation by the state continues with the gradual formation of a new group of young Suri leaders who have received jobs in local and zonal administration. Even though they may be coopted into a state structure where they have little real influence, the Suri now do have some voice in the higher echelons of the state. They are formally represented in the local and regional administration and in the national parliament on the basis of an ethnic quota system. In this sense, their peripheral position as an “ethnic minority” or “nationality” has now become a kind of privilege, because other local people – for instance, the dispersed descendants of northern settlers in southern Ethiopia living in the villages – are not politically represented.

**Internal responses to violence within Suri society**

While the Suri have often inflicted untold suffering on their neighbours – as with the massacres of Karsi village in 1990 and Kolu in 1993, the gunning down of the young girls in 1993 in Adikyaz, and the massacre in the Me’en area in early 2000 – the effects of such persistent violence reverberates within their own society. The dynamics of violence have an underestimated and unforeseen effect on the social structure of such small societies.31 Among the Suri, external crisis did not generate more internal solidarity against enemy groups; it seems to have had the opposite effect. First of all, the boundary between the two sub-groups Tirmaga and Chai became more pronounced. Furthermore, Suri men fight among each other, over women, over cattle gained in a raid, over compensation payments, to settle scores at duelling places or while performing preliminary rituals for a raid. Often, excessive alcohol use (the local Suri beer géso and araqé) is the trigger, and when automatic rifles are available, they are used. In all of such cases there are bereaved – wives, children, and parents – who mourn and demand redress (with the threat of vengeance killings always close; see Figure 2). Empirical behavioural evidence such as lower birth or child survival rates, family fragmentation, malnourishment, feelings of insecurity and grief, as well as effects like loss of labour power and loss of cattle due to more compensation payments to be made, reveal that the psychological toll of killing and death is high (See Figure 3).32

The frequency of grief inhibits people’s long-term well being and leads to what is called
Figure 2. Suri women and children have become vulnerable under deteriorating security conditions in Suri society (photo: J. Abbink).

Figure 3. Suri men discussing a community problem. All people in the picture were affected by violence in the past years: the old man on the right died about one year after his eldest son was shot dead, the man in the front was killed by a fellow Suri and the man holding a stick lost two brothers due to violent death and was himself repeatedly accused of killing (photo: J. Abbink).
post-traumatic stress disorder. Married women especially have been increasingly voicing their concern and arguing with men over the new levels of violence.

The neighbouring Dizi, in their search for explanation of Suri violence, often say that: “the Surma don’t care about human life, it is nothing for them to lose someone”. But, as evident from often heard private complaints, the Suri survivors do feel the loss, and they do see the problem, but they do not know how to stop the violence. The young men have guns, carry them around everywhere, and use them. A reconstructed image of the Suri male as an independent, assertive, gun-toting individual afraid of no one and with the capability to use force to realize his aims, has settled in Suri society. This new “masculine” identity, which reinforces gender oppositions and conflicts, is a far cry from the former Suri “warrior” persona of the old days, as someone who defended the herds, who respected a code of the proper use of violence, and who did not kill women and children on raids. Suri elders and also the Chai komoru, who are aware of the tragedy unfolding among their people, disapprovingly cited to me some years back the ugly incident of a mass killing by young herders of cattle captured by the Nyangatom. When the Suri saw they could not recover the animals taken by the Nyangatom, hoping to hit the retreating raiders between the animals, they machine-gunned a large number of the animals from a distance. This was an unprecedented event.

Violence, or the threat thereof, as an almost daily occurrence has imprinted itself on the minds of the young generation; children see their parents or relatives falling away and their households crippled by the loss of labour power, affection and social support. As Chisholm has pointed out, there is a strong negative impact of such life-history experiences. Some of the negative effects are very obvious in social life. I briefly mention several domains.

The topic needs further research, but it can be said on the basis of Suri life stories gathered that in the wake of the newly articulated ideals of individualized masculinity, kinship ties are getting weaker in that people in trouble receive less support from their kin. Likewise, the pressure on the bride wealth system has increased: not only have guns entered the system as part of the deal, but also arguments about the exact division are more acute. There is a growing demand by “wife-giver” clans to receive more and faster as well. Thus, affinal alliances are under pressure: husband-wife relations become more strained and a tendency for males to neglect spouses and children becomes visible. Women with children are forced to use staple grains (sorghum and maize) for brewing alcoholic ge’so beer, often for sale rather than for feeding their own family properly. The health and nutritional situation of Suri children is, as a consequence, often precarious.

Clan and lineage relations are also under strain. As my family case studies in two Suri villages in the 1990s and subsequent interviews with Suri spokesmen in Addis Ababa in 2003 and 2006 suggested, the customary requirement to pay compensation cattle in case of accidental or wilful homicide became increasingly contested. As a result, the threat of feuding between the group of the victim and the killer – that always used to be “bought off” with the compensation payment – has correspondingly grown. There are many unresolved feuds today. Some of them even extend into the kin group of a ritual leader: one komoru called Wolezoghi (from the Muge’i clan of the Tirmaga) was killed more than a decade ago, but the case – itself unprecedented in that a komoru was killed by a fellow Suri – was still not resolved by 2007. Agnates of both perpetrator and victim regularly kill a member of the opposing clan, and old ones are even revived. A telling example occurred in December 2003, when the brother of a man killed seventeen years ago by a Suri man without warning killed his school-going teenage son in Kibish town.

The crisis in the age-grade system, specifically that of the loss of authority of the reigning age-grade of elders over the youngsters, was evidence of internal disarray.
core relationship between the grade of the unmarried young men, the so-called “warriors” (or tégay, i.e. uninitiated) and that of the junior elders, called rórà, was disturbed because of the younger grade getting weapons and venturing out on their own. Since about 1989, Suri males obtained automatic rifles (M-16s, AK-47s, GM3s, and others). This had a big social impact. The youngsters can ward off claims of the elders, and even stall their own initiation, because the new age-grade identity would mean a responsibility they do not yet want. They have extended their period of youthful exploits such as using a gun.

From personal observation I can say that ceremonial duelling events have become more aggressive and dangerous occasions, as the duelling grounds regularly are arenas for shootouts, although these have nothing to do with the duelling itself, as it is a strictly regulated male combat sport among Suri of different herding units.

The position of the ritual leader or komoru still exists, but he is less heeded than in the past. As the Chai komoru Dolleti V (Londosa), one of my key informants, repeatedly told me, he was only a figurehead and had no authority to call people to order, least of all the young males. The Chai komoru often said that a policy of ignoring them and forcing them to be initiated into the adulthood age-grade might help. Among the Tirmaga, komoru authority is at its weakest. The Chai komoru Dolleti, who died in July 2001, was himself an authoritative person and had at least some restraining influence. After his death he was replaced by a “caretaker” komoru – one of his brothers, who died in 2005 – but an official successor was yet to be installed by 2008, reducing the authority of the position even further.

In addition, an interesting cultural phenomenon is that the force and relevance of Suri ritual in itself is contested, especially by youngsters. While Suri society is highly ritualized where all significant social relations and statuses are established by ritual acts, in recent years the force of said acts is waning. This was most readily apparent in the decade-long delay of the initiation ceremony for the senior age-grade, as well as the cleansing ritual for homicide when an enemy group member is killed and which requires the sacrifice of livestock – which is less strictly adhered to.

Among the Suri today there is a pervasive sense of disruption and disintegration created by internal violence. This is deeply regrettable, especially to elder Suri, and is seen as more problematic than the external violence. Perhaps people now fully realize that their society had always been ridden by latent tension and strife between kin groups and individuals. The system worked when the authority and role of the leading age-grade and the komoru was still respected. But due to dramatic conflict between Suri and the neighbouring pastoralists (especially Nyangatom and Toposa), new wealth through the gold trade, and the unforeseen aggressive power of youngsters of the tégay grade, it has crumbled. The aforementioned killing in 2002 of their MP Guldu Tsedeke was another, and most acutely felt, illustration of this crisis of internal violence.

**Tourism and missions**

The story so far has made it clear that the Suri are not an isolated population but had contacts (though limited) within the broader regional setting and with Ethiopian society. At present they are caught up in an inexorable process of incorporation into a wider field of forces constituted by: a) the regional-international conflicts in northern Kenya (Turkana–Nyangatom–state conflicts) leading to ethnic migrations to the north; b) the ongoing Sudanese civil war, leading to a flow of arms and ammunition and also to population movements; and c) tourism and missionary influence. Here, I comment briefly on the latter. Together with the Mursi, the Suri are sought out by mainly Western tourists as one of the few “really primitive tribes” still to be found in the African countryside – they
are advertised as such in certain travel agency brochures. The encounter with tourists is aggressive: in the absence of a shared language or a mutual interest in each other’s humanity; and because the principle of reciprocity is flouted during these encounters, the meetings are abrasive experiences for both parties.44 The Suri do not really accept the tourists, and try to exploit them. They have not developed a relationship of simple commercial exchange (of pictures, goods, and cash), but reproduce, time and again, an emotionally charged confrontation where the Suri express their contempt for the foreign “other”. The tourists in their turn want to see their “authentic, primitive tribe” but rarely want to be drawn further into their way of life, except in the form of take-away photographs. This situation of “double refusal” is rare in Africa.45

Since 1994 there has been a mission station in the small village of Tulgi, in the Tirmaga–Suri area, staffed by American and Ethiopian missionary workers. They have a programme of education, agricultural instruction, infrastructure development, medical care, and bible translation. There is a local church with regular services. The mission teaches by example, and in the past years a community of about 200 Suri converts has emerged. It is too early to say what the long-term impact of the Christian mission will be on the Suri. A previous missionary effort in the 1960s evaporated in the 1980s under the Derg regime and has left little legacy. But in the field of Suri local leadership and cultural orientation there are significant changes in the making. The Suri also are reflecting upon how the Christian belief will impact upon the traditional notions and rituals to which they remain attached. However, the need for change is felt, and the attraction of the Evangelical message of peace and reconciliation, of a “way out” of crisis, as well as the promise of social and economic connections to a wider global community of believers, is recognized.

A non-adaptive system?

The Suri have a crisis between generations, an excess of small arms, a lack of internal peace between clans and lineages, and live in permanent insecurity with regard to raiding threats, rainfall, and food supply. They did not succeed in forging minimal alliances with neighbouring groups who share the natural and cultural space with them (such as cattle pasture, water holes, forest items, game, cultivation sites, and the old ritual burial and initiation places). Neither were they successful in getting the new regional government to take their problems seriously or to secure adequate representation on the level of the regional state (in Awasa). This is now improving, but the number of Amharic-speaking46 or educated Suri is still small. No doubt their being largely monolingual has inhibited communication with other groups, villagers, and state agents.

So Suri society and economy are “beleaguered” and under pressure from all sides. In the south and west, the Nyangatom and Toposa are encroaching steadily and limit Suri pasture areas, even within the official “Surma woreda”. Most Suri herds (of both Chai and Tirmaga) have moved up north into the less favourable western Akobo Valley and near the eastern flanks of the Boma Plateau. In the east they are confined by the Dizi mountains and government pressure, in the north by the Me’en (Tishana), who will not allow them to move in. While the Suri make raiding incursions into both areas, territorial expansion, settlement, or herding there is not an option. In this respect, Suri are in a very difficult situation. Their response to crisis has been one of disengagement, militant self-defence, and violent entrepreneurship (the youngsters). The Suri fear the government will threaten their cattle wealth, and will not submit to rules and regulations that impair the state and growth of their livestock or their autonomy. Theirs is also a fight for respect to retain their identity as very few peoples in Ethiopia have been able to do. Their remote and inhospitable
environment has so far helped them to keep up this attitude, but as this natural space is shrinking, they will be forced to consider other options.

In the past the various groups in the Maji region were loosely allied and had open boundaries. Groups co-existed in simultaneous relations of violent incidents (raiding) and peaceful exchange of goods. Persons had bond partnerships and could be adopted as members in other groups. For example, some Tirmaga-Suri clans have Dizi and Me’en ancestry. The existence of shared rituals and codes of violent performance about which informants talk when referring to the “pre-Kalashnikov era” before the early 1980s, suggests that there was a kind of regional “ethno-system” that in some way prevented excesses of violence between groups (although this is not to suggest that Suri society previously was a harmonious, integrated society). Alongside the cattle raiding, homicide, and armed clashes that occurred, there were accepted ways of resolving and compensating for conflict. This system is known from other areas in the Ethiopian south. At present, such a system – which, however, should not be idealized either – is lacking, or at least in steep decline, and an alternative adaptation based on indigenous principles but geared to modern conditions is not yet in sight.

Furthermore, the Ethiopian state has not succeeded in replacing the previous system with one of equitable dispute resolution or legal redress. Its policies are highly prescriptive, imposed, and rely on the ultimate use of force. As we know, the post-1991 regime started a policy intended to empower local “ethnic groups” by engaging their representatives in local-level government, self-administration and education, although state agents retain control and follow their own agenda of political cooption. The state is working through (self-created) loyal ethnic elites connected to the regional and national level, and is not aiming at grass-roots decision making. The Surma Council is thus also, predictably, used as a conduit for implementing national policy (in the same way that the previous regime used the districts and peasant associations).

Changing alliances?
The question as to the future “fate” of the Suri is a relevant one. If they do not succeed in the rehabilitation of their social relations and in restoring their measure of unity as a group under new local leadership, they will have a hard time surviving as a pastoral economy and as a people. Their economic base, their autonomy, not to speak of their group pride or identity, will come under great pressure, and they will remain a pawn in other peoples’ games, including more powerful neighbours and, of course, the state authorities.

To summarize, the forces of change that reshape their society at present are: a) persistent tensions and violent exchanges with neighbouring groups; b) the Protestant mission, introducing the globalizing narrative of Christianity and trans-ethnic solidarity; c) the slowly expanding system of state political surveillance, local/zonal administration, and of education (primary schools); and d) material and infrastructural developments: the need for periodic food assistance and disease control, trade needs, monetization, and the opening up of the area by new roads. The simple fact of a new access road to the Suri area will have major consequences. A major all-weather road was completed from the town of Mizan Tafari to Tum, and on to Kibish, the new capital of Surma woreda, with extensions planned further south to the Nyangatom area. This will do more than anything to “open up” further the Suri area to external influences: state representatives, traders, missionaries, “development” people, and tourists, and will include the arrival of HIV/AIDS.

So the Suri will not be left alone. Their area has some strategic position along an 80 kilometre stretch of the Ethiopian–Sudanese border, and a growing economic relevance
because of gold trade, game resources, and the potential of tourism in the two national parks (Omo and Mago Parks, developed with a major EU-sponsored initiative in the past years). While there is no doubt that Suri society and identity will be vulnerable to the hegemonic projects of the various categories of “stakeholders”, they will be forced to redefine their role in the region and to survive as agro-pastoralists through the forging of partnerships and alliances with other groups in the Maji region. This area remains a vast realm of several ethnic/social groups that are mutually dependent.

There is no doubt that these various hegemonic processes will reproduce the images of backwardness and “primitiveness” about Suri among the various parties, most notably tourists, developers, and the state. A cultural boundary of difference, if not condescension, will be confirmed. A significant indication here was the prohibition by the Ethiopian authorities of Suri ceremonial duelling a few years ago, because it was “too violent”. For the Suri, such a prohibition – which was not heeded – is a humiliating gesture. It foreshadows a complex, evaluative debate about “good and bad culture”, and also about the right to continue valued traditions that define people’s identity vis-à-vis others. Due to the “collectivization” of identity and of political rights in Ethiopia, these issues will be even more contested in ethnic terms. The ethnic administration model in Ethiopia, both rhetorically and practically, is thus crucial in re-shaping perceptions of the importance of culture difference, re-defining group relations, and creating new forms of collective self-consciousness, whether these are based on the “facts” or not.

To a great extent, Suri chances lie in exploring and building alliances and shared concerns with other groups in the Maji area; with the Dizi, Mursi, and Me’en in particular, as they had alliances in the past and are interdependent today. Such a block of more than 150,000 people might try to develop joint efforts around local problems of resource sharing and economic activity, hold periodic consultations, start projects of phased disarmament, and enhance mutual cultural exchange (e.g., joining each other’s collective rituals, which in fact was regularly done in the past). This is a daunting task ahead in view of the current tensions and distrust, but only then these groups will be meaningful vis-à-vis other regional players. The Ethiopian state should play a back-stage role, and not impose its model of “development” and authoritarian political power, but only facilitate and work towards partnerships on the basis of equity, investments and a working legal structure. While such an approach would be in line with its officially declared policy of “ethnic rights and autonomy”, it is likely that the state will continue interfering and prescribing governance, “peace” and “development” in its own characteristic way. However, on the level of the newly emerging local elites (of Suri, Dizi, Me’en, Nyangatom, etc.), coopted by the federal state, such new understandings of shared interests and cooperation may eventually be built, perhaps with the help of the emerging “trans-ethnic” Christian community. Among the various ethnic groups, innovative leadership and the restoration of channels of peaceful negotiations and reconciliation rituals are necessary for it to happen: this means looking for continuities amidst change.

Currently, the small-scale societies in south-west Ethiopia are in a process of transition from ritualized, kinship-ordered social structures to territorial ones, partly defined by economic processes and by state bureaucratic discourse. This transition will lead to fragmentation and dispersal and to horizontal realignments among social strata of various ethnic groups and to normative pressure on their cultural traditions, thus subverting the model of ethno-cultural identity and organization that was proclaimed to be the future of the ethno-federal state. Trans-group alliances between group elites, based on concrete common interests, a politics of compromise, and in tune with the cultural commitments of the ethnic groups’ rank and file, will be a way forward. But this paper suggests that social
and political conditions at present are not conducive for these kinds of alliances to happen any time soon. The killing of Guldu Tsedeke was only one indication of the fact that internal divisions and a lack of leadership are great problems in Suri society, as well as among several of their neighbours, and will not be easily solved.

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Notes
1. Or “Surma,” as they are often called by outsiders, including the Dizi. I have treated other aspects of Suri society in various other papers (see list of references).
2. Data for this paper comes from fieldwork in the Suri area (1991–9), interviews in Addis Ababa during research visits in 2000–7, and correspondence with friends in Ethiopia.
3. For a useful survey of core issues, see Nagengast, “Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State.”
4. James et al., Remapping Ethiopia; Turton, Ethnic Federalism.
5. Abbink, “New Configurations.”
9. This awaits more investigation and evaluation in a comprehensive, critical manner, despite the spate of papers and articles published in recent years. The emphasis in most work has largely been on the formal political developments and policies, not on their effects on, and “appropriations” by, the common people.
10. For an excellent historical discussion, see Kuper, Culture: The Anthropologists’ Account.
12. There is a growing body of literature on this theme, but a systematic theory linking psychological, social-structural and cognitive aspects is still underdeveloped. For a very interesting study, see Miller, Humiliation. For an approach applied to (post)modern industrial-bureaucratic societies, see Margalit, The Decent Society.
13. For a pioneering study on the effects of stigma, see Goffman, Stigma. Also, Abbink, “Of Snakes and Cattle.”
14. This is not to say that people who are “humiliated” are always right in the factual or moral sense; we are analysing the social fact of people reacting in such terms to intensifying contacts, challenges, conflict, and hegemonic state policies.
16. The Suri regularly hunt in the nearby Omo National Park (buffalo, hartebeest, giraffe, antelopes; some species, such as elephant and rhino, have disappeared). Neighbouring people like the Nyangatom and Dizi (who also hunt) say the Suri have a very exploitative attitude towards game.
17. The term “culture,” as it is made relevant in the local discourse on group relations and enmity in the Maji area, refers here to nothing but the socially constructed and inherited repertoires of behavioural difference – in lifestyle, cognition, and values of honour, identity, or dignity – between human groups. (Locally, in Amharic, people talk of đànb, not bahil. Đànb means “the rules,” “the customary ways of doing things”; bahil is song, dance, theatre, etc.: the non-problematic, folkloristic culture).
18. Including the giving of coded warnings before an impending cattle raid, no burning of pasture, no poisoning of wells, no killing of cattle, no raping and killing of women.
19. Anywaa were not “traditional enemies” of the Suri in the past. Incidents with the Anywaa have occurred over approximately 15 to 18 years in gold panning places at the northern fringe of the Suri area and also in Dima, a new frontier town on the Akobo River, where much of the gold is...
sold to traders. Since 2000 the town is part of the Gambela Regional State, where mostly Anywaa used to control the administration. In Dima, visiting Suri are frequently robbed of their gold and money. Anywaa, because of their alleged “deviousness,” came to be seen by many Suri as their main enemy.

20. According to Bender, both languages are part of the East Nilotic branch within the East Sudanic subfamily of the Nilo-Saharan language family. Bender, “Nilo-Saharan,” 46.

21. The original, rather fluid, border between Nyangatom and Suri ran from below Mt Shulugui to the Omo River up to Kara country. For about the last ten years it has run from Mt Rongodó to the Dirga Hills, just south-west of the Omo River bend near the Mursi area (see Figure 1). The Suri have also lost virtually all of their old transhumance pastures in Sudanese territory.


23. Not only Dizi but also the Me’en have been victim of Suri raids, especially after the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime undertook a major effort to disarm them. Me’en are seen locally as the best fighters. In late 2000 the Me’en in the Gesha and Kella areas had had enough of Suri attacks and ambushes and staged a carefully planned and well-organized retaliatory raid, whereby they took about 5000 Suri cattle in one of the largest raids ever seen in the area. Some months later the Suri randomly attacked the Me’en area, killing 34 people, burning down 165 houses and taking away some cattle (interview with Guldu Tsedeke, Addis Ababa, 20 May 2000). The Me’en by that time were hampered by lack of weapons and ammunition. Government intervention or mediation failed. Only the Me’en were targeted for disarmament afterwards, and according to stories from eye witnesses (interview, Addis Ababa, October 14, 2001) it was carried out in a ruthless manner, with several adult men shot before the eyes of their children.

24. A record kept of violent incidents with dead or wounded for the years 1990–2007 has at least one violent incident per month between either Suri, Dizi, Me’en, Nyangatom, Anywaa or highland villagers. I estimate the number of casualties in these years to be at least 1300, most of them Dizi. The total 2007 population of these groups combined was estimated at about 190,000.

25. The Derg military government confiscated all their arms, and the EPRDF regime only allows some militia to carry (registered) weapons. These are also of a lesser quality or older types. In contrast to the Suri, the Dizi are easily checked on the possession of arms. See also note 15 above.


27. A report on the plight of the Dizi, written very much from their point of view and to be read very cautiously, is that of Addis Ababa University sociologist Abeje Berhanu, The Dizi People. See also Abbink, “Ethnic Conflict in the ‘Tribal’ Zone.”

28. Interview with Ato Adiburji Adikyaz, June 1998, Adikyaz village. I owe many valuable insights to Ato Adiburji, a Dizi chief and a very perceptive and wise man with whom I had many conversations in 1991–8.

29. One notorious incident occurred in 1986 when the Maji administrator, a Derg army officer, invited a number of Suri men to a meeting in Maji to resolve a case of cattle raiding. When they were gathered, he had them tied up and shot. A number of them died, the others escaped. Suri took revenge a year later with attacks on people on the roads near Maji, where a number of people were killed.


31. Elwert et al., Dynamics of Violence; Hutchinson, Nuer Dilemmas; Hutchinson, “A Curse from God?”

32. Abbink, “Culture Slipping Away.”


34. Abbink, “Restoring the Balance;” 84–5, 94.

35. As told by Mike Bryant, SIL language researcher among the Suri (Addis Ababa, February 5, 2004), and as noted in several cases during fieldwork or heard in subsequent interviews with Suri men in Addis Ababa in 2006 and 2007.

36. Chisholm, “Death, Hope and Sex.” For a revealing analysis of similar dramatic changes in Nuer society, see Hutchinson, Nuer Dilemmas, and Hutchinson, “A Curse from God.”

37. Interview with Bargola Lemudigir and Mike Bryant (February 5, 2004, Addis Ababa).


39. See also Mirzeler and Young, “Pastoral Politics,” on the Karimojong.
41. Interviews during fieldwork, 1992-4. Ulrike Beyer, a teacher among the Suri, told me (interview on February 7, 2004, Addis Ababa) that during a meeting in 2004 one Suri elder complained: “I wish we could crush those guns causing all that trouble.”
44. Abbink, “Tourism and its Discontents.”
45. Ibid.
46. Amharic is the working language of the SNNPRS, the Southern Regional State.
47. Once this disease enters the ethnic communities in the Maji area, disaster will loom because it will likely spread rapidly due to polygamy and certain food and ritual habits.

References


