



Garang Mawien Majok

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Garang had a ready smile; proud tribal markings punctuated his brow. He was taken into slavery when he was 8 years old shortly after the tribal markings identified him to belong to his people forever. The Baggara Arabs came to Rumdah Ayoup on horseback and camelback, shot the villagers and rounded up the men, women and children. He was taken, his hands bound, along with two other relatives; a girl and a boy. They were separated. "I don't know where they are; I don't know if they are still alive. That was 24 years ago when I was taken into slavery. I never forgot home and I always remembered my people"

"It was a terrible day, 24 years ago, when we were forced into slavery." We sat in silence as I saw him remember. After awhile, I asked gently, "Did you see any executions on the way north?"

"Yes," Garang replied. "Three men and one woman. One man was slaughtered [his throat was slit] when he refused to have his children taken from him. Two men and one woman were shot when they refused to walk; they were exhausted and laid down to rest. The Arabs ordered them to stand up. They called us over to have us watch when they were shot. Most of us were children, forced to watch."

Twenty-four years, a lifetime of sleeping with cattle under a tree, eating food rejected by the slave master family. Twenty-four years of being isolated from family and friends, country.

"Were you able to meet with other Dinkas, speak with them?" I asked.

"No, we were not allowed. There was always an Arab watching over us while we worked. If we were found speaking to another Dinka, we were beaten. Our hands would be bound so we could not protect ourselves during the beating."

Garang showed me the old scars on his head, upper arms and legs where he had received the blows. "We were treated badly; our girls, women, were raped. Some of our men killed, a few castrated. All of us were mistreated badly."

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“What kept you alive, Garang,” I said. “during all those years of suffering?”

He was quick to respond, “I put my faith in God; only God, no one else. I always prayed that one day I would be free, return home, farm, and be reunited with my family and my people.”

“For a number of years I planned my escape. Some Dinka had tried and were killed when they were caught. One night I decided to make my way home.”

This amazed me because the persons we greeted who had come out of slavery walked for 15 days, guided by a trusted Arab slave retriever. Garang was enslaved 10 days walking beyond that. Imagine risking that kind of journey to freedom.

“I was caught by a Rizeigat Arab. I thought I would be killed, or returned to my slave master. But the Rizeigat Arab was a good man. He asked me to stay to help look after his cattle for a while. He was a good person. He gave me food, not leftover scraps, but good food. I stayed with him for a while, and decided I needed to continue going home. After many days walking, a man came up to me at a well. [Garang met the trusted Arab retriever whom I have known personally for over 11 years.]”

The retriever said to Garang, “You are South Sudanese. Would you like to go home? We are gathering. You are welcome to come with us.” I decided to go with him.

“God has blessed me; I am home now.”

“Garang, is there a message you would like for me to take back to Switzerland, to America, to all the people who came together to bring all of you home, to be gifted with the Word of God, with a Sack of Hope, grain, and a goat as welcome gifts, along with the welcome of your chiefs, villagers who’ve come to welcome you home?”

“Do you want me to carry a message back with me,” I repeated. Garang replied, “Convey my message of thanks. Ask them, ask the people to work together to bring the rest of us out. Ask the people to pray to bring others out of that evil place. Ask them to put their hands together to help us.”

Then he added, “I will pray that God will keep you alive and add to your years so you can come back to us again.”



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In spite of 24 years of suffering in that evil place, as Garang called it, I felt that it wouldn't take very long for him to find that farm to cultivate, to begin his new life, his free life. I marveled at his tenacity, perseverance and faith. I was just soaked in Godly blessings to have the privilege of meeting Garang and introducing him to his people and you. Thank you everyone for your help in securing the freedom of our siblings from Jihadi slavery in Sudan.

CSI fact-finding visit to South Sudan, November 2015 by Pastor Heidi McGinness and Markus Weber. Luka Garang Kenyang, Translator