



Juvarsity

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Celebrating 50 Years of Exemplary Service with a Return to the Bajur Campus Dream

Our University celebrates 50 years of exemplary service this year. In the late 1980s, when war intensified in Southern Sudan, the University was relocated to Khartoum, where it expanded rapidly. After the war ended in 2005, the University was returned to Juba, where it continued to expand due to ever-growing demand for its services. Current student enrolment has exceeded 40,000, who are studying on the two campuses in the heart of Juba City.

The downside of this rapid expansion is the overcrowding of the campuses. As the Vice Chancellor points out in his article in this Juvarsity issue, this is to be addressed by a return to the development of the Bajur Campus, which is situated on the eastern bank of the White Nile. Actually, this is a return to the dream of the founding fathers of the University, which saw Bajur village as the site of the main campus of the University.

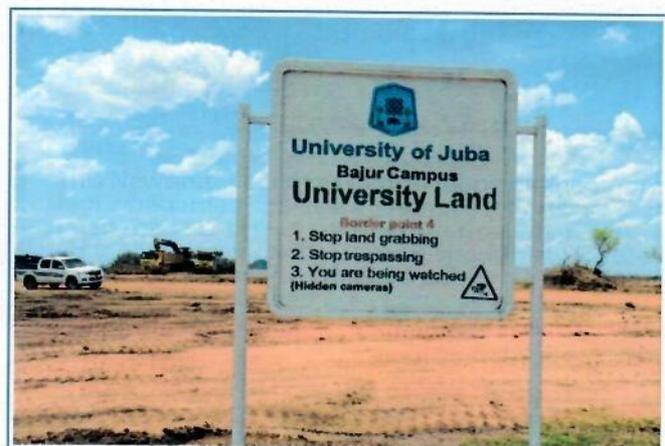
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The Focus: My Vision for the University of Juba Campus at Bajur

Professor Robert Mayom Deng
Vice Chancellor

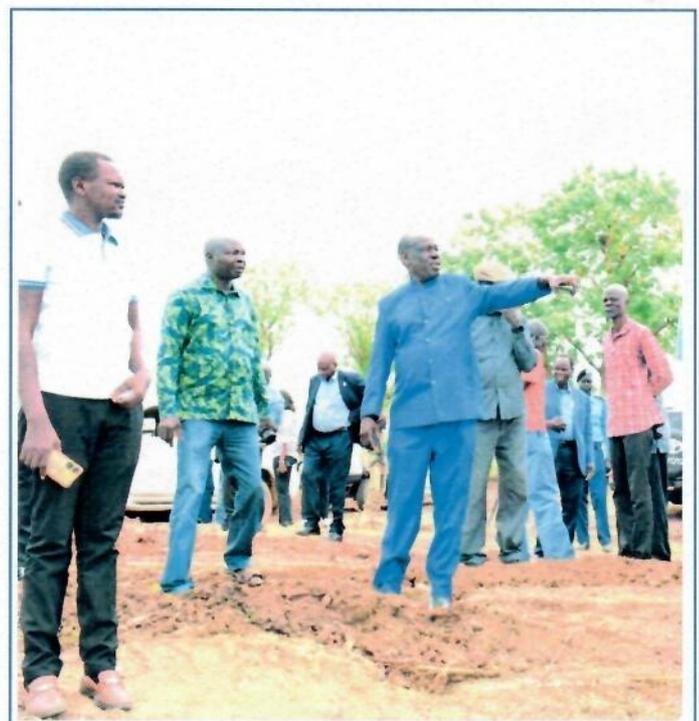
The Bajur Campus on the eastern bank of the White Nile was designated by the founding fathers to be the main future campus of the University of Juba. By late 1980s, with generous support from the European Development Fund (EDF), commendable and encouraging strides were made to achieve that goal by previous administrations of the University prior to its displacement and relocation to Khartoum in 1989. By that time, plans were already underway to relocate the College of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, and the College of Education to the Bajur Campus once the construction of the hostels, staff houses, lecture halls and laboratories was completed.

Unfortunately, the realization of this noble objective was disrupted by the civil war in the Sudan, which erupted in 1983. During that period and later, the uncompleted buildings on the Bajur Campus were occupied by several units of the armed forces before and after South Sudan independence, 2011, resulting in severe damages to the already completed infrastructure. At present, all the existing buildings are just walls standing in the bush without roofs, doors or windows. Following the relocation of the University back to Juba in 2010, the University administration found itself preoccupied with and consumed by the challenges of repatriating an institution that had grown considerably while in exile, that it could not meaningfully focus on the renovation of the Bajur Campus.

When I took over as Vice Chancellor in March 2024, the Main and the Customs campuses were already overcrowded and reeling from the deleterious effects of ever-growing student population. More schools were established and the University now has a total enrolment of over 40,000 students. It was imperative, therefore, to revive the strategic plan to decongest the Juba Campuses by moving part of the University to the eastern campus at Bajur.

Guided by the principle that one can only seek external assistance to move forward when she/he begins doing something her/himself, we started to encourage our Farm Management Unit to initiate some activities on the Bajur Campus. The best move for a start was to give the deserted and neglected campus some facelift by clearing the bushy premises. This was successfully done by engaging a Chinese contractor, whose work is still ongoing. Simultaneously, the Farm Management Unit was provided with funds to start some modest farming activities that will necessitate fencing off the Campus.

Our next major and critical step is to seek the support of well-meaning donors and development partners in order for us to embark on the renovation and rehabilitation of the dilapidated buildings to make them ready and useable for educational purposes. Once this is accomplished, we plan to move two Schools to the Bajur Campus. But this will only be possible if we are able to garner the necessary support to enable us to realize this noble goal as it was envisaged by the founding fathers. Like they say, a journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step.



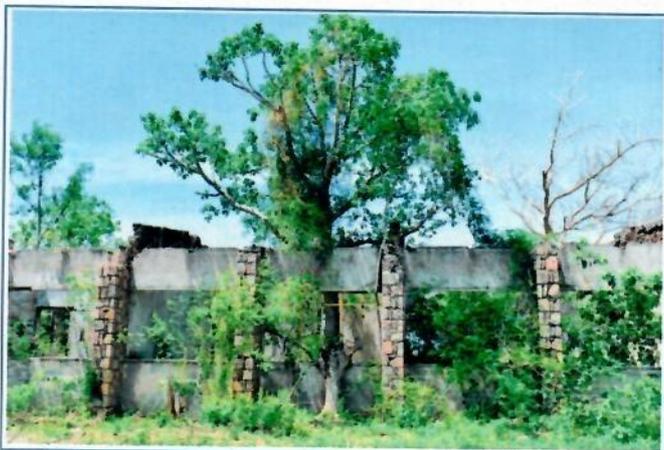
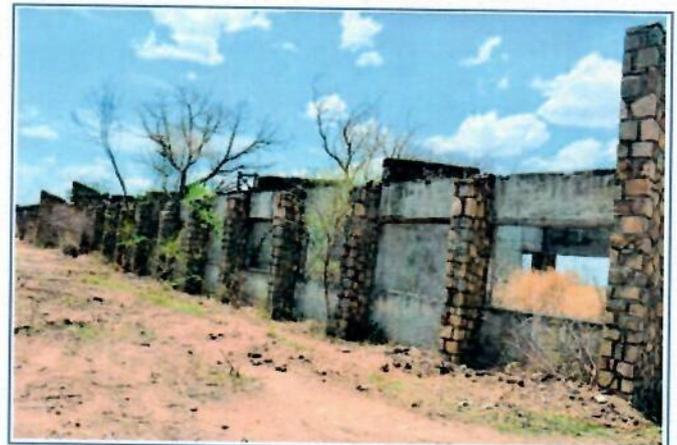
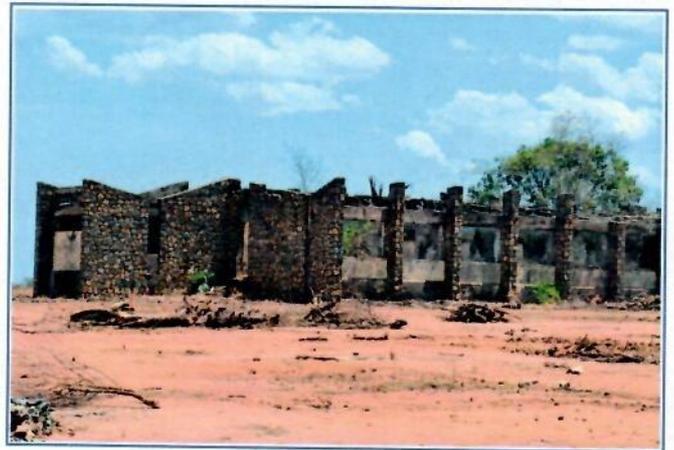


History of Bajur

The land in Bajur village was given to the University of Juba by the Bari community in the late 1970s, just after the University was established through a decree issued by the late President Jaffar Nimeiri in 1975. It was to be developed as the main campus. Construction of buildings progressed quickly. By the late 1980s, the construction work was nearly completed, and the brand new buildings were ready to accommodate the College of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies and other institutions of the University. Unfortunately, as war intensified across the then Southern Sudan, it became necessary to relocate students and staff to Khartoum.

Wartime Devastation

While the students and staff were in Khartoum during the war, the nearly completed buildings in Bajur were occupied by fighters from various armed groups. The first group of fighters were members of a militia led by a Southern Sudanese leader loyal to the Sudanese government. These fighters were replaced by soldiers from the Sudan Armed Forces and paramilitary forces recruited by the Sudanese government or what were commonly called Popular Defense Forces. After the war ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) were accommodated in those buildings. With the advent of Southern Sudanese independence in 2011, the JIUs were disbanded but fighters from the Sudanese People's Liberation Army remained in the area. These fighters subsequently left the buildings, but in a state of disrepair, lacking roofs, doors and windows.





Writings and Graffiti on Walls in Bajur Campus: Anthropological and Sociological Insights

By Professor Venansio T. Muludiang

Graffiti refers to writings and drawings made on walls or surfaces of public buildings, usually without permission and within public view. The graffiti on the inner walls of the buildings at the Bajur Campus is the work of soldiers who occupied them during and after the second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005). A multidisciplinary research team tasked with addressing gaps in the University of Juba's history, particularly the period covering the war era to the present, is now looking closely at the writings and drawings on the walls to unearth what they signify. The data collection phase is already in progress.

Preliminary observations reveal that most of the (Arabic) writings on the walls are about remembrance. War veterans are known for wanting to leave marks wherever they have been during war. For many soldiers on war frontlines, the prospect of going back home alive is a remote possibility. During the Sudan civil war, soldiers were normally buried where they died. For those northern Sudanese combatants who died and were buried in Southern Sudan, there is no possibility for their remains to be exhumed and repatriated after the war. So it is only natural for them to wish to be remembered by friends and the loved ones back home.

What can be gathered from the writings on the walls by soldiers is that most of the combatants seem to hail from Western Sudan, especially from the Darfur Region, the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile. These are the most marginalized areas of Sudan where many young people were deprived of modern education. For those who were not able to progress beyond the religious schools (khalwas) or secular primary education, the only avenue for upward social mobility was to join the Army and work hard to rise through its rank and file to some middle level positions in the military. These are the main architects of the graffiti found at the Bajur Campus.

The writings by the SPLA soldiers who occupied the Bajur Campus during the post-independence era, and after the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) evacuated the area, reflect more their ethnic makeup and contempt for the Sudanese Armed Forces. While some writings were obviously directed against the SAF, sentiments of some soldiers turned against the Dinka and Nuer following the outbreak of the 2013 civil war. Many soldiers from the other ethnic groups were inclined to blame the Dinka and the Nuer for starting the 2013 war which resulted in the loss of many of their colleagues and innocent civilian lives.

As for the pictures on the walls, and especially of women, conjectures range from soldiers fantasizing about persons whose affection they could not afford to have, assuming of course, that women were not allowed into the 'army camp' at Bajur Campus, to drawing pictures of women they might actually had relations with. Another plausible sociological argument is that the soldiers could have actually drawn pictures of the women they were planning or expecting to marry back home. For a Muslim combatant in a war zone, not only will such a planned marriage have to wait, it may never take place. Even if he gets home alive, the anticipated bride might have been given to someone else.

The few pictures of army officers drawn on the walls tell a different story altogether. How these are configured depends on what soldiers think about their superiors. Those who are loved by the rank and file are normally given gentle profiles or no pictures of them are drawn at all. Those who are regarded as mean officers may be treated harshly in the pictures drawn about them. Some of the latter are given big tummies or heavy moustaches to depict their mean or brutal characters.





Whispers from the Wall

By Ms Adau Leek Mawut,
Deputy Director, Directorate of Alumni Affairs

In the old remaining buildings of Bajur, where wind moves freely through the open windows and a tree made a strong bond with the walls very much attached like a mother and a child. In the walls of those buildings, there are a lot of untold stories.

The writings and the drawings reflect the soldiers' feelings of missing home, fear of unknown, and the desire for love and comfort. One wall bears a drawing of a naked woman, and I began to wonder if it was really helping them. Well, only the soldiers can answer that. But all I know is they were missing their wives and sweethearts, or they were just for jokes to drown out fear.

These buildings, which are now silent, were once controlled with the breath of fear and frustration, where men lived in close spaces between orders and not being aware of what will happen around them.

Bajur campus held different groups from the Sudan Military in the 1990s to the Joint Integrated Forces in 2000s. From the writings on the walls we knew there were Brigade 24, Battalions 105, 129 and many others, but what caught my attention the most is one of the writings which says 'people go to sleep without knowing who is wronged'. In my understanding, I think whoever wrote this must have had doubts about the war!

The drawings are normal and the writings are simple but together they form a gallery of the soul holding on to whatever humanity they could draw on a wall to escape the fear and frustration of war.



Bari Deities and the Bajur Campus

By Madel Thiong
Coordinator of Special Projects, Office of the Vice Chancellor

In 1978, during an expansion plan to establish a College of Natural Resources, the University of Juba was allocated a piece of land in Bajur village, in eastern Juba by the Bari community. However, when the university established its presence in Bajur, it entered not only a physical space but a sacred one, a land watched over by the ancestral deities of the Bari people.

The Bari people are an Eastern Nilotic ethnic group residing primarily along the White Nile. They practice both crop growing and livestock rearing, and are deeply rooted in spiritual and cultural traditions. The Bari community leaders have cautioned the university not to disturb the spiritual presence on Bajur, but rather acknowledge and respect it. As one Bari elder explained, "The deities have offered silent guardianship to the Bajur facility and continue to provide spiritual protection for our academic journey."

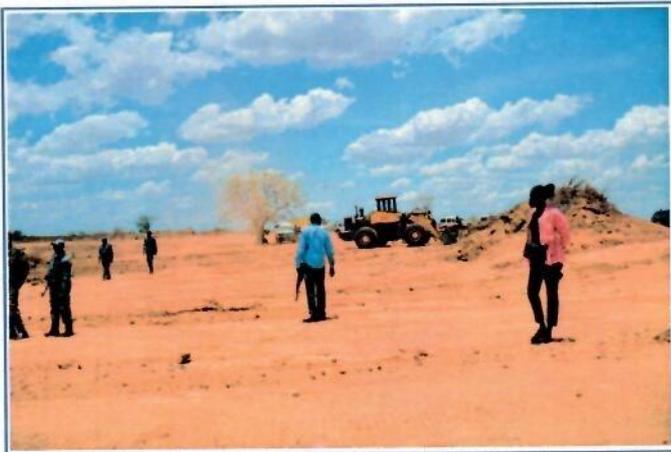
The complexities of African belief systems, often inadequately covered in academic settings, offer a unique opportunity for dialogue and cooperation. The local chief emphasized that embracing indigenous knowledge systems could foster greater social harmony between traditional spiritual institutions and modern centers of learning, provided that such systems are respected.



Ongoing developments in Bajur Campus

Land clearing activities by a Chinese Company

The Ruitan Industrial Co. Ltd, a Chinese company, was contracted by the University to clear the bush around the buildings, open internal roads and grade them, construct bridges and culverts, and dig a reservoir.



Preparing land for crop growing

By Mr Simon Duku Jididayo Waya
Manager, University of Juba Farm Unit

Some of the spaces cleared by the Chinese company have been ploughed by tractors from the University of Juba Farm Unit for growing crops during the rainy season. The water from the reservoir, which the Chinese company is digging on the site, will be used to irrigate crops during the dry season. The agricultural activities will enhance learning by students.

Lecture halls in the Bajur campus will be rehabilitated as the University works on a plan to relocate the School of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies to the area, fulfilling a vision of the founding fathers of the University.





Meeting of the University of Juba Alumni Association

By Ms Ann Poni James, Public Relations,
Directorate of International Cooperation

On 29th March 2025, the Directorate of Alumni Affairs, University of Juba, held a General Assembly Meeting, in which notable personalities participated including Professor Robert Mayom Deng, Vice Chancellor of the University of Juba, Professor Abraham Matoc, Vice Chancellor of Dr John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology, Professor Isaac Cleto Rial, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Professor Justo Wani Jada, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance; Hon. Joseph Africano Bartel, Undersecretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry; and Hon. Sarah Cleto Rial, former Governor of Western Bahr el Ghazal State.

Professor Robert Mayom expressed gratitude to the Directorate of Alumni Affairs for organizing the meeting, and urged it to take an active role in driving development initiatives in the university. Dr. Ruba C. Bilal, the Director of Alumni Affairs, enumerated some of the benefits of joining the Alumni Association, including networking opportunities and professional development.

An interim leadership of University of Juba Alumni Association (UJAA) was elected as follows: Hon. Joseph Africano Bartel, Chairperson; Hon. Sarah Cleto Rial, Deputy Chairperson; Dr. Ajak Makur, Secretary General; Paulino Machot Mayen, Secretary of Finance; Rebecca James, Secretary of Social Welfare; and Stanislaus J.D. Hipia, Secretary of Information and External Affairs.



Visit to Bajur Campus by Alumni

The alumni of any university are a valuable source of resources for development. Aware of this, the University has invested efforts to mobilize its alumni, who recently gathered in the University's Senate Hall to elect a new executive body, so as to mobilize resources for the development of its flagship project, the Bajur Campus. This was followed by the visit of the Deputy Chairperson of the Alumni Association, Hon. Sarah Cleto Rial and other alumni to the Bajur Campus on 29 March 2025 to see the ongoing activities and also plans for the development of the area.





Visit to Bajur by former Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology

On 23rd April 2025, the former Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Hon. Gabriel Changson Chang, paid a visit to the Bajur Campus to acquaint himself with the ongoing activities at the site and also receive a detailed briefing on plans for development of the area.



Visit of the Senior Management to Bajur Campus

The members of senior management team of the University of Juba have visited the Bajur Campus several times to inspect ongoing development activities. The below pictures were taken on 17th April 2025, when the preparation of a field for planting of seeds had made substantial progress.

