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ISSN: 0044-8370

COLONIAL POLICY AND PROPHETS: THE 'NUER SETTLEMENT', 1929-1930

Since their suppression by the Anglo-Egyptian government in 1930, the prophets of the Nuer have been seen almost solely in terms of their political relations with non-Nuer. Their existence is explained as being in some way a product of Nuer foreign relations. According to Evans-Pritchard they organized the Nuer in their wars against the Dinka, the Arab slavers and the colonial government. In attempting to unite all Nuer against all non-Nuer they were associated with the highest level of segmentary opposition. P.P. Howell summarized the administrative view when he wrote that the Lou prophet Ngundeng "was thrown up like some dictator" in the face of Mahdist and colonial aggression. Recently, in an attempt to underline the continuity of their own struggle against the Northern (Arab) Sudan, Southern Sudanese intellectuals too have emphasised the prophet's resistance to colonialism.

These views are essentially "outsiders'" views. They have dominated discussions of the role of the prophet in Nuer society, but no attempt has yet been made to analyse the relations between the Nuer and the government they were supposed to have opposed. This paper will concentrate on the events and personalities of the "Nuer Settlement" of 1929-1930. It is therefore as much an examination of the Anglo-Egyptian administration as it is of the Nuer prophets. I hope to show how the policies of pacification and local administration in the Sudan helped to form government attitudes towards the prophets, and how these attitudes influenced both the government's opposition to the Nuer prophets and the Nuer's response to the government. As many of the government's attitudes were conditioned by what they thought had happened in the recent past, I shall begin with a brief outline of the activities of the prophets during the nineteenth century.

Prologue: Rise of the prophets

Prophets first began to appear in the mid-nineteenth century among those groups of Nuer which had migrated east of the Nile and assimilated numbers of Dinka and other people[1]. This absorption of individual Dinka inevitably introduced a number of Dinka ideas of Divinity to Nuer society. Evans-Pritchard has described the assimilation of Dinka clan-divinities as well as foreign types of magic. He has also suggested the assimilation of Dinka free-divinities in the form of the sky spirits who possessed and inspired the prophets.

The Nuer east of the Nile, especially the Lou and the Gaawar, came under the influence of two Dinka shrines: Puom Aiwel (the Mound of Aiwel) and Luang Deng (the Luak of Deng). Through them a number of myths and symbols central to the main Dinka concepts of Divinity entered Nuer society. The Lou prophet Ngundeng was possessed by the sky-spirit Deng. He built a large mound of earth and ash which he referred to as Luak Kuoth (the Nuer name for Luang Deng) or Puom Aiwel. He adapted many elements from the Aiwel myth to his own life and, in his own ceremonies, incorporated many of the symbols associated with Aiwel and his descendants, the masters of the fishing-spear. His teachings emphasised what is perhaps the most notable feature of the Dinka concept of man's relationship to Divinity: he existence of a single community at peace created by Divinity. Ngundeng tried to settle feuds between Lou sections, and he also prohibited raids on the Dinka. The absorption of Dinka reinforced these teachings which were at once socially sound and spiritually comprehensible to both societies.[2] Extensive intermarriage with Dinka groups had the same effect

Ngundeng and the Lou lived in a relatively stable area, undisturbed during the 1860s and 1870s by any major incursions from slave raiders or the Egyptian government. The Gaawar were not so fortunate, for the area of the Zaraf valley where they settled became a major waterway south from the mid-1860s to the mid-1870s (see map p. 3). Both Nuer and Dinka living on either bank of the Bahr al-Zaraf were drawn into the orbit of the armed camps of the merchant companies that traded in the area. The leader of the dominant section of the Gaawar allied with one of the companies and raided Dinka, Nuer and even the Gaawar for captives and cattle. He lost support among the Gaawar but built up a large personal

following from a number of Nuer and Dinka groups. Some of this following raided the Lou and were nearly annihilated by Ngundeng in the only battle he is known to have fought.

A Gaawar prophet, an adopted Dinka called Deng Lakka, later led the Gaawar in overthrowing the merchants' ally after the merchants themselves had withdrawn from the Bahr al-Zaraf. Deng Lakka continued intermittent warfare against those Dinka who had also supported the slavers, and when floods of the Bahr al-Zaraf forced him to seek the higher ground of the Duk ridge, he came into conflict with the Nyarreweng and Ghol Dinka to the south. But his conflicts were selective and not directed against the Dinka as a whole. He was in close contact with the Dinka shrine at Luang Deng; and had numerous marriage connections with Dinka groups living among the Gaawar. Many of these Dinka supporters accompanied his raids to the south. As he became older, peace-keeping and ending feuds became increasingly important activities for him, though he was never as successful at these as Ngundeng.

It is important to note in passing that among the Western Nuer who had been exposed to more intensive slave-raiding for a longer time, and who faced stiffer opposition from the Dinka than either the Lou or Gaawar, prophets appeared later than in the east. These prophets were more aggressive towards the Dinka, but they seem to have had more limited political and spiritual authority than their eastern counterparts. It is worth keeping these differences in mind, for it seems that the Western Nuer prophets have been used as the basis for the model which has dominated later academic discussions, a model which represents Nuer prophets as militantly opposed to the Dinka.

The Arrival of the Government

The Anglo-Egyptian government that entered the Sudan after the battle of Omdurman in 1898 was concerned during the first few years of its rule with establishing order and security throughout the territory it claimed. It was obsessed with determining the degree of "loyalty" or "hostility" of its new subjects. Frequently "hostility" was defined not so much by actual instances of violence and rebellion, as by refusal to recognize the authority of the new government. "Hostility" was the opposite of "submission". This definition could also be applied indirectly, for any independent group that threatened subjects of the government ran the risk of being accused of under-mining the government's authority.

For the Nuer, relations with the new government were complicated not only by their attitude to it, but also by its attitude towards the Dinka. In the Upper Nile Region among the first to submit to the new government were those Dinka groups living on the more accessible banks of the Sobat and Bahr al-Jabal. Some had been allies of the old Egyptian government or of the merchant companies against the Nuer. Those who had been allied with the old government in the past were willing to submit to the new government and to try to use this new alliance in the same way they had used the old. Thus the Nuer ran a double risk of being declared "hostile" either by refusing to meet with the new government's representatives, or by appearing to threaten the government's "loyal" Dinka subjects.

A further complication was the government's inherent hostility to any form of unorthodox, prophetic or ecstatic religion. In the northern Sudan the government had defeated Mahdism, a Messianic Muslim revivalist movement that had overthrown the old Egyptian government. For several years therefore, the government was continually on the watch for new "Mahdis". It viewed the unorthodox Sufi brotherhoods of the north with suspicion, and the activities of itinerant holy men, fiqis or charm-sellers, with distaste. These prejudices had their counterpart in the Southern Sudan, where the colloquial Sudanese Arabic word for

"witchdoctor", "kujur", was applied to numerous types of spiritual experts. The new administration identified them with the fiqis of the north. Thus any person identified, through the medium of an Arabic speaking soldier or interpreter, as a "kujur" was immediately suspect as a potential threat to security.

In later years when the government was trying to create a particular class of administrative "chief", it formalised its opposition to what it considered to be the reactionary magicians in the Unlawful Societies Ordinance of 1919. This act was first used among the Azande to strengthen the position of government-appointed chiefs against the "Secret Societies" there. The government had been alarmed by the "cultic" organization of these societies, for they had spread, almost undetected, across tribal and international boundaries. The Secret Societies became a model for administrative fears, and with the Unlawful Societies Ordinance organized "magic" was legally defined as politically subversive.

One can easily imagine the new government's reaction when it began to hear of the two "kujurs" of the Lou and Gaawar via "loyal" Dinka who had clashed with both Ngundeng and Deng Lakka many years before. Throughout the years of 1899 to 1901 the new government heard of impending Nuer raids. Government informants claimed the Nuer were "hostile and have declared that if Government troops come into their country they will kill all their cattle to prevent them from being taken, and will fight to the last". Later it was reported that Ngundeng "promises to kill all people other than his own tribe, and even them, if they are friendly with white people approaching his village". The main sources of this information were the Dinka groups which had attacked and been defeated by Ngundeng. They offered to guide the government in any patrols against him, and in April 1902 a patrol of Sudanese soldiers aided by a large number of Dinka warriors set out for Lou Nuer territory.

This large and well-armed force progressed through Lou territory unresisted. Ngundeng and the Lou withdrew with their cattle before it and refused either to parley or give battle. This retreat was interpreted by the commander of the column as a deliberately hostile act, so he burned Ngundeng's abandoned village and looted his pyramid of the elephant tusks that were placed around its base. Ngundeng remained aloof from the government and two years later an official commented, apparently without irony, that his "antagonism to Government has apparently only deepened with time. With the best possible intentions we may be unable to prevent the Nuers of the Sobat moving across to Denkur (sic) (Ngundeng's ox name) rather than accept our pacific proposals".

By this time the government was beginning to doubt the veracity of its Dinka allies. The anticipated raids by Ngundeng's Lou failed to materialise; the Sobat Dinka were themselves found to be using the protection of the government to raid the Nuer; and other Dinka, particularly the Ngok and the Nyarreweng, were found to be on amiable terms with the Lou. A final attempt was made in 1906 to get in touch with Ngundeng, but he had died during the rains of 1905.

The government had more success with Deng Lakka. Though it described him as a "Mahdi" and a "fakir", the failure of its campaign against Ngundeng made it wary of further aggressive action. Perhaps because he had more experience with outsiders, Deng Lakka seems to have been more willing to speak with the government than Ngundeng had been. He met with government officials twice before he died in 1907, and managed to justify to them his antagonism towards those Dinka who had allied with the slavers in the preceding century. Ironically, then, we

find that the government officials began to sympathise with the prophet who actually raided their "loyal" Dinka, while they remained suspicious of the prophet who did not. This ambiguous attitude resulted mainly from the differing approaches the prophets took towards the new government, Ngundeng practiced avoidance, and while he did so the government could conclude that their only alternatives lay in reconciling or removing him. Deng Lakka was willing to speak with government officials, and in so doing gave sufficient recognition of the government's authority to placate it. This pattern was to be repeated with the prophet's sons and successors twenty years later, producing similar results.

Administration of the Nuer and Dinka

The immediate problem of the government's policy towards these two prophets disappeared with their death. It could now concentrate solely on establishing public order and an administration that worked through men with sufficient authority to be treated as chiefs. But, because frequently it established provincial and district divisions for strategic military reasons rather than from internal logic, the government tended to thwart its own project. The garrisons in what later became Upper Nile Province, for example, were established to deny the Sobat and the White Nile to the French and the Abyssinians. Further south a separate garrison was established at Mongalla to watch the Belgians at Lado and Rajjaf; when the Belgians left, their territory was merely added to the province that had grown up around the Mongalla headquarters. This included the Dinka of Bor District, while most of the Lou and Gaawar were administered by Upper Nile Province. As province administrators were jealous of interference from neighbouring provinces the net effect of this division was to compound clashes between Nuer and Dinka with clashes between province staff. Over the years tensions between the two peoples on the province borders became exaggerated by different officials who saw them as external threats to the internal administration of their provinces. In many cases it was this exaggerated view that formed the basis of later administrators' and even anthropologists' understanding of Nuer-Dinka hostility.

The pattern of relations in this area was already exceedingly complex. As refugees from Deng Lakka's earlier conquests tried to regain their cattle by nocturnal theft, the Gaawar launched raids of their own to recapture the cattle. The Nyarreweng and other Dinka frequently fled to the Lou for protection from Gaawar raids, and mixed settlements and intermarriage resulted.

The province borders did not take such complexities into consideration. In an attempt to end raiding, officials from both provinces decided in 1909-1910 that the simplest solution was to fix a "tribal boundary" that coincided with province boundaries. The two peoples were thus to be separated - the Nuer in Upper Nile solely. the Dinka in Mongalla - and their "official" relations conducted through their respective province administrators. Much effort was spent to enforce this arrangement by trying to "return" the Nuer to Upper Nile. From time to time administrators in each province realized the futility of the operations, for the communities were so mixed that the definition of who was a Nuer and who was a Dinka was frequently arbitrary. Unfortunately there was no uniform agreement between the provinces, and attempts to establish some uniformity by an official in one province were usually rejected as "interference" by his counterpart in the other province. The provinces continued to identify themselves with what they perceived to be the interests of the people they were supposed to represent. Thus the Mongalla officials sought to protect the Dinka from the Nuer, while the Upper Nile officials were prepared to resist what they called "Dinka intrigue".

These artificial barriers and the rivalries they produced had the opposite effect from what had been intended. The Gaawar and Lou living near the province boundary were in more contact with the Mongalla officials on the border than with

Upper Nile administrators. The identification of Mongalla Province with Dinka interests was encouraged by the fact that the minor Sudanese officials there were frequently Dinka from the Bahr al-Ghazal who were serving in the army. These soldiers frequently, on their own initiative, intervened in disputes on the side of the Dinka, leading the Nuer to regard the entire government as on the Dinka's side. In 1916 one Dinka officer was killed and his patrol annihilated in an ambush when he took the side of a local Dinka chief against the Lou prophet Pok Kerjiok. The defeat of government troops, even on an unofficial manoeuvre, forced the government to take action; a punitive patrol was sent against the Lou in 1917. Its range of action was extended to include the Gaawar who, under Dual Diu, the son and successor of Deng Lakka, had earlier clashed with government troops over problems in relations with the Dinka. When Dual finally made his peace with the Upper Nile administration the following year, he claimed that he had assumed Mongalla represented the entire government in its support of the Dinka and had not realized that representatives at Malakal, the capital of Upper Nile Province, might have listened to him more sympathetically.

A few administrators recognized at the time that many of these conflicts grew out of administrative policy, but the conflicts largely worked to reinforce the idea that the main security problem of the area was the protection of the Dinka from the Nuer. As prophets such as Dual and Pok Kerjiok became involved, the idea that "kujurs" were inherently hostile to the government also seemed confirmed. By 1926 when Bor District (a Dinka centre) was transferred to Upper Nile Province in an attempt to overcome some of the administrative tangles, such attitudes had hardened into dogmatic rigidity among those responsible for Dinka administration. By 1926 also, when the governor K.C.P. Struvé retired, there was no-one left in Upper Nile Province whose experience in Nuer and Dinka affairs predated 1921.

Dramatis Personae

Struvé had spent many years as an Inspector in Upper Nile Province and was one of a series of Inspectors with experience among both the Nuer and the Dinka who had also, since 1910, become governors of the province. He had been involved in the original delineation of the Nuer-Dinka boundary and had personal knowledge of the Nuer and Dinka participants in the many subsequent disputes. He had a strong suspicion of anything that smelled of "intrigue", especially anything emanating from the local mamurs, (junior Sudanese officials in charge of a sub-district) interpreters and Dinka chiefs of Bor District. "The Dinkas are decidedly clever at presenting a good case", he advised his successor, "while the Nuer is a correspondingly damned fool at the game, and prefers the spear as an argument. Consequently he appears to be always the aggressor, and the Dinka uses this fact to the full." As governor Struvé had used his experience as an Inspector to deal with complaints from the border area. "Most of the chiefs know me personally from my own D.C. days and know it is useless to start on to old intrigues which I have washed out." But, he warned his successor, "My departure and your arrival will probably be the cause of a lot of stirring of old antagonisms, and attempts may be made to see if you are likely to reverse present policies". Struvé specifically warned the new governor that he would probably hear rumours of impending Nuer raids from the Dinka chiefs in the border area, from the government interpreters of Bor District, and from the mamur of Duk Fayuil near the Nuer boundary. The Dinka would use the fact that the Gaawar had rifles to try to convince him to mount a patrol which they could accompany as "friendlies", and would seek to be rewarded with captured Nuer cattle.

Of the two District Commissioners who were then in charge of Nuer and Dinka affairs, Struvé commended highly the Nuer D.C., Percy Coriat: "Coriat has the

Nuer side of the question at his fingers' ends, and has no illusions about the Nuers." Coriat did indeed have a detailed knowledge of the Nuer. He had begun his administrative career in 1922 at Ayod among the Gaawar. He became fluent in Nuer - - the first District Commissioner to become so - - and established close personal relations with the Gaawar, including the prophet Dual Diu. But in 1924 his headquarters were transferred to Abwong on the Sobat River, and by 1926 all the Gaawar had been transferred to a new and less experienced District Commissioner. Coriat retained only the Lou. Based among the Dinka around Abwong as he was, Coriat never came to know the Lou as well as he knew the Gaawar. Nor were his relations with the Lou prophet Guek Ngundeng as close and easy as those with Dual Diu.

The man who administered the Dinka of Bor district was Major "Tiger" Wyld, a man with a unique way of spelling which was the result, it was widely rumoured in the province, of his father being the Merton Professor of English Literature at Oxford. Wyld had no knowledge of Dinka or Nuer and relied exclusively on his interpreters and mamurs for information. Struvé was worried by the influence of these dubious sources, especially as Wyld was, perhaps true to his name and military background, a rather impetuous man. "Under a military style of Government," Struvé advised, "he might be something of a fire-eater, and too prone to force the pace; I sometimes think he chafes a little under the restraint of a chief who has himself got past that stage and seen the futility of it".

The new governor, C. Armine Willis, universally known as "Chunky", came from the Intelligence Department in Khartoum where he had spent the last ten years as both Assistant Director and then Director. He was a prodigious writer of reports and saw the role of his department almost solely as that of a confidential library service. Unfortunately he appears to have neglected some of the more immediate aims normally associated with Intelligence: in 1924 he neither possessed nor provided advance warning of the army mutiny and the "White Flag League" Revolt. This omission led to his being "reorganized" out of his department and transferred to the governor's office of Upper Nile Province. Willis resented his removal and posting to one of the least developed provinces in the Sudan. Seeing the transfer as a criticism of his personal and administrative abilities, he seemed determined to vindicate both his vigilance and his administrative methods. Having been swept out of Khartoum, he appears to have regarded himself as a new broom in a very dusty province.

His personal disappointment was manifested in suspicion and disapproval of the personnel of his new province, and he voiced this disapproval throughout his term as governor. He was appalled by the mid-western American missionaries on the Sobat and noted, "They need to be herded and watched." The wife of one of his D.C.'s, he wrote to his sister, was "thoroughly unsound on 'serviettes' - - you know the type well..." On more substantial matters he dismissed his predecessor's rather laissez faire style of administration as "the maintenance of adequate security at the lowest possible cost - - He did not demand a high degree of security; he was more concerned to keep expenditure down than to elaborate a constructive administrative policy." The tribesmen themselves he considered "practically primitive and somewhat trucilent (sic)..."

Willis persuaded Khartoum to allocate money for the development of the province, the most important grant coming from the Egyptian Government for the examination of irrigation schemes - a precursor to the present Jonglei Canal project. Using this as a base, Willis was determined to build " a more progressive policy" than his predecessor, bringing the peoples of the province into close contact with "civilization" for the first time. This required that the tribes be "organized and disciplined", in a process that involved "gradually eliminating elements adverse to Government and insinuating such benefits of

sanitation, education and progress as could be absorbed..." Such progress required the building of roads, as well as the creation of administrative chiefs and Chiefs' Courts through which the government could direct the peoples to their new destiny.

The government had been searching for chiefs for over a quarter of a century, with very little success. They had found men of some influence who were incorporated into the administrative hierarchy, but no one who could be described as an hereditary chief with traditional executive powers. There was a belief among administrators that hereditary chiefs did exist but that their powers had been destroyed in the last century and thier position usurped by the "kujurs". Since these kujurs were the most influential men then among the Nuer, a number of administrators had reluctantly decided that they should be included in the embryonic Chiefs' Courts until such time as the government could create a real executive chief. As one D.C. put it in the early 1920s, it was better to try to win them over to the government point of view "than appoint some nincompoop who could not stand up to the kujur". As Willis later claimed that all the "kujurs" were implacably hostile to the government, it is worth examining their relations with the government.

We have already noted Dual Diu's early difficulties with the government over the Tribal Boundary. After 1918, when a government post was established at Ayod near his home, his personal relations with the government seemed amicable, and he visited Malakal twice. In 1922 Dual proposed to settle all Gaawar blood-feuds at a reduced rate of compensation, a proposal which was in accord with the government's peace-keeping policies but which was successfully thwarted by a government-appointed chief from the rival primary section of the Gaawar. (The chief lived, or rather died, to regret his opposition, for two years later he was killed in revenge for an unsettled feud.) Tension was reported on the Nuer-Dinka border in 1925-1926, but the rumours emanating from Bor district about Dual's intended raids proved false. Coriat reported that Dual had not raided the Dinka for ten years. He seemed anything but hostile to the government, and Coriat described him personally as a "great friend".

Guek Ngundeng received considerably less sympathy from government officials. He had become possessed by his father's spirit Deng while in flight from government troops who were campaigning against the Lou and the prophet Pok Kerjiok in 1917. In 1920 the government heard rumours that Guek was planning to set up a "rival government". These turned out to have originated with the government interpreter at Nasir, who, because the local D.C. could speak neither Nuer nor Arabic, had become quite rich bytextorting bribes from people wanting cases heard.. Dissatified with the outcome, many people had gone to Guek and received more satisfaction. Guek was cleared of the charge of rebellion, but he followed his father's reluctance to deal directly with government officials. He sometimes stayed on top of his father's pyramid in a siezure of spirit possession throughout their visits. Because of this obvious reluctance to be involved with government affairs he was recognized as only a "sub-chief" of his own section. He was not considered to be as co-operative or as influential as Dual, and Coriat wrote of him,"The more I became acquainted the less did I consider him fitted as a Chieftain and had it not been for his Kujurial power and the necessity of keeping him in a position where he could be watched, I would have been prepared to ignore his influence entirely."

The other two Lou prophets were Pok Kerjiok and Car Koryom. After the 1917 Lou Patrol Pok had dropped out of the government's view. Even Wyld, who was vigilant in spotting anti-Dinka and anti-Government prophets, had never heard of him. Car Koryom came from a Lou section on the Nyarreweng

Dinka border that had intermarried extensively with the Nyarreweng and generally lived in peace with them. Car himself was cited in government reports as being active in settling or preventing feuds and preventing other Lou sections from raiding the Dinka. From a government point of view the Lou prophets had all been quiet, and even tractable, for over ten years.

The Conflict

The first phase of Willis' progressive policy was the building of a road through Lou territory to Bor District. A meeting of Lou chiefs was held in May 1927 where Coriat explained to each chief the section he was responsible for and the labour he was to provide. Guek spoke at the meeting, objecting to the labour involved. Coriat was surprised, as Guek had never taken much interest in administrative affairs, but he dismissed Guek's objection and emphasised that as he was only a minor chief he was expected to obey the instructions of those above him.

The precise nature of Guek's objection is still obscure. The Lou today admit that Guek objected to making the road, but they give various reasons for this. Some say that he objected to the labour involved, others that the timing of the project clashed with the time Nuer normally cleared their fields for cultivation.

Willis interpreted Guek's objection to road work as "anti-government" propaganda. In presenting this view to Khartoum he emphasised that Guek and all other "kujurs" were inevitably opposed to the government because "their position and wealth depend on keeping the people ignorant and frightened of their supposed supernatural powers; and in the nature of things they must be reactionary and opposed to a policy of progress such as the Government proposes". Both supporters and opponents of Guek among the Lou today deny that he intended to raise a rebellion over the matter of the road. They admit that Guek finally did decide to fight the government, but that this decision was based on the government's own actions and the insistence of other people. The corroboration of modern Nuer testimony provided by government files is surprisingly consistent.

After the May meeting Coriat went on leave and did not return until the end of the year. Therefore there was no Nuer-speaking official in the province who could check on the reports about his district. Reports of Guek's preparations for rebellion came in from two main sources, Wyld in Bor District, and Mor Lou chiefs. Wyld's reports all came via his interpreter and the mamur at Duk Fayuil, who were both Dinka. Considering Struvé's prediction that such rumours would come from precisely those sources, it is strange that they were believed. While it is true that reports from Mor Lou chiefs seemed to corroborate them, there is reason to suspect that such stories were motivated by sectional rivalry among the Lou. The Mor had always been reluctant to acknowledge Ngundeng, Guek's father, as a prophet, or abide by his prohibitions against feuds and raids against the Dinka. After Ngundeng died, feuds between the Gun and the Mor broke out into war, the "Kur Luny Yak" that Evans-Pritchard mentions as an extreme example of the intensity of inter-sectional fights among the Nuer. Guek's possession came after this war, and Lou testimony today confirms that he continued his father's preaching against feuds and raids. Government accounts of 1921 record that Guek admitted he had little influence over the Mor. Many individual Mor later sided with Guek in the hostilities against the government, but it need not surprise us that men who already owed their position to government support might have tried to use that support to weaken the influence of a rival. Thus, anti-Guek reports from a few Mor government chiefs cannot be

regarded as conclusive.

These reports, however, were believed by Wyld and Willis, both of whom were already predisposed to accept such accounts and to use them in urging an immediate response from the government. Willis, having been transfered from Khartoum for failing to discover a rebellion, was all too ready to take swift action at the first hint of rebellion in his new province. Wyld was quick to take advantage of the situation to put forward the interests of his district of Bor, which he felt had been overlooked by a pro-Nuer governor in the past. He agreed with Willis about the need to eliminate "Kurjurial power" in the province in order to protect the Dinka and establish administration. He had repeatedly requested that Dinka living among the Lou be resettled under the government chiefs of his district in order to bolster their power. Throughout 1927 Wyld repeatedly urged that a patrol be used to facilitate this transfer.

In August Willis persuaded Khartoum to authorize a patrol to "show the flag" among the Lou during the coming dry season of 1928. In September Wyld reported that his interpreter, a mamur and a Dinka chief had all reported the Guek planned to kill Coriat, raise all the Nuer, and parcel out "raiding rights" against the Dinka as far as Bor. Willis forwarded these reports to Khartoum, noting, "I have received reports which go to confirm the probable rising of Gwek Wonding as I had anticipated..." He went on to point out the residual benefits of such a rising: "In many ways however it gives an opportunity to start the 'native administration' with a definite demonstration of what is to happen to those natives who refuse to recognize the chiefs' and the Government's authority." Preparations for military operations thus continued, and work was started clearing a landing strip for the R.A.F. at Abwong.

In November H.C. Jackson, the man who had first contacted Guek in 1921, wrote from Halfa Province, where he was then governor, to point out that six years earlier, when reports of Guek's alleged rebellion had poured into Malakal from all over the province, the circumstantial evidence against Guek had been just as strong as it was now. When Guek was contacted personally it was found that the rumours were completely false. Jackson suggested the same procedure should be followed this time as well. The Governor-General agreed and suggested that Coriat, who would return from leave soon, should try to contact Guek first; if he failed, then and only then should R.A.F. planes be sent to bomb Guek.

When Coriat arrived in Khartoum he found that preparations had gone almost too far to be stopped. The use of planes seemed to have been an administrative decision, for the recent use in Iraq had led the government to try them against the Nuer "in order to determine their use, one way or the other in administration". The sheaf of telegrams and reports awaiting Coriat's arrival seemed to provide damning proof of Guek's intentions, and Coriat admitted that he had "gone too far to submit". Coriat received instructions to go to Abwong to discover the extent of Guek's support, but he was specifically ordered not, as he himself wished, to try to arrest Guek with the few mounted police at his disposal. He was given until December 7th to discover "whether it was war or not". Coriat was flown to Malakal and was in Abwong by the 27th November and on tour by the 29th.

It is here that a comparison of government and Nuer sources provides a curious reconstruction of events. Government documents record that a Lou Nuer chief, Dok Dieng, contacted the government three times between June and November. The first occasion was before Coriat went on leave when he urged Coriat to try to talk with Guek about the road again, but Coriat dismissed the suggestion. The second time he appeared at Abwong in November with an elephant tusk from Guek, protesting that Guek had no intention of fighting the government. The third time he came with a number of other Lou, including Guek's brother Bol, bearing a second tusk

from Guek, and presented it to Coriat just before he set off on his tour. Coriat replied that he was not satisfied with Guek's conduct and that he expected them all to meet him in a few days' time with other Lou chiefs to settle the matter. To ensure that they did, he detained Bol Ngundeng at Abwong.

The Lou remember Dok Dieng's attempts to appeal to the government. They also remember that he was one of the Nuer leaders who warned Guek of the government's preparations for war and urged Guek to fight. They also remember that other men who had been to Abwong with Bol Ngundeng when he was arrested urged the same course of action on Guek. In fact, it was only with the detention of Bol that Guek became convinced of the government's hostility towards him.

Coriat spent from November 29th to December 7th on trek in the Lou country. By this time the Lou anticipated some sort of conflict, and Guek was making preparations for battle. Coriat returned to Abwong where he met the Commander-in-Chief of military forces in the Sudan, Willis and other military officers. At this time Coriat still thought that he could resolve the matter personally if he was given a strong escort of mounted police to arrest Guek, but Willis vetoed this proposal. So it was decided to begin the campaign by sending four planes to bomb Guek's pyramid and village.

The decision to use planes was a matter of government conjuring. It was thought that the 20 pound bombs carried by four bi-plane bombers could destroy an earthen structure 60 feet high and 150 feet round at the base. It would be dramatic proof Willis claimed, that the Government had the stronger "kujur". It was to be humane proof too, for Coriat was to announce the date of the raid ahead of time so that "loyal" chiefs could evacuate their people from the area and no one would be hurt.

The announcement was duly made, but the government kujur had not counted on logistical problems, and it was found that the planes could not be made ready in time. The day of the raid passed with no raid taking place. Road gangs immediately left work. To raise government prestige again, a much more ruthless demonstration was planned for the following day. The planes raided the pyramid, arriving in time to interrupt the sacrifice of an ox. Their incendiary bombs failed to set fire to the village, and their 20 pound bombs missed the pyramid. The Nuer scattered. Another bombing and machine-gun run against the pyramid was held the following day, and the Nuer hid in their sorghum fields. The planes went out several days running, machine-gunning any concentrations of men or cattle they could find. The "morale effect" was considered excellent. The Nuer were thought to be terrified until one Nuer with a rifle shot at a plane and wounded the pilot in the thigh; thus grounding both pilot and plane for the rest of the patrol. The Nuer terror was then admitted to have "moderated". The total casualties inflicted by the R.A.F. were two old men and 200 cattle killed.

Troops had to be sent in. They succeeded in burning the village around the pyramid, but they were unable to find any large concentrations of Nuer to fight. The Lou had scattered when the planes had come and had gone into swamps where the troops could not follow, or had sought refuge among their neighbours the Gaawar. The first principle of "savage warfare", that of forcing the enemy to concentrate so that it could be decisively defeated, had been violated by the over-optimistic use of planes. After several weeks roaming around the bush the patrol could claim only a few prisoners. Their score in human casualties was slightly higher than the R.A.F., being 2 women and 2 children killed.

Government prestige had suffered with the failure to damage the pyramid. The Royal Engineers were called in to level it with explosives. Some thirty - four Lou chiefs were gathered to watch the demonstration, which took on the

atmosphere of a conjuring trick as Coriat told them that he would make the mound disappear in a puff of smoke at the drop of a handkerchief. The handkerchief was dropped, the charge set off, and t"The result was something of an anti-climax", Coriat later wrote. The wind blew the sound away, and all that was seen was "A puff of white smoke and a few lumps of earth tumbling down the side". Symbolic of the government's entire effort, only the top of the pyramid had been removed, leaving the base intact. Nevertheless the government in Khartoum announced to the papers back home and to the world at large that the pyramid had been "completely destroyed", and that "The destruction of this stronghold of wizardry symbolises the downfall of the kujurs..."

With the bungling of the Lou patrol it was now necessary to impress neighbouring Nuer with government strength and reassure the Dinka of their protection. The reports that Lou fugitives were with the Gaawar and that a new prophet, named Kurbiel Wal, had arisen among the Gaawar, determined the government to send a patrol to the Gaawar. Wyld was to come from Bor District and be met by Coriat and the new D.C. of the Gaawar.

During the planning of the Gaawar March Willis' condemnation of the prophet became more intense. He began to discover evidence of a conspiracy of "the kujur as a body" and he proposed "to remove any kujur who is using his magic for profit or politics..." This proposal to eliminate all "kujurs" alarmed the Governor-General. He declared himself ready "to deal strongly with hostile kujurs" but he feared that a general campaign against "kujurs" would only encourage opposition.[3] He cited Edwin Smith's The Golden Stool to support his reservations. Willis set about gathering information to support his claims of a conspiracy. He compiled a dossier on what he called the "Cult of Deng" and solicited information from his D.C.s. He hoped to show that the Dinka elements in the teachings of such prophets as Ngundeng and Guek constituted a foreign "cult" which had entered Nuer-land and was subverting Nuer custom and tradition. His D.C.s in the Shilluk and Dinka districts responded with reports corroborating his notion of the subversive nature of the Cult of Deng and the "Deng Men", and these were forwarded to Khartoum. His Nuer D.C.s, Coriat in particular, denied that any such thing as the "Cult of Deng" existed. These reports were not forwarded to Khartoum, and Coriat received a sharp reply from Willis for his pains. Willis then wrote his own account of the Cult of Deng. He moderated his original position slightly in the face of Khartoum's reservations, but he did say that he hoped that he would soon have "sufficient evidence to make the Cult of Deng an illegal society..." In this way he tried to link the prophets with recognized anti-government "magicians".

Meanwhile events among the Gaawar had escalated. In late February Coriat and the new Gaawar D.C. visited the new "kujur", Kurbiel Wal. He paid three bulls as tribute to the government and then disappeared. Coriat then turned his attention to Dual Diu and visited his cattle camp where he was joined by Wyld who was accompanied by 300 Dinka warriors who had followed him to Gaawar. Dual was still considered a "loyal" chief at this time. The meeting between Dual and Coriat was friendly, each giving assurances that they had no desire for hostilities. Unfortunately Coriat met stiffer opposition from Wyld who felt Dual's Gaawar should be disarmed; Wyld was not satisfied with Dual's assurances that he was not harboring Lou refugees. Coriat gave in, and Dual's camp was surrounded that night. At dawn the troops enterd the camp and according to one British eye-witness, "generally beat the place up..."[4]

Dual was incensed, and further injury was caused by some of the Dinka "friendlies" whom, he claimed, mutilated one of his bulls. He complained to Coriat and Wyld on the spot, but his complaints were rejected. It was from this

point that Dual, feeling betrayed, decided to break with the government. Coriat's remorse over this incident is clear, for two years later after hostilities with Dual had ended with his capture, Coriat wrote, "In my opinion Dual had material cause for grievance at the action taken on the Gaweir march..."

Willis continued innocent of any real understanding of the situation and was overjoyed by the results of the march. "The Kujur have been discredited" he reported, "and it has been brought home to the tribesmen that if they harbour rebels or refugees they get into trouble". The new Gaawar D.C. was left to roust out Kurbiel himself, while Coriat returned to track down the Lou prophets Guek, Pok Kerjiok and Car Koryom.

Reports of the downfall of wizardry had appeared in the home newspapers and Punch took a fancy to the names of two prophets mentioned. It published this confident jingle:

> I fear that Messrs. Pok and Gwek
> Will shortly get it in the neck
> And that an overwhelming shock
> Is due to Messrs. Gwek and Pok.
>
> Then let us mourn the bitter wreck
> In store for Messrs. Pok and Gwek
> When we administer the knock
> To Mr. Gwek and Mr. Pok.

This irritated the Gaawar D.C. who thought his efforts to hunt down Kurbiel were ill-appreciated. "I don't think many people seem to realize that the Gaweir kujur KURBIEL is a real die-hard", he complained to Willis. "His name has not yet appeared in the British Comic Press, but in my opinion his removal is just as necessary as that of any of the BIG THREE of the LAU".

The big three were to be joined by Dual Diu. In August, during the rains, he gathered a force of Gaawar, a few Lou and the inevitable Dinka contingent and raided the Nyarreweng Dinka and the government police post at Duk Fayuil. Though it was reported at the time that he had broken with the government because of the events of the Gaawar March, and that most of the herds he attacked contained Gaawar cattle confiscated by the government, Dual's action was interpreted as motivated by the Nuer's inveterate hatred of the Dinka. As Willis put it, the Nuer had an "inborn conviction that Dinkas existed merely to be raided". The fact that some Nyarreweng Dinka sent their cattle to Lou Nuer relatives during this period of Gaawar raids was also reported but had no effect on the standard interpretation.

The "kujurs" were in general revolt now, as Willis had confidently predicted over a year before. Police patrols were sent at the beginning of the dry season to try to locate Guek, Pok, Car and Dual. By early January 1929 it was decided that some radical form of administrative reorganization must be tried to bring about a final solution to Nuer unrest and Dinka fears. A "settlement" backed by "armed assistance" was proposed. This "Nuer Settlement", as it came to be called, consisted of concentrating the Gaawar, and the Gun and Mor Lou into specific areas, and creating a "No-Man's Land" between them and their Dinka neighbours. Those who had not concentrated by early February would be declared "rebels" and would be forced to move by police and troops. Not only would Dinka cattle and captives be returned, but Dinka currently living among the Nuer would be forced to move back to the Dinka areas, so that all the peoples of the area, Nuer and Dinka, would be organized to "establish proper discipline and control and preclude further disturbance of peace". The concentration and separation of the Nuer and

Dinka would be followed by the building of roads and the economic development of the area. The administration of "tribal discipline" would be carried out through the government-appointed Chiefs' Courts and Chiefs' Police. Prophets were naturally to be excluded from them.

The military phase of the "Nuer Settlement" was greatly helped by the return of Guek to the ruins of his pyramid. There, on February 8th, 1929, a patrol encountered him with some 200 of his followers. According to government sources Guek hoped to raise his sagging prestige by a successful contest of arms. According to Guek's nephew who was with him at the pyramid, Guek ordered his following to disperse before the government troops could arrive, but they decided to stand and fight. "The following morning," his nephew told me, "Guek's kuoth left him".

Nuer and government sources agree on what happened next. The government troops arrived and formed a square facing the pyramid. The Nuer made no motion to attack, so the soldiers fired in the air to bring them on. Then the Nuer began to advance, with Guek in the lead following a white ox. Guek's nephew, who was by his side during the battle, described it this way:

> When the Turuk (white man) came, Guek took an ox and walked towards the Turuk... Guek tried to spear the ox, but the ox turned away. He did this many times and the ox did the same until Guek wept. Then the Turuk shot him and also shot the ox. When we saw that Guek had been killed we fled. The Turuk killed thirty people from the family of Ngundeng of which I am a member. The Turuk took all our cattle and children who were left behind and took them to a place called Muot Dit.[5]

Guek's body was taken from the field and hung up on the branches of a tree near the pyramid. When the troops had left, some of Guek's wives returned and found him hanging there. He was taken down and buried. "He would have been buried in a hut," one man who lost two brothers at the battle later told me, "had it not been for the burning of all the huts by the Turuk".

With Guek dead the Lou obeyed the concentration orders, and all were reported to be in their assigned settlements by 17th February. Willis was delighted and wrote home,"Guek's death has given a great fillip to obedience. .." Dual was still at large, but Gaawar obedience to the concentration orders was aided by a rinderpest epidemic at the end of the year, which coincided with a crop failure. Dual was eventually captured or the Sobat river in 1930. By 1931 Car, Pok, and Kurbiel had all surrendered or been captured.

So ended the military operations of the "Nuer Settlement". The implementation of the "No-Man's Land" was more complicated. By 1931 it was found that the various groups of Dinka living among the Gaawar and Lou refused to move back to what the administrators called their original "homeland". Willis, who retired in 1931, left the province with this definite order: "The policy was laid down that Dinka should go to Dinka country and Nuer to Nuer. Where there is doubt as to the tribal identity of individuals, each case will have to be decided on its own merits." This was easier said than done. The province officials contemplated all sorts of means of effecting the transfer, even the removal of the shrine at Luang Deng from Gaawar territory to the new Dinka tribal area. One old Dinka chief was heard to declare that if he was forced to move he would tell his son to kill the Nyarreweng Dinka chief "who is getting the Turk to move us..."

Both Wyld and Coriat also left the province in 1931, so none of the formulators of the "Nuer Settlement" remained to implement it. The new governor, who had

served as an Inspector in Upper Nile during World War I, was faced with implementing a policy which was thoroughly unworkable. The new D.C. of Bor District fought for it as the cornerstone of his own district's adminisration, but he was faced with the fact that there were not enough Dinka in his district to occupy the territory the Lou and Gaawar had evacuated.

The Gaawar and Lou D.C.s found that the overcrowding of their districts caused by the concentration order was further complicated by another rinderpest epidemic in 1931 and floods which destroyed the crops in 1932. This, plus the refusal of the Dinka living among the Nuer to move, caused the governor to reverse the resettlement policy in 1933. In 1937 his successor abolished the No-Man's Land. This decision was marked by a grand fête of Lou, Gaawar and Dinka where the occasion was celebrated by relay races, which the Dinka won, and a tug-of-war, which the Lou won.

As administrative policy moved through the 1940s towards the creation of a grand "Nilotic Confederation" in the province, the "tribal boundary" was relaxed and the transfer of individuals between districts was allowed in a limited way. Large numbers of Dinka left Bor District and became Nuer during the economic hardships and floods of the 1940s, late 1960s and early 1970s.[6]

Prophets were still excluded from administration, but some were allowed to carry on in their religious functions. As the administration became well established and less fearful of opposition, more knowledgeable and sympathetic administrators began to adopt a more generous attitude to some of the prophets. The word "kujur" was replaced by the Nuer word "kuoth" in administrative documents. Of the prophets who were captured during the Nuer Settlement, Pok died in exile, Car eventually returned home, and Dual was released shortly before the independence of the Sudan, only to be rearrested again when the Dinka claimed that he was planning to raid them. He was finally released in 1957, when a peace-making ceremony was held between him and the Dinka chiefs. He died in 1968. His nephew, who was seized by the spirit Diu after Dual died, was accused by the Dinka in 1976 of inciting raids against them, but he was cleared of these charges when they were investigated and was commended for having tried to keep the peace between his district and Bor district.

Conclusion

Readers familiar with Evans-Pritchard's work on the Nuer may have already suspected how the events of the "Nuer Settlement" affected his perception of them. He has drawn our attention to the initial difficulties of his research, which began in 1930, deriving from Nuer suspicion of the government, and from the difficulties of obtaining information on the prophets when they had been killed, exiled or were in hiding (1940a: 9-11; 1954: 305). As there were no general anti-prophet regulations in effect among the Western Nuer, sky-spirits and prophets seemed better known there than east of the Nile, where they had been suppressed. This led Evans-Pritchard to make erroneous claims about their western origin and their diffusion eastward. It affected his analysis not only of Nuer prophets, but also of the true impact of Dinka ideas of Divinity on Nuer religion. Evans-Pritchard's representation of Dinka influence on Nuer religion is that certain Dinka ideas and practices arose outside Nuer society, among the Western Dinka, and entered from the West and moved eastward. He sees the Dinka ideas and spirits as something ultimately separable from Nuer society, and in his analysis of the relationship of spirits to the social order he does not seem to see the social order extending beyond the boundaries of Nuer society. His studies of Nuer kinship offer proof of the massive absorption of Dinka into Nuer society (at least among the Lou), but he tends to see the result as the domination of "Nuer society" over the Dinka, rather than a fusing of the two.

These impressions were perhaps confirmed by his experience in Western Nuer, where he terminated his investigations. There the Nuer and Dinka again faced each other across province boundaries. The military activities of the prophets still active in the West seemed to confirm the case the government has presented concerning the Gaawar and Lou prophet's aggression and hostility to both the government and the Dinka. Evans-Pritchard seems to hace accepted the general trend of this part of the government's argument, though he was unable to accept particular details, especially those presented by Willis.

It was not just his view of the prophets that was affected by the "Nuer Settlement". Evans-Pritchard did not see Nuer society, especially Lou society, in its natural state. He found the people artificial and forcibly separated from the Dinka. As the Nuer had been told that the patrols sent against them, the confiscation of their cattle, and their removal to fixed concentration areas was done in part on behalf of the Dinka, their resentment against the Dinka is understandable. Evans-Pritchard's analysis of Nuer-Dinka relations is slightly ambiguous, for contrasted with the rapid and relatively easy assimilation of Dinka into Nuer society, are a number of exaggeratedly hostile and violent personal statements of various Nuer against Dinka. Evans-Pritchard left the "Nuer Settlement" area before the reversal of its policies began. He completed his research before the "No-Man's Land" was abolished. He therefore had little opportunity to rectify his earlier impressions.

Modern anthropologists, by ignoring the "Nuer Settlement" entirely, have continued to be misled in their interminable revisions of the Nuer material. A few have added the writings of contemporary administrators to some of the more extreme Nuer statements recorded by Evans-Pritchard to develop bizarre theories concerning the origins of the two peoples. Others have used Willis, despite or perhaps because of Evans-Pritchard's warnings about his reliability, to revise Evans-Pritchard's own analysis of the prophets. There was an example recently, in an Oxford seminar, of how something as remote from the political events of the "Nuer Settlement" as a detailed argument about pastoralism and the economic nature of bridewealth can be distorted by citing Evans-Pritchard's account of Nuer pastoralism in the early 1930s, without taking into account how the machine-gunning of Nuer herds by planes, the confiscation of cattle, the effect of two rinderpest epidemics in three years, and the hiding of cattle from government patrols and tax assessors might have affected his impressions.[7]

The "Nuer Settlment" was a brief episode in Nuer history and the history of Nuer Administration. As an attempt to settle once and for all Nuer-Dinka relations it failed, for it was based on an erroneous appreciation of those relations. This misunderstanding arose as much from the structure of administration in the province at the time, as from the personalities of the men involved in implementing or opposing the "Nuer Settlement". The balance of Nuer-Dinka relations in the Upper Nile Province had been complicated by the administrative divisions which introduced the opposition of district interests to the other tensions of the area. Where the government intervened in Nuer-Dinka disputes its solutions were very frequently the results of inter-district compromises based on the balancing of the administrative objectives of opposing districts.

The objectives of those representing Bor District over the years had come to be aggressively defensive on behalf of the Dinka against the Nuer. They had aimed at controlling Nuer contacts with the Dinka, and at isolating the Dinka from the Nuer in order that the Dinka might strengthen their own position. As long as Bor District was part of Mongalla Province, the Upper Nile Province staff reacted with suspicion at what it feared were attempts to interfere with its own province administration. This suspicion favoured a pro-Nuer attitude in Nuer-Dinka disputes that crossed province lines.

When Bor became part of Upper Nile Province in 1926 and the last governor involved in the Upper Nile-Mongalla disputes left, the inter-provincial rivalry that had supported Nuer claims in the province vanished. But the interests of Bor District as an administrative unit remained. To defend these interests the Bor D.C. advocated the isolation of the Dinka from the Nuer and the strengthening of the Dinka population at the expense of the Nuer districts, by the resettlement of Dinka from the Nuer districts. No longer supported by another province in disputes with the Nuer, Bor district had to gain administrative strength at the expense of the Nuer districts in order to defend its own interests. The D.C. at Bor, Wyld, already convinced of a Nuer threat to his district, was vigilant to spot and eager to point out evidence of this threat.

Willis' defence of his own interests was no less vigorous than Wyld's. His policies in a province where he had no personal experience were as much an answer to Khartoum's implied criticism of his abilities as a response to the province's own needs. He was quick to spot potential opposition not only because he had failed to spot an uprising in his last post, but also because he expected resistance from the "kujurs"; he shared the general attitude of administrators in the Sudan which branded the "kujurs" and other such persons as reactionary and troublesome . When, therefore, Wyld produced evidence proving the need to defend Bor district from the Nuer, this evidence confirmed Willis' anticipation of opposition, and he was quick to prepare for rebellion. Once Khartoum accepted the need to prepare for an uprising, it was only a small step for the central government of the Sudan to use the opportunity to carry out its own experiments-in this case an experiment with the use of planes in administrative patrols. The preparations of the government produced the very uprising the government had anticipated. The experimental use of planes scattered the original target and necessitated the extension of operations to other groups of Nuer. This government action brought the Gaawar into open opposition. The expanding Nuer resistance justified the government's contentions about the danger of prophets and the need to protect the Dinka from the Nuer.

This "proof" has found its way into innumerable scholarly studies about the Nuer and the Dinka, resulting in the current state of anthropological understanding of the area. No attempt has yet been made to analyse the government's accounts or understand the motives behind administrators' statements. They have been treated as equal in validity to Evans-Pritchard's work. All Nuer source material has assumed a timeless quality, as if the discussion of mere events had no bearing on the discovery of eternal truths. It is ironic that Evans-Pritchard's material has been treated in this way, for he repeatedly complained of the lack of historical method in modern anthropology. That his own work should be placed in its historical context is both a fitting extension of his own interests, and long overdue.

Douglas Johnson.

NOTES

Space does not permit the full citation of references. Quotations from documents have been taken from the following: Civil Secretary, Intelligence, Dakhlia and Upper Nile Province files in the Central Records Office, Khartoum; Administrative, Army, Tribal and Governor's Office files in Malakal, Upper Nile Province; the Willis Papers, Sudan Archive, University of Durham; the Coriat Papers which recently have been donated to Rhodes House, Oxford; and the published Sudan Intelligence Reports.

Interviews among the Gaawar and Lou Nuer and the Nyarreweng Dinka were conducted in February-July 1975, and March-August, 1976. All research was carried out in preparation for a doctoral dissertation in African history at UCLA. The events described will be published in more detailed articles elsewhere in the future.

1. Much confusion has arisen in recent anthropological writings about Nuer-Dinka relations, so it is best to emphasise that the Dinka discussed in this paper (as well as in most of the writings of Evans-Pritchard) are the Eastern Dinka of Upper Nile Province, about whom considerably less is known than the Western Dinka of the Bahr al-Ghazal Province.

2. The evidence for this statement, which is contrary to almost, all other written accounts of Ngundeng, must be accepted as conclusive. My Lou informants were unanimous on this aspect of his teachings, and their statements were confirmed by other Gaawar Nuer and Nyarreweng Dinka informants. Francis Deng records a Ngok Dinka song (no. 90 in The Dinka and their Songs) which also confirms Lou statements made to me. Early government reports also record peaceful relations between Ngundeng's Lou and the Ngok and Nyarreweng (Sudan Intelligence Report, no.128, 1905, pp.6 & 8). These have apparently been overlooked or ignored by later administrators and by Evans-Pritchard himself.

3. The campaign against the prophets was complicated by the murder of Capt. Fergusson, D.C. of the Western Nuer, at the end of 1927. Fergusson's district was then in Bahr al-Ghazal Province and was due to be transferred to Upper Nile. It was recognized that Fergusson's death was unrelated to events east of the Nile, but attempts were made to attribute the murder to the "kujurs" of the Western Nuer. It was at first supposed that the man who instigated the murder was a minor prophet named Garluak Nyagh. Suspicion fell on him in part because the real instigator of the murder, a "loyal" government-appointed chief, had accused him to the government, and in part because he was a prophet and therefore immediately suspect. Fergusson's own attitude towards prophets had been ambivalent, for he praised the work of some and killed four others during a punitive patrol. Willis later claimed that it was from Fergusson that he first got the idea of eliminating all "kujurs". But Fergusson's views were so ambiguous that the Governor-General also cited them back to Willis in support for his prohibition against a full-scale campaign against the prophets of the east.

4. This is the account of Capt. Romilly, as recorded by B.A. Lewis in a file in the Malakal archives. Romilly accompanied the Gaawar March as a soldier but later entered the Sudan Political Service and became a Nuer D.C. In the post-"Nuer Settlement" era of the 1930s both he and Lewis maintained that Wyld's actions during the Gaawar March were largely responsible for the alienation of Dual Diu and the Gaawar.

5. Ngundeng is supposed to have achieved his victory over the Gaawar-Dinka aggressors by sacrificing an ox on the battlefield while facing his attackers. Guek was clearly attempting the same thing. In this account his failure is attributed to his kuoth having left him because it disapproved of fighting.

7. David Turton, "The Economics of Mursi Bridewealth: A Comparative Perspective", Feb. 9, 1979.

6. Space does not permit recounting the full details of the complex relations that have existed, and still exist between the Gaawar, Lou and their Dinka neighbours. One should however, contrast the general pattern of Nuer dominance there with Western Nuer's relations with the Dinka of the Bahr al-Ghazal. Between 1911-1918, for instance, the Western Jikainy were forced to flee south of the Bahr al-Ghazal because of Kuil (Rueng) Dinka raids. At one point the Western Jikainy so feared the Kuil Dinka that they demanded

government protection. Further south the Agar Dinka, under Wol Athiang (the man who master-minded the annihilation of the Egyptian garrison at Rumbek in 1883), dominated Nuer-Dinka raiding until well after the establishment of the colonial administration. Wol's name is still regarded with awe by the Nyuong, Dok and Jagai Nuer.

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THE USE OF THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE FRAMEWORK IN THE ANALYSIS OF EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

In much of the literature concerned with the analysis of the role of women in a given society one theme seems constantly to repeat itself. In a very general sense this theme can be summarized by the old saying which Elizabeth Janeway uses to introduce the first chapter of her book Man's World, Woman's Place (1977): 'It's a man's world. Woman's place is in the home.' These two aspects of cultural space have been labelled public and private or public and domestic. Often they are depicted diagrammatically as overlapping or concentric spheres, or, as I have done, (Skar 1978) as a vertical continuum corresponding to altitude, a model which tries to take into account an outside world. This image of space as divided between the sexes is no doubt useful in the analysis of ethnographic material, particularly material from the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Nevertheless I feel there are some problems in trying to apply such a model to the analysis of the role of women in an acephalous society such as the one I studied in highland Peru.

In the case of Matapuquio, I found the exercise to be ethnocentric, reflecting our own preoccupation with woman's liberation and our struggle to enter a man's world, to break out from the home and participate on a wider scale in an area previously reserved for male activity. The model which characterises the men's sphere as public and the women's as private or domestic corresponds to divisions in our own society or rather to a pervasive myth in our culture, and is constantly reinforced in our literature. For this very reason, however, we should be wary of applying it elsewhere. Indians in Matapuquio do not compartmentalize their world in this way.

A second danger in applying this division is that it evokes a long list of characteristics associated consciously or unconsciously with each sphere. Public/private is linked with active/passive, extrovert/introvert, outside/inside, culture/nature, high prestige/low prestige and so on. 'Woman's place' is a shorthand phrase which sums up a whole set of traits, attitudes, and ways of presentation which we think proper to women along with the obligations and restrictions that these imply.

I should stress that I do not see myself as an opponent of this way of analysing sex roles and/or the division of labour in western cultures or in others. Rather I am searching for new ways of examining the problem which can give a truer grasp of a particular anthropological situation. There have been some very convincing arguments put forward in the literature as to why the designation of the public sphere can be equated with the male domain and the private sphere with that of the female.

I shall outline some of these before considering them in relation to my own work. Many of these arguments are based on the assumption that women are universally in a subordinate position to men: because women bear, give birth to, and nurse the infant members of a society, they are bound to the home and to domestic activities to a much greater extent than men. The mother-child relationship is thus seen as the pivotal point around which the public/private framework is articulated. Rosaldo defines the domestic sphere as referring to 'those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organized

immediately around one or more mothers and their children; "public" refers to activities, institutions, and forms of association that link, rank, organize or subsume particular mother-child groups' (1974:23). She goes on to say that this model 'does not determine cultural stereotypes or asymmetries in the evaluations of the sexes but rather underlies them' and, finally, that the opposition between domestic and public orientation 'provides the necessary framework for an examination of male and female roles in any society' (ibid:24, my emphasis). Her definition of public and private assumes, however, a certain lack of male activity in the private sphere; it is a model used 'to understand the nature of female subordination and the ways it can be overcome' (ibid). But is such a framework necessary or even desirable in the analysis of cultures in which the public and domestic spheres are indistinguishable and the centre of life for both men and women is the home? If the public sphere is so diffuse and the private sphere so pervasive for both sexes what would be the analytical use of such a framework?

Engels, drawing on Morgan and Marx's notes, attempted in The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State to provide a 'consistent cultural-materialist view of prehistory' (Harris 1969:247). In prehistory, he claimed, there was virtually no private sphere except in the context of the mother-child relationship. Emergence of private property was the determining factor in the creation of the private sphere and women became the main occupants of this sphere. Here we are provided with the elements around which so much of the later discussion of the role of women in a particular cultural setting has revolved. Engels distinguished between a public and a private sphere, one being the domain of men and the other the domain of women. Most importantly he linked the existence of these two spheres to a materialist cause, the emergence of private property. It is recognized now that Engels was inaccurate in some of the details of his theory but Marxist writers involved with women's studies, seeking to shed light on the relationship between the nature of women's role in the domestic sphere and the mode of production, still try to link materialist causes to the relative inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the public and private spheres (see, for example, Bujra's introduction to Women United, Women Divided (1978)). Much of the discussion centres around the differences in degree of female subordination between foraging societies and sedentary ones. Many of the articles in Reiter (1975) exemplify this. Reiter's own article in the book makes a case for the increasing isolation of the public and private spheres as part of a whole range of changes brought about by the emergence of the state: class develops as an organizational institution which competes with kinship as the principle around which resources are controlled; the declining importance of kinship ties has resulted in a gradual and more complete segregation of public and private spheres.

Other students of women's role are more concerned with gaining an understanding of how women in a given culture view themselves and how they are viewed by others. The symbolic articulation of being female as well as the ideal norms associated with the status of being a woman are taken as important signposts in the analysis of woman's role. Okely (1975) and Hirschon (1978) are two examples of this sort of investigation. Analyses such as these, searching for the perceptual factors which delineate the boundaries of female status and role in a given society, view the public and private domains not so much as articulations of the

division of labour between two inherently different modes of production (as in Marxist analyses) but as a means of dividing space both symbolically and perceptually. The public and private spheres in this instance serve as conceptual aids in understanding the significance of the status/role complex of women.

In studying the literature on Latin America as background to my work in Matapuquio, I have found too much emphasis given to the stereotype mestizo concepts of machismo and marianismo. Though ultimately sex categories, these two ideal types, one associated almost exclusively with the public domain, the other with the private, are Latin American phenomena with roots in the continent's Mediterranean heritage. The use of these ideal types to explain much of the interaction between male and female in Latin America has become so prevalent that it is difficult to conceptualize the problem in other terms. One is constantly confronted with them, both in the literature and in every-day conversation. The more familiar figure in the dyad is the macho, who is defined as possessing a 'sense of exaggerated masculinity or a cult of virility whose chief characteristics are extreme aggressiveness and intransigence in male-to-male interpersonal relationships and arrogance and sexual aggression in male-to-female relationships' (Stevens 1977:141). Marianismo, the female side of the coin, takes its name from the veneration for the Virgin Mary, who is the female ideal and who symbolizes the excessive veneration demanded by women. Women see themselves as having greater spiritual strength and capacity for sacrifice than men. Marianismo expresses the women's philosophy of passive acceptance of life's hardships including the aggression and infidelity of men. The women's place in this context is not simply in the domestic sphere but more restrictedly in the home, waiting faithfully for the macho to return from his exploits in the public sphere, those with 'loose' women as well as those in the political-economic arena.

This Latin American example of macho and maria as social types strongly associated with the public and private spheres stands in stark contrast to Indian images of what it means to be men and women. In contrast to the macho/maria pattern of the dominant mestizo culture, with which the Indians live in constant contact, Indian males do not

> engage in sexual conquest as a validation of their masculinity; sexual conquest does not add luster to the reputation of the individual. Exploitation of one sex by the other encounters little sympathy just as political or economic exploitation of one by another is not countenanced within the boundaries of the community (Wolf 1959:223).

In order to discuss these perceptions of male and female roles among a particular group of Quechua Indians, as well as to come to grips with some problems in using the public/private dichotomy, a certain degree of background information is necessary.

I carried out my fieldwork with my husband in 1976-1977. Our purpose was to study the impact of the Peruvian land reform on a Quechua Indian village in the southern sierra (or high mountains) of Peru. I was particularly interested in studying the changing role of women under the process by which the large landed estates (haciendas) were being turned into co-operatives (Skar 1978). The village we lived in was called Matapuquio and

was divided into two moieties, an upper half called Antaccasa and a lower half simply retaining the name of Matapuquio. The village was located half way up a steep south-oriented slope in the Pincos Valley.

To simplify the discussion, I am going to concern myself solely with the situation in the upper village of Antaccasa, taking into account the possible implications of the lower village material in my closing remarks. I will try to illuminate the problems involved in applying the public/private framework to this material and to suggest an alternative way of conceptualizing the position of Matapuquio's women in relation to men.

Let us start by considering what much of the anthropological literature would define as the private domain. In Quechua the term for household is wasifamilianchis - literally 'our house family', as opposed to other family members that are not of 'our house'. The emphasis here is on the house, a place of residence usually consisting of one or possibly two adobe structures partially enclosed by a low wall, the whole complex again being surrounded by the household's corn field. The one or two adobe structures that comprise the wasi are not lived in, however, in the sense in which we think of living in a house. The 'living' goes on in the courtyard or under the overhanging eaves of the buildings. The actual structures have two purposes. One has the dual function of kitchen and a kind of pen for small domestic animals such as guinea pigs, chickens, and dogs. The other room or structure serves as the household's warehouse and is called the marka. The marka contains the maize, potatoes, grains, dried meat and cheeses by which the household subsists. Agricultural tools, saddles and horse blankets, a few purchased staples, festive clothing and the musical instruments played only on ritual occasions are all hidden within the bowels of the windowless marka. All household members no matter how young or old have certain rights over the contents of their marka. They guard these rights from intruders, both symbolically and practically, by simply sleeping in front of the marka door at night and having watch dogs posted outside the carefully padlocked doors during the day. Protecting the marka against thieves or mishap is of extreme importance to the household members. The contents of the marka represent rights in land and animals for every person in the household; therefore guarding it is equivalent to guarding the very basis of one's livelihood.

Although the marka's contents ultimately are pooled to provide food and clothing for all the household's members, it would be erroneous to equate the wasifamilia with the family farm in Chayanov's sense of the word - i.e. a production/consumption unit, the means of production held and exploited jointly between household members. Wasifamilia members show a qualitatively different view in their attitude to the contents of their marka and to the basic resources of land and animals which the marka represents. Every household member from the infant at baptism (or more typically at his first haircutting ceremony) to the aged are individual owners of land and animals. Through gifts, inheritance, and industry a person can increase his possessions. Though productive activities are carried out jointly, individual household members never lose sight of their approximate rightful share. This individualistic orientation applies equally for females and males. For instance, inheritance rules by which all offspring divide equally the land and animals of their parents assure sisters equal economic status with their brothers.

In productive activities men, women, old and young members of the household each have their particular duties, to a certain degree defined by sex. Men and women work the fields together while the older generation takes care of the youngest children. Older youngsters may tend the animals or help alongside their parents in the fields. Sex-defined tasks seem to be complementary and not rigidly enforced.

There are, however, two areas in which male and female activity are segregated to a greater extent than otherwise. Women have the main responsibility for herding, and men comprise almost all the regular work force at the hacienda in the valley. Both of these activities are at least in part integrated into a money economy, whereas all other production belongs strictly to the subsistence economy. Thus women and men have independent access to money, which again reflects the basic orientation of the individual exploitation of resources.

In anthropological work in other contexts the household is taken as the very heart of the private domain associated with women. Here, however, it is a kind of corporation whose members, male and female, each claim shares in the contents of the marka. It is the home base to which members return in the evening from their dispersed activities to eat and sleep, only to be up and gone again at day-break.

As to the demarcation of a public sphere, there is indeed constant vigilance against 'foreign' calamity from the unknown, a vigilance which bears witness to a basic orientation villagers seem to have towards anyone from the outside; but this, I argue, has no similarities to anything which might be called a public sphere in the traditional sense of the term. If the marka represents the centre of the household, something to be guarded by night and carefully locked by day, who are the thieves or outsiders who would threaten one's very existence by stealing from it? When asked directly, this question elicits many vague answers, such as "the people of lower Matapuquio. They are bad people (mala gente) and cannot be trusted." In other contexts, however, tales begin to surface of robbers who until recently roamed the mountains preying on undefended Indian villages. Travellers fed themselves by stealing from the fields, and in time of food shortage, mestizos simply rode into the mountains killing sheep and chickens and demanding maize and potatoes without recompense. There was no justice. From all the historical accounts of the lawlessness in the sierra, these stories might certainly be true. Fear of being robbed is very real, even though the enemy is ill defined and in one's mind ultimately resides on the periphery of village acquaintances, typically someone (unnamed) from the other village half. This threat from outside the household group, while seeming to come from the 'public' domain of the village, is actually a force which comes from outside the village altogether.

In my description of the wasifamilia, I have gleaned away many of the details of daily life that make this an intimate and thoroughly integrated group in order to bring out the underlying individualistic attitude towards production and consumption activities. The household ideally is comprised of the nuclear family and is naturally the scene of very close family ties. But the household is a part of the village as well and must in some way be integrated into this wider system. It is in the process of such integration that we might expect the first signs

of public institutions to appear, 'activities, institutions, and forms of association that link, rank, organize, or subsume particular mother-child groups', as in Rosaldo's definition quoted above. Now the private domain of the mother-child dyad, if we could say such existed in Matapuquio at all, is composed ideally of the triad of male, female and offspring. The privacy of the private domain is thus made no less so by the active participation of males in child rearing and in domestic activities of all kinds, not only in those considered to be the responsibility of men, but also in others ideally designated for women. This seeming equality between the sexes within the context of the wasi and wider afield on the village slopes is the basic reality of everyday life for villagers of both sexes. Having established that, in this context, there is no private or domestic domain peculiar to women, we must answer the remaining question: are there any 'linking institutions' which might be termed public and specifically the domain of men? Going beyond the boundaries of the single wasi, we must seek out the organizational principles that form the basis of village integration.

True to the male-oriented nature of our discipline, our first reaction might be to look towards political institutions as a source of asymmetrical positioning of the sexes. This initial reaction, however, would divert us from the most important integrating factor within the village, that of the ayllu.

Matapuquio is a village of the dispersed type; after the Spanish Conquest there was no resettlement of its population, as in the case of the reducciones. In colonial times some villages were forced to relocate, building their homes close together around a village plaza and going out to their fields on the outskirts of town to work each day; the dispersed village type is undoubtedly of pre-Conquest origins. In a dispersed village there is no plaza. Each house is located on the edge of its fields, particularly maize fields, so that a map of the houses and fields has a distinctly patch-work appearance. The few families who sell basic supplies as a source of extra income do so from an extra room in their house, one that opens out onto a village path. Practically speaking, then, there is no village centre or focal point; each of the composite units which make up the village seems to exist independently in relation to the others. This, of course, is an illusion. Each household unit is bound to other similar units by a complex system of cooperative work groups and reciprocal ritual activity. The principle of the formation of such groups is found in the concept of ayllu.

A Matapuqenian defines ayllu as 'our extended family' or familianchis. Because the very notion of ayllu implies mutual trust and aid, the question that naturally follows is, how far does the extended family extend? The reply to this question is unfailingly : it depends on the situation. Your ayllu is first of all your close kin group, both affinal and bilateral. It is with this closest group that you share reciprocal work arrangements, called ayni, and that you have the greatest social contact. Because of the system of inheritance in which all children inherit land equally from both their parents and a system of marriage which shows strong endogamous tendencies not only within the village but more importantly within each moiety, your nearest neighbours tend to be members of this closest kin group. The members of a marriage partnership do not live at any great distance from their parents, or more importantly from their

married siblings. However not all members of this closest kin group, which in the literature is often termed minimal ayllu, are in fact mobilized to work in ayni. Such work group formation is dependent not only on kinship affiliation but on all participants having approximately equal resources. Forming work arrangements with siblings of the same sex seems also to be a factor, the group being just as frequently brought together by sisters as by brothers.

No two groups of full siblings share exactly the same minimal ayllus; thus the various minimal ayllus (including spouse, half-siblings and first cousins) form a kaleidoscope of overlapping affiliations which at its greatest extension encompasses the entire village. When work projects of a wide nature are undertaken, mobilization of personnel occurs through the coupling of minimal ayllus. Neighbourhood irrigation projects bring together perhaps a few minimal ayllus, while the cleaning of all the village's irrigation ditches involves everyone. Such community-oriented work projects are called faena.

Participation in the faena is at the very heart of community membership. A village-wide faena is always organized in such a way as to express the inherent competition between moieties. The work is divided in half so that workers from the upper village compete against those from the lower village in completing the project. Because there is 73% endogamy within the two moieties, the village halves are closely knit kinship groups which for convenience may be termed optimal ayllus. Though the very idea of community-wide faena confirms the acceptance of the claims of the maximal ayllu, the village, effective mobilization takes place within the context of the two optimal moiety ayllus. Village integration is thus a family affair which, as is true in most families, is fraught with ambivalent feelings of dependence and competition. Although a person with a strong personality - a man or a woman - may emerge as a leader in the context of a particular project, the real power resides in the ayllu configurations and the affiliation one has with these.

There is in fact only one village institution which can be said to represent even slightly a form of village leadership. The varayoqkuna are the appointed officials in the village, appointed yearly and in rotation, and as the name implies, the institution has roots in both a colonial and Incaic past: Vara means staff in Spanish; yoq is the Quechua suffix for "master of" (Métraux 1959:231). In Matapuquio there are four varayoqkuna. They have both a ritual and a law-enforcing role to play in the community. Because the ritual responsibilities require the efforts of both partners of a marriage team, all varayoqkuna are married, and though the appointment is made in the name of the male partner, it is in function an office held by both husband and wife. Formal appointment of the new varayoqkuna is made on New Year's Day in the town of Huancarama. On this occasion both husband and wife must travel to town to accept the new staff of office; though the husband is the one to step forward and accept the staff and the official blessing, the wife is also present. Just as her participation is needed in fulfilling the responsibilities of the office, her presence is required for the ritual acceptance of that responsibility. Travel outside the village is a rare occurrence, and those few times in the coming year when the varayoqkuna are called upon to leave, they will do so together, husband and wife.

Equally, the responsibilities of the varayoqkuna can only be carried out by a marriage team, the men, for example, organizing the work of a community project and the women administering and directing the preparation of the large quantities of food necessary. The authority of both the man and the woman are again needed in aiding in the resolution of conflict. Often this occurs by the mobilization of relevant kin to intercede or by direct confrontation between the varayoqkuna and the conflicting parties, which are most typically mixed groups of men and women. Finally, the economic requirements of holding the office of varayoq requires the cooperation and complementary efforts of both spouses. Here the stores of the marka are in question, and before the year of office is over many will have had to contribute economically to the carrying out of official duties.

Our search for something outside the context of the household which might bear resemblance to the public sphere so far has met only with wider and wider rings of family affiliation traced through both the men and the women of the household. The increasing inclusiveness of the ayllu organization eventually takes in the entire village, binding it together into two moieties but ultimately into a single unit. Aside from the varayoqkuna who are in effect male-female representatives for their segment ayllus, there are no true leadership positions in the village, in its traditional form.

In the case of a basically acephalous village organization based largely on kinship affiliation, a complementary, though certainly not rigidly exclusive, division of labour between the sexes, a basic attitude of individual economic independence, and an ethos of mutual respect and cooperation as well as a certain degree of competition between the sexes, the applicability of public and private spheres seems questionable. What then can be used as an alternative model by which to grasp the significance of men's and women's roles in such a society?

Here we have arrived at the crux of the problem. I can find very little warrant for the use of public and private even as conceptual tools to begin the analysis of sexual roles. Household and village organization are in fact not separate at all, but are parts of an integrated whole, the organizational principle of which can be traced to the nature of the bilateral kinship system. What then is the difference between the roles of men and women in Matapuquio? If indeed it is so difficult to point out differences between the economic roles of the sexes, and the public/private spheres do not correspond to any symbolic or perceptual organization of the problem, surely there must be some other perceptual model which can deal with the fact that to be a woman in Matapuquio is not the same as to be a man?

The best way of addressing the problem seems to me to be through the Quechua concept, yanantin. Yanantin means equality or equal entities but has the additional connotation of a mirror relationship (Mayer 1977:77). The conceptualization of space is perceived in this way, the upper and lower villages representing mirror images of each other. The village is so situated on the slope that whether in the upper or the lower half, the other moiety is laid out before you. You are directed automatically towards contemplating the opposite though equal image. Left and right hands are also seen in this way. They are opposite yet equal. The concept of yanantin is linked with many aspects of

Quechua ritual life as well and seems to be a basic part of the way in which the pervasive duality of the culture is expressed. In fiestas women sit in a long line facing the men, each group ritually drinking together. The woven designs on ponchos and mantas (carrying cloths) are made in such a way that one half is the mirrored opposite of the other.

It should come as no surprise that the conjugal relationship is said to be a yanantin relationship. As is true of the poncho, the one half of the conjugal pair is felt to be incomplete without the other. Though the complementarity of the division of labour within the household is rarely rigidly maintained, the pervasive attitude is that both man and woman must labour together as a unit in order for their work to be successful. This is most clearly expressed in planting and harvesting activities, where both the male and female working together in the fields are felt to be essential to the fertility of the earth. In the cultivation of maize, for instance, the man digs the furrow and the woman plants the seed. These equally important though opposite activities of digging up a furrow and closing the earth over the seed are more than simply means of ensuring agricultural fertility. They express the equality and opposition in the relationship between husband and wife.

The concept of yanantin is essential to the analysis of sex roles in Quechua society. In the case of Matapuquio this conceptualization of sexual difference seems to have certain advantages over the public/private framework. The mirror image model does not ignore the existence of differences between the sexes, and differences in ways of experiencing and perceiving one's own sexual role. On the other hand it avoids the obvious question of subordination implicit in the public/private framework, a question which raises the problem of not only the degree of subordination but also the different nature of the subordination in the public sphere and in the private sphere - if such spheres can be found at all. The concept of yanantin has the added advantage of being an indigenous concept rather than a potentially ethnocentric one. Some students of cultures may criticize this use of indigenous concepts in that they hamper our ability to make cross-cultural comparisons. I would argue, however, that our comparisons should establish how indigenous groups understand sex differentiation, rather than how we might understand it.

Sarah Skar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fieldwork on which this article is based was supported by the Norwegian Research Council for the Humanities and the Sciences and the Lumholtz Grant from Oslo University. I am indebted to both of these institutions for making the research possible.

An earlier version of this article was presented to members of the women's anthropology group seminar at Oxford. I particularly want to thank the members of this group for their criticisms and encouragement.

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THE SYMBOLIC ATTRIBUTES OF THE WITCH

'"The witch" is largely a symbolic personality.' — Jean Buxton.

A large proportion of the definitions of witchcraft and sorcery that have been offered by Africanists in the last forty years are based on what can be termed "Evans-Pritchard's distinction", the distinction between witchcraft and sorcery that is made by the Azande. The clearest statement of this distinction is the following:

> Azande believe that some people are witches and can injure them in virtue of an inherent quality. A witch performs no rite, utters no spell, and possesses no medicines. An act of witchcraft is a psychic act. They believe also that sorcerers may do them ill by performing magic rites with bad medicines. Azande distinguish clearly between witches and sorcerers (1937:21).

From Evans-Pritchard's statement we can see that method is a major basis upon which the Azande distinguish between witchcraft and sorcery. Yet there are many African witches who use medicines. Focussing on the use or non-use of medicines, therefore, is not the best way to distinguish between witches and sorcerers. The clarity, simplicity and authority of Evans-Pritchard's statement have meant that ethnographers have tended not to ask whether the Azande distinguish between witchcraft and sorcery on any other grounds, and if they do, whether some of these other grounds would be better for general definitional purposes.

If we examine Evans-Pritchard's work it can be seen that Azande witches and sorcerers are contrasted in at least five ways:

Witch	Sorcerer
1. Power to do evil lies in innate physical substance inherited unilineally.	1. Power to do evil lies in the use of medicines, ritual, spells.
2. Can sometimes (but not usually) act unconsciously.	2. Must always act deliberately.
3. Produces slow wasting illness.	3. Produces sudden and violent illness.
4. Very important sociologically to Azande commoner. Not important to nobility	4. Tends to exist outside social system of commoners. Very important to nobility.
5. Characterized by an image of inverted symbolic attributes.	5. Not characterized by symbolic attributes.

In societies with two types of evil practitioner, the difference that occurs most frequently is the fifth. I would suggest that it is impossible to define witchcraft until it is recognised that the definitional problem is a problem of symbolic classification. Witchcraft beliefs are united around the image of the witch, an image made up of a number of different symbolic attributes, and it is these attributes that should be used in defining witches and witchcraft.

The similarity of these attributes has been recognised by many anthropologists (e.g. Richards 1964; Mair 1969). Whether one examines the beliefs of the Navaho in the United States, the Cebuano of the Philippines, the Mapuche of Chile, or fifteenth to seventeenth century Europe, one finds readily identifiable features in the image of the witch. Although witchcraft beliefs involve many elements, these elements always constitute a system for the personification of power and evil and are always found combined in a particular pattern, one of symbolic reversal and inversion, a pattern first isolated by Middleton (1954) and to which each society 'adds it own embellishments' (Mayer 1954:4).

On this basis we may say that the witch is a person who is thought capable of harming others supernaturally through the use of innate mystic power, medicines or familiars, and who is symbolized by inverted characteristics that are a reversal of social and physical norms.

What is interesting about the similarity of witchcraft beliefs wherever they are found is that, despite the wide variety of symbols, human beings have chosen time after time similar ways of expressing and personifying power and evil. We shall now examine these symbols in detail and attempt to show why they are so appropriate for constructing the image of an evil and anti-social person who possesses a great deal of supernatural power.

* * *

A. Symbols of Power - Fire and Heat Symbolism

The major way in which the witch's supernatural power is symbolized is by some form of fire or heat symbolism. Fire is one of the most important "natural" symbols. It is also the type of symbol to which Turner has applied the term 'polysemous' (1967). It has several qualities linking it with other objects which tend to assume a similar symbolic value by virtue of their association with fire. Fire is hot, and it is therefore linked symbolically with other things that are hot or considered to be heat producing. Fire is red or yellow (a colour which tends to be classed with red) and is therefore linked symbolically with other things that are red such as blood. Fire also casts a light so it can be considered a symbol of light as well as heat. In the literature one sees that witches are said to either 'emit a bright light' as they fly through the air or to be seen as a 'ball of fire' in the sky. Heat and light are mentioned together so often in the same context in connection with witches that it seems safe to consider them as aspects of one another and not as separate symbols.

In many cases heat and light are associated with those who possess good spiritual power. These symbols can also be associated with those who possess bad spiritual power however, a fact for which there is abundant ethnographic evidence in the many forms of association one can find between heat, light, and witches. In fact there would be enough evidence for one to be able safely to say that any form of extraordinary or supernatural power, good or bad, can be, and often is, symbolized by or associated with, heat or light in some manner.

An excellent example of such an association between sorcery and heat can be found in Sorcerers of Dobu. Fortune states,

> the sorcerer engaged in sorcery believes that he must keep his body hot and parched; hence the drinking of salt water, the chewing of hot ginger and abstention from food for a while (1932:295).

A similar association between fire, heat and witchcraft can be found in many societies. One finds beliefs that the witch can be seen as a 'ball of fire', bright light, sparks, or a 'glow in the sky'. One reference for the Akan will give a good example of beliefs of this type:

> "Witches go naked. Then they begin to glow. The extremities begin to glow, especially the mouth which glows like a fiery ball". They go out "emitting flames from their eyes, nose, mouth, ears and armpits" (Debrunner 1961:20-21).

Another type of association between witches and heat is for fire or light to be associated with the witch's familiar in some way. Perhaps the best explanation for this lies in the fact that the familiar is usually regarded as also having supernatural powers of one type or another, a fact which may be symbolized by some form of heat symbolism. Alternatively, the familiar, simply by association with the witch, may acquire similar symbolic attributes.

A number of writers have attempted to explain the witch's fire in a literal manner rather than attempting to discern the symbolism lying behind this particular attribute of the witch. Field, for example, tries to explain the 'fiery glow' of a Ga witch's susuma. She states,

> This fire, though associated by every African with the activities of witches, has never been mentioned in the confession of any witch I have ever met. I have never seen such a fire, though I have stayed out for whole nights in places where they are said to appear. They are sometimes seen over water, appearing and disappearing, and on the seashore. The seashore is often a filthy place, strewn with human excrement and heaps of household refuse and decaying fish, so that the presence of phosphine and methane would not be too surprising (1937:146-147).

This sort of explanation is really not a satisfactory one for the association of light and fire with witches. Curiously no one has ever attempted a symbolic explanation for the witch's fire despite the large amount of descriptive material that is available on it. Hopefully the statement that it is a symbolic representation of the witch's 'heat', which is in turn a symbolic representation of the witch's supernatural powers, will be seen as an adequate and satisfactory explanation for the many forms of association between fire, light, heat and witches in systems of witchcraft beliefs.

B. Symbols of Evil

1) Symbols of Physical Inversion

The basic pattern of witchcraft beliefs being one of social and physical inversion one can say that inversions of one type or another are the most frequently used means of symbolizing the witch's evil. Having discussed this aspect of witchcraft beliefs in great detail elsewhere (Standefer 1972), here we shall focus only briefly on actual physical inversions.

Winter has commented that 'The behaviour of witches is not only thought to be different from that of ordinary people, it is the exact reverse' (1963:292). He states that among the Amba this fact

'is immediately apparent in the adoption by witches of postures which are in actual fact upside down' (ibid). The linking of the two facts, inverse moral behaviour and actually being physically upside-down, is significant. In addition to these upside-down symbols we can also find many "backward" symbols, another form of physical inversion.

a) Upside-Down Symbols

The "inverted" witch is often thought of as being quite literally inverted, i.e. upside-down. Debrunner cites a characteristic belief about Akan witches,

> Before they leave the body, they turn themselves upside down ... They walk with their feet in the air, that is, with the head down, and have their eyes at the back of the ankle joints (1961:20).

In another text, describing what will happen to you if you acquire a witch's demon, it is said that 'You walk with the legs in the air and the head downwards' (Debrunner ibid:58). The Iteso 'say that witches dance upside down' (Nagashima 1970, personal communication). Kaguru witches are thought to travel upside-down, either 'walking upside-down on their hands' or by hugging their hyena familiars 'by the belly as they race through the sky' (Beidelman 1963:65). A witch may also 'turn the head of a person upside-down or may reverse the person's sleeping position' (ibid).

b) Backward Symbols

As another symbolic indication of their social inversion, there are a number of things that witches are thought to do backwards. The Ewe witch, for example, when it walks upright, has its 'feet turned backward' (Africa 1935:550).

Among the Bhaca a witch is believed to ride his baboon familiar with 'one foot on its back and facing the tail' (Hammond-Tooke 1962:284). He states that witches are always thought to 'Approach a kraal backwards' and gives the explanation that this is 'so that they can get away quickly if necessary' (ibid). Although the latter explanation for the backward behaviour of the witch is reasonable enough, it is far more likely to be simply another inverted symbol.

2) Natural Symbols

a) Body Symbols

Mary Douglas has said 'Most symbolic behaviour must work through the human body' (1969:vii). Although one may not agree with such a categorical statement (as there are many other types of symbols), it is certainly not difficult to find numerous examples of ways in which the human body is used symbolically in systems of witchcraft beliefs.

(i) Nakedness

Nakedness is often thought to be one of the attributes which identifies a person as a witch. An Abaluyia informant told Wagner that a particular person was known to be an omulogi (witch) 'because he has been found outside all night without wearing any clothes' (1954:41). The Fipa image of the witch is that 'of an old man who goes around his village naked at night ... and his wife also naked, who carries her husband upside-down from her shoulders' (Willis 1968:3-4). The Kriges state that Lovedu who have seen witches 'always

describe them as naked, perhaps because people always sleep naked wrapped in their blankets' (1943:251). This is another example of a literal attempt at explaining a symbolic attribute - and not attempting to see what lies behind the symbolism itself.

There seem to be two major ways of explaining the witch's nakedness. First, it is a reversal of normal behaviour because normal people usually do wear clothes of some type. Even in societies where there is a tradition of nudity or near nudity, there are rules governing the degree of nudity permitted, what parts of the body can be exposed and to whom, as well as very definite concepts of modesty. Beidelman makes a number of interesting points about this in 'Some Notions of Nakedness, Nudity and Sexuality Among the Nuer' (1968).

In discussing Kaguru beliefs, Beidelman sees the supposed nakedness of the witch in terms of inversion:

> A witch's nakedness is a further inversion. Kaguru are traditionally prudish regarding exposure of the genitals. One's exposure is an insult to those who see him (1963:67).

That people we would normally regard as naked are still expected to wear something is well illustrated by the following quotation which also has an interesting association with witchcraft. Munday, in a discussion of Lala witchcraft, states that a child

> is taught never to go out of the hut stark naked, a small piece of string will do, but he must wear something; this is not from motives of modesty, but to prevent him from being mistaken for a witch (1951:12).

This quotation provides an illustration of the important distinction between "nudity" and "nakedness", a distinction of the utmost importance for understanding the emphasis upon nakedness in witchcraft beliefs. The best explanation of the difference between the two is given in Sir Kenneth Clark's <u>The Nude</u>. He states,

> The English language, with its elaborate generosity, distinguishes between the naked and the nude. To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition. The word nude, on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenceless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body: the body re-formed (1956:1).

(ii) <u>Eyes</u>

The eyes are used symbolically in four major ways in witchcraft beliefs. Witches can be said to possess the "evil eye" or to have special or extraordinary sight. The eyes of witches may also be described as 'red' or as 'bright', 'gleaming', or 'emitting fire'. The belief that witches have extraordinary sight which enables them to see things ordinary mortals cannot see is often mentioned. The Mandari believe that 'those with the Eye and witches see liquid passing into the stomach', for example (Buxton 1963:106). A Cewa witch is said to have red eyes which are thought to result 'from staying up all night' (Marwick 1965:74).

A possible explanation for the emphasis on red eyes (which can only be interpreted as the <u>whites</u> being reddened) is that a great deal

of symbolic significance can be attached to the fact that something ordinarily or usually white has turned red. The change of a bodily substance from a colour signifying purity, goodness and innocence to one that can symbolize danger and evil is a very effective way of symbolizing the negative, evil character of the witch.

(iii) Excrement

Another type of body symbolism associated with the witch is the belief that the witch uses human excrement (usually in medicines) or has filthy habits. This association with excrement can also be regarded as an association with something 'black', which, as we have seen, is a colour often associated with witches.

The Dinka witch is believed to defecate in public places. Lienhardt states that

> He excretes in the middle of the homestead, urinates in the cooking-pots, and leaves silently. If he is caught about these tasks, he is an outlaw and in danger of his life ... The excretion of the witch in the centre of the homestead is ... a subversion of the values which the Dinka attach to the human community, an invasion of the homestead and the human order by the unregulated behaviour of the wilds (1951:307).

Douglas explains the symbolic use of excreta by the Lele witch as a form of complementary dualism:

> The idea of the sorcerer, as the epitome of badness, is contrasted with the idea of the good man who is sensitive to bahonyi [shame]. The sensibilities of the sorcerer are blunted and his ingrained malice drives him to heap grief and shame on his fellow man. The concept is based on the full range of paired opposites. His lethal charms are supposed to be concocted with foetal matter. Disgusting things rouse no revulsion in him, and are the hall-mark of his trade (1955:399).

(iv) Blood

In order to understand the symbolic use made of blood in witchcraft beliefs, it is useful to consider concepts about blood and the values attached to it in a few tribal societies.

The article on "Blood" in Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics states that in tribal societies it is thought that 'life is the blood and vice versa: when the blood left the body, it carried the life with it' (Robinson 1908:715). Though this may be a little overstated, it would still appear to be the case that a large number of societies do regard blood more or less in this manner, considering it to be vital to life, associated with life or even symbolic of life itself.

Blood is an ambivalent symbol, however. Among the Kaguru, for example, it can be associated 'with life ... fertility and the perpetuation of the descent group' but it can also be associated with 'death and danger, passion and the uncontrollable'. 'The redness of blood is sometimes compared to fire which, with all its many uses, can also be dangerous' (Beidelman 1963:328).

The most thorough examination of concepts about blood in an African society is to be found in Turner's work on the Ndembu. He states, 'The blood of a healthy person "wanders about" ... in his body' (1962:148). There are '"good" and "bad" sorts of blood for the Ndembu, and indeed redness is a highly ambivalent concept' (ibid). The blood of a healthy person is thought to be 'clean and white'. White is here being used 'metaphorically in the sense of "pure", to describe blood that is untainted by disease' (ibid:147). Blood that has been attached by disease is considered to be 'bad' or 'black' (ibid:148). Turner found that red symbols stood for 'the blood of witchcraft/sorcery' because that was the type of blood 'which is seen when witches eat human meat' (ibid:155).

There are many examples in Africa of societies in which it is thought that the witch is a vampire who can kill 'by sucking the blood out of a person' (Africa 1935:553; describing beliefs about Akan witches).

The Akan have some very interesting beliefs about what witches are thought to do with the blood they acquire through vampirism. They do not appear to keep it and digest it in their own bodies right away, or use it to increase their own vitality (a belief found in many societies). Rather, it is thought that they store it - either in a communal pot or a witch's own individual pot (Debrunner 1961:38), or in a bottle or bucket which they conceal somewhere (ibid:27).

One Akan woman who confessed to being a witch referred to the witches' meeting place in a tree. She said that

> it was there that they boiled their meat and that was why they were keeping salt in that hole. She said that the other bottle contained pure blood which served as oil for them (ibid).

The witches' pot was thought to be a significant part of their witchcraft apparatus. Debrunner reports that it was said that the pot '"must always be filled with blood or all their undertakings will be nullified"' (ibid:29).

The Wolof doma or witch is thought to be a vampire addicted to drinking blood. 'He is thought to be particularly attracted to the 'blood associated with childbirth and circumcision' (Ames 1959:265), both of which are rites de passage marking changes in personal status (which are traditionally thought to be dangerous times for the person undergoing the change in status). It is significant of course, that these are the two main rites de passage at which blood is shed.

Familiars are sometimes thought to be vampires who drink or suck blood. The Bhaca mamlambo, a snake familiar, is thought to suck 'while the victim is asleep and he dies without being sick' (Hammond-Tooke 1962:285). Although Ndembu familiars do not appear to be thought of as vampires, they are nevertheless associated with blood in Ndembu thought. Turner states that tuyebela or familiars 'are commonly supposed to be kept in the menstruation hut' (1967:78ff.), which is of course a very appropriate symbolic association as menstrual blood is classed as "bad" and "black".

Finally, Yoruba believe that the witch is able 'to prolong her own life ... by drinking the life blood of numerous victims' (Prince 1961:798). Prince adds that 'it is for this reason that old people are suspected of being witches' (ibid).

(v) Sexual Symbolism

Another type of body symbolism associated with witches is sexual symbolism. There is a tremendous amount of data on the association of witches with one or another types of sexuality. In African witchcraft beliefs the main emphasis is on sexual perversions, something that contrasts rather markedly with the sexual emphasis in European witch beliefs where witches are thought to take part in orgies, to copulate with the devil or an incubus or succubus (spirit familiar). African witches are said to commit incest or acts of bestiality, homosexuality or lesbianism, or to co-habit with spirit familiars.

The major purpose of an African marriage being that of producing children, it should not be too surprising to find that one of the most usual activities of the witch is thought to be that of preventing conception in some way. There are two ways in which sterility and impotence in men and barrenness in women can be associated with witchcraft. The more usual belief is that witches cause the above maladies; the other is that people with these maladies are witches. A sterile man is 'often regarded as a sorcerer' by the Ndembu (Turner 1957:107). The Dinka associate monorchids with witchcraft. The link is made partly because they are abnormal human beings, but also partly it seems, because of the belief that they are impotent. In a number of societies a barren woman is thought to be a witch. The Luo believe that if a couple is sterile one of the pair must be a witch, for it is believed that a union between a witch and non-witch will be unproductive (Whisson 1964:15). There is also the belief in many societies that witches can make birth difficult for a woman.

There is a great deal of emphasis in systems of witch beliefs on the fact that witches have intercourse with improper categories of persons. The major illustration of this type of belief of course is the emphasis on the supposed incest of the witch. This can be father-daughter incest, mother-son incest, brother-sister incest, father-in-law - daughter-in-law incest, or simply clan incest. One often reads that witches are thought able to increase their power or the strength of their medicines through incest.

Prohibited categories of relatives are not the only categories of improper person however. Sometimes it is believed that the witch will have sexual relations with an immature girl or a very old woman, or very young children.

Sometimes nymphomania or excessive sexuality is believed to be a characteristic of a female witch. The Ndembu 'strongly condemn excessive sexual desire and associate it with propensities to sorcery and witchcraft. Like witchcraft, desire ... is "hot"' (Turner 1957:151).

b) Animals

Animals comprise another category of natural symbols associated with witches. This association can take a number of forms. Animals can either be the familiars of witches or creatures into which the witch is said to become transformed. Sometimes certain animals are simply said to be 'associated' with witches, with no particular type of association specified.

The animals most frequently mentioned as familiars of African witches are snakes, owls, hyenas, and leopards. These are primarily night animals, a fact which would make them "naturals" for the role of witch's familiar. They have other characteristics as well which makes their choice as symbols appropriate.

Hunter refers to the ichanti or snake familiar of the Pondo witch and states that it 'has great eyes with which to stare at people' (1936:286). Crawford states that 'animals such as snakes are dangerous because they can kill; owls are feared because they fly when all other birds sleep' (1967:71).

Explanations have also been advanced for the selection of the hyena as a witch's familiar. Beidelman states 'A hyena is considered to be the epitome of all that is objectionable and unclean' (1967:299). The hyena has characteristics of a particularly obnoxious type that make it a fairly obvious natural symbol. It is active at night, is greedy and filthy, is a scavenger which feeds on dead meat and has also been known to dig up corpses from graveyards (an activity quite commonly associated with witches).

The association between snakes and witches is fairly easy to explain with or without any discussion of phallic symbolism or Freudian suggestions about the fear of snakes. First of all, obviously, snakes are extremely dangerous to man and are therefore animals to be feared, despite their lowly position as 'creatures which creep and crawl'. Although snakes do move about during the day, they are far more active at night, at which time they are twice as dangerous because they are more difficult to see and can be stepped on - sometimes with fatal results - more easily. They also have prominent eyes, a characteristic of some animals which seems occasionally to have been related to their selection as animals to be associated with witches and the power to harm others. Finally, some snakes are black, a fact which makes them a very appropriate natural symbol for witchcraft beliefs.

c) Colour Symbolism

The colours most frequently associated with witches are black and red. These of course, along with white, are the primary "social" colours, to which symbolic values are attached far more than any other colours. Although one cannot make a categorical statement to the effect that only black and red are used to symbolize witches (for there are a few examples of white being associated with witches as well), nevertheless the instances in which black and red predominate are far more common than those in which white is used. It would therefore appear safe to say that black and red are the "colours of witchcraft". It is interesting to ask what association these colours have.

Turner has made many careful analyses of Ndembu colour symbolism. Most of what he says about black, white and red symbolism for the Ndembu is applicable to other African societies (and non-African societies) as well. The cluster of values associated with these colours seems to have a widespread, if not almost universal, reference among tribal peoples.

> Whiteness is all that is open, honest, generous, pure, responsible and pious. It stands also for social unity, and for concord between the dead and the living, between traditional precept and actual behaviour (1962:145).

Black objects, on the other hand, in ritual 'often stand for witchcraft and death and sickness it produces' (Turner 1968:188). Black 'is the colour, not only of death, but also of sexual lust and adultery (which sometimes lead to murder and sorcery) in the idiom of Ndembu colour symbolism' (1962:134-135). Turner also discusses a particular type of tree which has black inedible fruit and states that its blackness is said by Ndembu to represent death, badness, impurity, misfortunes and trouble (1968:188).

Turner says that red symbols also stand for the 'blood of witchcraft/sorcery. This is the blood "which is seen when witches eat human meat"' (1962:155). Turner found that there was a mixture of red and black "things" in the symbolism of Ndembu witch beliefs. Such a statement would be true for the witch beliefs of many African societies. The two colours occur in a wide variety of contexts.

Red or black medicines are often thought to be used by witches. LeVine states that poisons 'allegedly used in witch killings', which he has seen unearthed from Gusii houses, 'are usually black or red powders concealed in small reed tubes' (1963:227). Turner states that the Ndembu allege that witches 'make use of material considered "black" and "impure" such as the feces of their intended victim, cindered foreskins stolen from circumcisers, and the like, as ingredients of death-dealing "medicine"' (1967:80). Nyakyusa say that '"a person has a black heart" or "has black blood" or is "black in his face towards us" when he is thought to be a witch, eating his fellows, or when he is a thief, or a liar, or an adulterer, or dirty' (Wilson 1959:141).

d) Night and Darkness

There are many references to the nocturnal activities of witches. Among other things, witches are said to fly by night, to leave their bodies at night, to appear naked at night, to belong to a coven whose members 'meet at night', or to be associated with 'night creatures'.

The association of witches with night and darkness is not really very difficult to explain. First of all, it is the most frightening period of the day, when human beings are able to see far less than when it is light. The dark holds many unknown terrors for the tribal person, terrors that can be in the shape of wild animals, evil spirits, angry ancestors, sorcerers or witches, and few except the most intrepid seem willing to venture away from the relative safety of the homestead at this time. People cannot carry on their normal daytime activities at night for three important reasons; first because it is difficult to see to do one's work properly, secondly because the dark is frightening, and thirdly because it is the time for sleep. This makes the night even more dangerous however, because man is particularly vulnerable and defenceless when he is asleep. It is an ideal time, therefore, for witches to attack. LeVine for example, states that 'The fear of witches and witchcraft among the Gusii is associated with a general fear of the dark and its denizens' (1963:249).

Because night is a time of insecurity, it really seems only natural that witches would be thought to be most active then. The witch's nocturnal activities can be regarded as a reversal of the usual way of doing things. Normal people stay near the homestead and go to bed at night. Witches, on the other hand, fly away to meet with other witches, dance, and take part in necrophagous feasts.

Finally, nighttime is dark, or classificatorily black, with all the associations going with this colour. Witches are often associated with black things so the use of black symbolism, combined with the belief that witches work at night, helps the symbols to reinforce one another and heightens the impression of the witch's evil and anti-social nature. Dinka witches, for example, are closely associated with night creatures and the night:

> Working by night is working secretly. Night is the time of concealment ... A Witch dare not be seen at his work, and works alone under cover of night. He is therefore associated with some of the commonest night-creatures ... the owl and the night-jar, birds of the night(Lienhardt 1951:309).

One might well say that night and darkness are natural symbols that have made an impress on the human mind as things to be feared. In constructing the image of the witch, therefore, it is only to be expected that witches would be symbolized as working primarily in night and darkness.

3) Anomalous Symbols

Sometimes an anomaly of a particular type will brand an individual as a witch. Physical deformities of one type or another can be associated with witchcraft. Among the Lugbara 'Often men with some physical disfigurement, such as a missing eye or nose, are thought to be witches' (Middleton 1960:241).

Sometimes events which do not conform to the usual order in which it is felt that they should occur can be associated with witchcraft. An example of such a practice can be found in the Azande fear of someone who 'cuts his upper teeth first'. Evans-Pritchard states that Azande say of such a child:

> "Oh, what a child to have his teeth appearing above. It is a witch. Oh protect my first-fruits lest that possessor of evil teeth goes to eat them" (1937:57).

Twins are another type of anomaly that can be associated with witchcraft. It is a fairly common practice in Africa to expose one or both of a pair of twins, although the reasons for doing so vary from tribe to tribe. Beidelman notes that among the Kaguru, twins are 'sometimes spoken of as being witches' (1966:363).

4) Symbols of Parody

Witches are often thought to parody normal forms of behaviour. The giving of feasts, practicing the principle of reciprocity, singing and dancing, the playing of games and even fighting of wars, are all thought to be the activities of witches. In systems of witchcraft beliefs however, these are usually given an appropriately macabre twist. The organization of a witch's coven can parallel the normal social organization of the society, and the tools, vehicles or equipment used by witches are often similar to those used in the normal world, although again, they may be given a macabre touch.

The major activities of witches, aside from the harming of their victims and the general causing of trouble for others in their society, would appear to be feasting and dancing. Almost everywhere that there is a belief in a coven it is also believed that members of the coven feast and dance when they meet. These activities are distinguished from normal feasting and dancing, however, in that it is believed that witches eat human flesh at these feasts and dance naked, upside-down or back-to-back.

The social organization of the witches' coven often parallels normal forms of social organisation. Winter states that 'The manner in which these witch teams are conceived is very reminiscent of actual groups in the society' (1956:150). The Sukuma would appear to believe that witches parody normal forms of social organization as well. Tanner states:

> Every form of activity in Sukuma life has its society with graded ranks, specialized knowledge, and meetings; and witchcraft is no exception with its dark secrets and night meetings in which the members dance and sing in lonely places (1956:439).

There can be ranking within witch companies - usually based on the amount of power that a particular witch possesses. Evans-Pritchard states, for example, that among the Azande there are thought to be

> status and leadership among witches. Experience must be obtained under tuition of elder witches before a man is qualified to kill his neighbours. Growth in experience goes hand in hand with growth of witchcraft-substance (1937:39).

Witches are sometimes thought to have a system of apprenticeship whereby one must train to become a witch. Like many ordinary human groups, the witch coven also sometimes requires an initiation fee before allowing someone to become a full member. The macabre twist usually given in the case of the witches' coven however, is the fact that the initiation fee is often believed to be a human life, usually that of a relative of the witch himself. Among the Gonja, for example, 'A part of the initiation is the bringing by the novice of one of his or her own kin to serve as the first meal of human flesh and the admission price to the coven' (Goody 1970:209).

There can be a distinctly commercial aspect to some witchcraft beliefs. Kopytoff states that Suku witches sometimes operate by 'special magical means that, like all magic, is purchased from others. Not unexpectedly, witches want to be paid in flesh which is their currency' (1968:2).

Witches are believed to play games like ordinary people, including football. In order to do so, however, they may, like Cewa witches, '"cut off a person's head and play ball with it"' (Marwick 1965:76). Akan witches are also said to 'engage in ... harmless pleasures such as dancing and playing football where they are said to use a human skull' (Debrunner 1961:31).

Other forms of parody can be found among the Tiv,

> It is said that for everything that is owned by man the mbatsay have their equivalent. They have a lamp, which they call ishan, and the oil which is burnt in their lamp is human fat (East 1965:248).

Although witches are most often believed to ride familiars when they fly off to join the coven, sometimes their vehicles are direct parodies of vehicles in the normal world. Some interesting examples of cultural change can be found in the witch beliefs of the Cape Nguni, Bakweri and Tiv. Modern vehicles such as cars, bicycles, lorries and planes have obviously made an impression on the minds of those constructing systems of witch beliefs. Hammond-Tooke, in discussing Cape Nguni witch beliefs, states:

> Informants stressed that witches ... were extremely active in the community and that of latter years they had developed more sophisticated techniques. There was much talk of "flying machines" used to spirit away victims (1970:28).

Akiga provides the following description of the vehicles of modern Tiv witches:

> since the white man came, and the mbatsay have seen the bicycle, they have made bicycles for themselves to ride by night, and motor bicycles too, and cars - nothing is beyond the power of the mbatsay (East 1965:248).

Ardener states that the Bakweri believe that witches have 'a town and all modern conveniences, including ... motor-lorries' (1970:147).

Symbols of parody can be, and often are, used extensively in witch beliefs. Perhaps their major purpose is to provide convincing details about the parallel world in which witches operate, a world that may become more believable if witches are said to do things that normal people do (in their own macabre way of course).

5) Necrophilous Symbols

Many of the symbols used in witchcraft beliefs are symbols that can be termed "necrophilous", symbols of death and decay. There is such a marked emphasis on necrophilous symbols in witchcraft beliefs that we may say along with certain natural symbols and symbols of reversal and inversion that they are one of the major categories of symbols associated with withcraft.

The morbid dwelling on the supposed necrophagy of witches (or the eating of the dead flesh of their victims), the belief that many if not all deaths in the society are caused by witches and the belief that witches may use parts of a dead body in making medicines all provide examples of necrophilous symbolism.

Fromm, in The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil, has written at length about the 'necrophilous orientation'. As he uses the term it includes something rather wider than a simple preoccupation with matters relating to death and the dead.

> The person with the necrophilous orientation is one who is attracted to and fascinated by all that is not alive, all that is dead; corpses, decay, feces, dirt. Necrophiles are those people who love to talk about sickness, about burials, about death. They come to life precisely when they can talk about death (1964:39).

Among other characteristics 'The necrophilous person is attracted to darkness and night' (1964:41). Fromm also states that

> The necrophilous tendencies are usually most clearly exhibited in a person's dreams. These deal with murder, blood, corpses, skulls, feces (1964:42).

The parallels between the necrophilous orientation and witchcraft beliefs are clear and the following statement by Wagner about Abaluyia beliefs is a good example of the necrophilous content of witchcraft beliefs:

> all poisonous plants and roots, crawling animals (snakes, lizards, worms, etc.), all birds that feed on carrion, faeces of men ... and any decaying matter, eggs (because they rot) and objects of a similar nature are looked upon as "evil substances" which are used, or alleged to be used, by witches and sorcerers in the preparation of their evil magic (1954:52).

A necrophilous orientation 'is the most morbid and the most dangerous among the orientations to life of which man is capable. It is the true perversion: while being alive, not life but death is loved: not growth but destruction' (Fromm 1964:45).

Among the social conditions which produce a necrophilous orientation, Fromm suggests the following:

> Perhaps the most obvious factor that should be mentioned here is that of a situation of abundance versus scarcity, both economically and psychologically. As long as most of man's energy is taken up by the defence of his life against attacks, or to ward off starvation, love of life must be stunted, and necrophilia fostered (1964:52).

Fromm's description of the necrophilous orientation and his attempt to describe the social conditions under which it arises have a great deal of relevance for the understanding of witchcraft beliefs.

Fromm's really major contribution, however, is his suggestion that the necrophilous orientation arises under conditions of stress and acute deprivation. Many explanations of the existence of witchcraft beliefs in African and other societies offer a similar perspective.

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The symbols of witchcraft beliefs are chosen through the working of a variety of symbolic processes. The basic symbolic pattern is one of reversal and inversion, but a number of other symbolic patterns can also be identified, including the use of appropriate "natural symbols" of various types, symbols of parody, anomalous symbols and necrophilous symbols.

Having analysed the symbolism of witchcraft beliefs, I should like to comment briefly on the value of comparative studies. It would be fair to say that, although the basis of anthropology is comparison, anthropologists to date have not made as full use of the comparative method as they might have done. There are many problems in ethnographic literature that can only be solved by intensive comparative analysis. It is essential for the good health of our discipline to make room for more large-scale comparative studies. This means encouraging both established academics and graduate students to attempt such studies despite the enormous amount of time they may take. Today when opportunities for field work are, in any case, drying up, it would be a very sensible thing for a small proportion of scholars to be diverted from field studies in order to read widely in a particular problem area, look for recurring patterns in the phenomena they are studying and then just sit quietly for some time and think about it all. In this way, it may be possible to make some new and interesting discoveries, and, in the process, add to the "theoretical capital" of our discipline.

What then has the analysis of witchcraft beliefs told us about the human mind and the way it works? It would seem that the main thing we have learned is the fact that man has the mental ability to create many diverse forms of "collective representations", selecting items from his social and physical environment, which he then combines according to a number of different possible patterns existing in potential at all times. Given the nature of man's mental capacities, his basic concerns with food, health, reproduction, and social security, a threat to any of these may be regarded as "evil". A potential pattern exists which could be invoked at any time to personify this threat by creating the image of a witch. Not all societies take advantage of this potential pattern however. It usually is found in societies of a particular type, primarily small-scale agricultural societies. In societies of this type, difficulties in any of the

major areas of human concern can be attributed to the machinations of human agents, witches and sorcerers, rather than to the gods, spirits, ancestors, ghosts or simply chance or bad luck as in our society.

Man, in his anger, fear, and desire for vengeance, finds a scapegoat upon which he is able to project a number of negative, inverted symbols indicating extreme evil. Having created such an image for the scapegoat, it then becomes easier to direct his vehemence, fear and anxiety upon it, for, if one believes, who could not hate someone as terrible as the person who is symbolized by the inverted image of the witch? In so hating witches and taking action against them, man relieves some of the stress and anxiety created by the misfortunes they have supposedly caused - as well as the stress and anxiety created by living in a society which believes in the existence of human beings with such dreadful powers.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This article has been condensed by the editors from a paper presented at the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, held in Dehli in December 1978. A number of general comments have been omitted. Any misrepresentations or distortions introduced thereby are, of course, the responsibility of the editors alone.

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COMMENTARY

ROUSSEAU AND THE CALL FOR ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropologists tend to be preoccupied with the search for precursors. This search follows from our new-found understanding, barely a generation old, of anthropology as an interpretive (or as we say, semantic) study rather than as a pseudo-natural science. The intellectual history of the discipline, unlike the history of science, is intrinsic to the work itself, since the work of interpretation requires self-understanding. Put another way, our new-found 'paradigm' demands that we anthropologize ourselves, that we situate ourselves as part of the field. Unlike the natural scientists, we find ourselves as an opacity to be highlighted, a problem in culture to be interpreted rather than as a forgettable given. To get on with the job we have to recollect how we got it in the first place.

There is, in this self-investigation, a touch of anxiety over the legitimacy or propriety of the discipline, a hint of the nouveau riche looking for some obscure relationship to a noble ancestor. Such anxiety is probably a concomitant of all interpretive studies, since the authority of the interpreter always remains ungrounded, but it seems more acute in anthropology. Perhaps because it is such a young discipline, perhaps because the subject's inherent inclusiveness undercuts the academic legitimacy of secure departmental borders, perhaps because, unlike psychoanalysis and historical materialism, our hermeneutic has not passed into the public domain, or passed itself off, as economics or linguistics have done, as a new kind of science, we seem plagued with doubts about the integrity of our method, our theoretical capital, even our object of study. And we trace genealogies like the child who half-suspects his illegitimacy.

If we pay close attention to our history, what we find there should not really comfort us. Anthropology, which I use here to mean the universalistic study of human nature through the pluralistic study of particular cultures, seems to emerge in an unself-knowing way, as a series of theories which yield no actual work (Enlightenment 'philosophical anthropology' and, in another way, evolutionism) or as description untutored by any ideas (eighteenth century reports of colonial administrators, nineteenth century amateur expeditions). By the time anthropology comes to resemble its present form--with a theory of culture which admits of some version of pluralism and so entails fieldwork--by the time, that is, of the Année Sociologique and the Malinowskian revolution, the discipline is already contemporary and still lacks those precursors we now seek. Anthropology seems to come from nowhere, or to take bits from several traditions which collect in only arbitrary ways. Despite the seeming continuities of social theory, the study has grown in a piecemeal way, leaving the past generally half-digested and so depriving itself of a straightforward pedigree. We are hard put to define the historical necessity by which it arose as a domain of knowledge, the moment in which to think of man was to think of anthropology.

The Enlightenment is the most important example of this uncertain emergence, because it seems to be the moment in which new social experience and the changed organization of knowledge required anthropology as I have specified it. The end of the epoch of exploration and the start of a new epoch, where the space that had been explored would be domesticated politically (through the inscribing of colonial borders) and economically (through the appropriating of indigenous resources) turned the philosophes toward non-European man with a mixture of universalism and particularism that Dumont describes as the principle of anthropology (see 1978). This appropriation of the New World had proceeded far enough for non-civil peoples to seem encompassable objects of knowledge,

but not far enough for them to have relinquished their mystery; the New World could become the site no longer of adventure, but of science, a scienee of man celebrating his plurality and fecundity. Certainly such a science was demanded by the notion of enlightenment itself, a process at once intellectual and moral, a gaining of autonomy through self-knowledge. We recognize our own modern pieties here and so understand the fascination with which the philosophes regarded the Tahitians, the Brazilian Indians, the Hottentots, and closer to home, the Persians and Turks. For the first time, then, there emerged a class of intellectuals emancipated from the presumption that their society incarnated the general humanity, yet sure enough of their own autonomy to seek out that general humanity elsewhere. Within a moment made possible by the processes of colonialism and capitalism, they could develop a study of man which was at once a science and a critique of these processes. And for the first time they had, through the proliferation of travel narratives and colonial administrators' reports, access to a world of information othat could match their daring. They had an object of study, a nascent theory of the pluralism of social manners, and, in the broadening of travel to include non-adventurers, the suggestion of a method. Anthropology was on the tip of their tongues, and it is Rousseau, perhaps the most perspicacious of them, who announced explicity the demand for it:

> ...we know no other men except the Europeans; furthermore, it appears, from the ridiculous prejudices which have not died out even among men of letters, that under the pompous name of the study of man everyone does hardly anything except study the men of his country. In vain do individuals come and go; it seems that philosophy does not travel....
>
> Shall we never see reborn those happy times when the people did not dabble in philosophy, but when a Plato, a Thales, a Pythagoras, seized with an ardent desire to know, undertook the greatest voyage solely to inform themselves, and went far away to shake off the yoke of national prejudices, to learn to know men by their likenesses and their differences, and to acquire that universal knowledge which is not that of one century or one country exclusively, but which, being of all times and all places, is so to speak the common science of the wise?
>
> ...Let us suppose a Montesquieu, Buffon, Diderot, Duclos, D'Alembert, Condillac, or men of that stamp travelling in order to inform their compatriots, observing and describing...Turkey, Egypt, Barbary, the empire of Morocco, Guinea, the land of the Bantus...: then, in the other hemisphere, Mexico, Peru, Chile,...the Caribbean islands, Florida, and all the savage countries: ...we ourselves would see a new world come from their pens, and we would thus learn to know our own. (Second Discourse, 211, 212-3)

Nothing could be clearer or more contemporary than this call 'to know men by their likenesses and their differences'. What surprises us, then, is how little of what we would recognize as social anthropology emerged from the Enlightenment, beyond the programme itself. Despite the curiosity and pluralism evident in Rousseau's burgeoning catalogue of peoples (of which I omitted half), the Enlightenment thinkers turned to savage man much more to characterize the natural unity of man and to delimit the boundary between humanity and non-human animals, than to explore social diversity. Their interests, in other words, were with philosophical anthropology rather than ethnology. The latter concern derives not from philosophical humanism but from nineteenth century racial theories. Robert Wokler writes in a piece on Rousseau's anthropolgy:

> Around the turn of the nineteenth century, that is, with the exhaustion of the Enlightenment discussions of the primate limits of humanity, anthropology came instead to be focused upon the boundaries and distinctions within our species, upon the study of races... (1978: 110).

The philosophes turned to savage man largely to find man in the state of nature, not a rival version of social man, and their purposes grew primarily from a sense of the unnaturalness and artificiality of European civilization. The New World provided them, whatever its possibilities, not so much with the site of a new science, as with a point d'appui from which to apply their critique of the Old World. The state of nature was merely the negative projection of the civil state, and the savages they found there were not objects of new knowledge but mouthpieces for a critical meditation on Europe. In dialogues like Diderot's Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville and mock travel narratives like Gulliver's Travels and Montesquieu's Persian Letters, it is the outsider who is (either literally or implicitly) the proto-anthropologist and Europe which is the field. The far more radical question of alternative social states, equally denatured but unencompassed by Western categories, was left aside; or if it was broached, as in Voltaire's Histoire des moeurs, it was treated with a general (if satirical) poverty of imagination, domestic squabbles simply being exported to exotic milieux. However radical its aims--the abolition of slavery, the undermining of 'superstitious' Christianity, the reform of political corruption--Enlightenment anthropology remained Eurocentric. The New World was a space for use.

Of the few writers who were, I think, capable of taking the anthropological leap out of European categories and purposes, among the most important were two of the century's greatest political philosophers, Montesquieu and Rousseau. Each of them stressed a certain version of cultural relativism and refused to define political right apart from the plurality of social conditions in which politics could appear - Montesquieu emphasized material and ecological pre-conditions, Rousseau moral and religious ones. Yet neither of them truly did anthropology; they turned their nascent theories of cultural interpretation into theories of politics. Here again, despite a greater imaginative breadth, the philosophical purpose remains Eurocentric: not the education of men concerning their humanity, but the self-education of civil men as citizens.

But here our own genealogical task should make us pay attention. Enlightenment political philosophy failed to metamorphose into anthropology, however akin the two seem to us, not because imaginatively it could not, but because it chose not to. The organization of knowledge required not anthropology but something close to it, something which could educate and reform European man, but from within his native categories of politics. The Enlightenment sought to present the image of universal humanity, but in the dress of a European--as a citizen. Thus political theory assimilated to itself what we may now take as the calling of anthropology. Discovering why this bypass occurred may tell us more of what that calling is and why we seem hard put to locate the time and place that it became necessary. Rousseau, in his early work, especially the Second Discourse, calls explicitly for a social anthropology, yet by the Social Contract and the Emile refuses the same call himself. Thus he seems the exemplary figure by which to explore the displacement of the nascent discipline into political theory.

The call to anthropology occurs in a long footnote to the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (the Second Discourse), which Lévi-Strauss describes as 'the first treatise of general ethnology' (1977:35). The passage quoted above makes a double claim: first, that ethnographic inquiry is the proper method for arriving at an understanding of universal humanity

(rather than, say, some form of introspection); second, that this universal knowledge of man is neededforself-knowledge; '...we ourselves would see a new world come from their pens, and we would thus learn to know our own'. Anthropology is thus a means of obeying the Delphic inscription; it is the method of philosophical wisdom. Why? Several assumptions are at work here: that humanity is fundamentally pluralistic, and hence that no particular society incarnates its essence; that 'the common science of the wise' can only start when one leaves one's home-world behind; and, most important, that the society which believes itself to incarnate humanity is the most deluded and self-estranged of all. This is, of course, characteristic of Rousseau's Europe: '...we know of no other man except the Europeans;...from the ridiculous prejudices which have not died out even among men of letters,...under the pompous name of the study of man everyone does hardly anything except study the men of his country...'

Anthropology is necessary, then, because of European (or as Rousseau calls it, civil) man's self-estrangement, because of the distance between his conventional wisdom and his essential humanity. He must go out to other cultures in order to know himself because he has fallen away from his own nature. This fall from nature into civil society is the principal theme of Rousseau's work, its main assumption and primary problem, and in the Preface to the Second Discourse Rousseau ties it explicity to the difficulty of self-knowledge:

> The most useful and least advanced of all human knowledge seems to me to be that of man; and I dare say that the inscription of the temple of Delphi alone contained a precept more important and more difficult than all the thick volumes of the moralists. ...how will man manage to see himself as nature formed him, through all the changes that the sequence of time and things must have produced in his original condition...? Like the statue of Glaucus, which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it looked less like a god than a wild beast, the human soul, altered in the bosom of society by a thousand continually renewed causes...has, so to speak, changed its appearance to the point of being nearly unrecognizable...
>
> What is even crueler is that, as all the progress of the human species continually moves it farther away from its primitive state, the more new knowledge we accumulate, the more we deprive ourselves of acquiring the most important knowledge of all; so that it is, in a sense, by dint of studying man that we have made ourselves incapable of knowing him. (Second Discourse, 91-2)

The crisis of self-effacement which made anthropology necessary, in other words, itself derives from the fall from nature, the disfiguring of the human soul which civil man undergoes. As opposed to writers like Diderot, who use the doctrine of the state of nature to replace a more sophisticated cultural relativism, or those like Hume or Adam Ferguson, who simply dismiss the doctrine as a fiction and turn to society itself, Rousseau links the 'nature'-critique of European artificiality with the call for a pluralistic study of culture. Anthropology as a means of self-knowledge arises in response to the self-forgetfulness of the civilizing process. To understand why Rousseau calls for it, we must see what is unnatural in civil society.

As the 'statue of Glaucus' passage implies, the fallenness of contemporary society is at once intellectual and moral. Our ignorance of our true nature amounts to our moral self-abasement--the soul looks 'less like a god than a wild beast'--because nature is the standard of goodness. Rousseau identifies

'true philosophy' not with knowledge but with virtue, 'sublime science of simple souls' (First Discourse, 64); for virtue entails the recovery of nature, while (at least some forms of) knowledge may estrange it: '...by dint of studying man, ...we have made ourselves incapable of knowing him'. By the same token, to teach men of their own nature will amount to a moral transformation of them, a reinstatement of their humanity. When souls are not simple, the vocation of 'true philosophy' will become not only wisdom but education, the effecting of this transformation. This is why Rousseau's most self-avowedly philosophical work is the Emile, his treatise on education. If anthropology is indeed called for by Rousseau's project, it will be as a method of education, not as a mode of pure inquiry.

What civil man has forgotten about his nature--hence what he has corrupted--is his freedom. Freedom is the essence of humanity for Rousseau, the basis of morality as well as of social life, so that nothing could be more corrupt or more self-ignorant than the abnegation of it:

> To renounce one's freedom is to renounce the quality of being a man, the rights of humanity, even its duties. There is no compensation possible for whoever renounces everything. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; it takes away all morality from his actions just as it takes away all freedom from his will. (Social Contract I:4)

Though Rousseau speaks against slavery here, the same critique could be put to the entry into civil society, since it entails a similar renunciation. The compensations of being civilized can only 'spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with which men are burdened, stifle in them the sense of that original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turn them into what is called civilized peoples' (First Discourse, 37).

Rousseau gives a principally twofold account, psychological and political, of the slavery of civil society. Psychologically, he argues that the public/private distinction on which civil bonds are based--and which leads on the one hand to a hypocritical realm of 'public relations' and on the other to the ruthless competition of private interests--derives from the extremest form of vanity (amour-propre). Vanity is inimical to freedom, because it forces civil man to depend for his sense of self upon the regard others have for him. The competitive individualism to which it gives rise has only the mask of individual freedom; under the guise of the free play of interests, it enslaves men's wills to their desires, and their desires to their recognition by other men:

> ...there is a kind of men who set some store by the consideration of the rest of the universe and who know how to be happy and content with themselves on the testimony of others rather than on their own...the savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgement alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence...everything being reduced to appearances, everything becomes factitious and deceptive: ...we have only a deceitful and frivolous exterior, honor without virtue, reason without wisdom, pleasure without happiness. (Second Discourse, 179-80).

We recognize in this a whole tradition of attack on the inauthenticity of European, especially bourgeois, culture, of which Rousseau's First Discourse (On the Arts and Sciences) is perhaps the foundation-text. The Second Discourse follows up this psychological critique with an analysis of the

institutional relations inherent in civil society. Rousseau asserts that the privileging of private interests must take the ultimate form of private property--the personal, exclusive appropriation of nature--before the political forms of civil society are necessary or even conceivable: 'The first person who, having fenced off a plot of ground, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society' (Second Discourse, 141). As property becomes scarce, the competition of interests causes a class division between rich and poor (landed and landless) and a consequent Hobbesian state of war of all against all[2]. Finally the preservation of self-interest demands that a public realm be created to oversee the competition of private interests, to secure orderly ways of serving one's vanity. An original compact creates that public realm with the institution of law, which will administer the play of interests and wills. The institution of law, of political relations, signals the birth of civil society.

This original compact (not to be confused with the one described in the later Social Contract)is illegitimate, since it requires the renunciation of freedom, the submission of personal will to the will of political magistrates:

> All ran to meet their chains thinking they had secured their freedom, for although they had enough reason to feel the advantage of a political establishment, they did not have enough experience to foresee its dangers. Those most capable of anticipating the abuses were precisely those who counted on profiting from them... (Second Discourse, 159-60).

Those who counted to profit from the compact are, of course, the rich, for the rich had the most to lose from the stage of pre-legal private property; in Rousseau's myth, it is they who offer the compact to the poor. The poor are thus doubly enslaved; as with the Marxist doctrine of the state, the public-ness of the public domain is itself an illusion, for it is the precinct of class interests. This is not to say, however, that Rousseau sees the rich as in any sense free. They have renounced freedom in becoming rich; they are slaves to their wealth and even to the poor who define by negativity their wealth for them[3]. No citizen of such a state is free.

We know then what the lack of freedom looks like in European society: it is psychologically the dependence on others for one's sense of identity, and politically the submission of one's actions to others' wills and interests. We still do not know, however, what natural freedom looks like, and we must if we are to restore ourselves to it; our education depends on what we have fallen from. In the Second Discourse Rousseau describes it as the quality which delimits humanity from the rest of nature:

> ...it is not so much understanding which constitutes the distinction of man among the animals as it is his being a free agent. Nature commands every animal, and the beast obeys. Man feels the same impetus, but he realizes that he is free to acquiesce or resist; and it is above all in consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is shown. (Second Discourse, 114).

This freedom in which the quality of humanity resides is purely freedom-from, not freedom-for. It consists in the capacity to withhold oneself from compulsion; it does not itself compel. It implies no content; it does not give humanity anything in particular except the empty will to choose everything in particular. Because the general humanity has no essence, no content to

identify it, Rousseau describes its freedom as not only of will, but as a sort of freedom to become anything; he assimilates it to 'the faculty of self-perfection, a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all the others'. The quality of humanity is its plasticity, a freedom from necessary conditions. (That is, whatever conditions men are subject to are contingent to their humanity.)

This 'freedom of being', which Rousseau names perfectability, is the only version of freedom which can at once characterize the state of nature and account for the fall from it; there is a certain economy, then, to his argument which requires it:

> ...it is this faculty which, by dint of time, draws him out of that original condition in which he would pass tranquil and innocent days; ...it is this faculty which, bringing to flower over the centuries his enlightenment and his errors, his vices and his virtues, in the long run makes him tyrant of himself and of nature. (Second Discourse, 115).

Perfectability--ironic name--is what makes possible the fall from nature; it shows us that even the most slavish social life is grounded in freedom, the freedom to renounce everything. This is small comfort, however: it holds up the image of our nature without being able to restore us to it, nor remove the self-contradictions of our freedom. Indeed Rousseau emphasizes as a concomitant to his version of the state of nature that once it is left, there is no return to it:

> What! must we destroy societies, annihilate thine and mine, and go back to live in forests with bears? A conclusion in the manner of my adversaries, which I prefer to anticipate than leave them the shame of drawing it. Oh you, ...who can leave your fatal acquisitions, your worried minds, your corrupt hearts, and your unbridled desires in the midst of cities; reclaim, since it is up to you, your ancient and first innocence; ...men like me, whose passions have forever destroyed their original simplicity, ...can no longer nourish themselves on grass and nuts, nor do without laws and chiefs... (Second Discourse, 201-2).

If the plasticity of our nature implies that we cannot return, it implies as well that we can still go forward.

Perfectability allowed us to fall; it also allows us to reverse the irony and perfect ourselves. We will never be renaturalized, but we can aim to reintroduce freedom at the level of civil society, aim to legitimize what cannot be reversed: 'Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains. ....How was this change made? I do not know. How can it be rendered legitimate? I believe I can resolve that question'. The opening lines to the Social Contract (I:1) describe the vocation of 'true philosophy' for Rousseau: to discover what freedom in society looks like and to educate the citizenry to that freedom.

We may start this education by excluding what Rousseau clearly does not mean by social freedom: the freedom of liberal bourgeois society. Liberal freedom--the individual's freedom to pursue his self-interest, the privileging of self-interest over common values, and the consequent retention of certain "natural" rights--implies for Rousseau a nonsensical conception of freedom, nature and society. Especially invidious is the notion that there

is such a thing as natural right after the institution of civil society and conventional value:

> ...the social order is a sacred right which serves as the basis of all others. However this right does not come at all from nature; it is therefore founded on conventions. It is a question of knowing what these conventions are. (Social Contract I:1)

There is an absolute discontinuity between nature and civil society; one cannot go back again. This discontinuity is what makes the fall from nature so devastating, but it also makes any appeal to nature from within civil society--as in the liberal defence of private property--illegitimate. Such an appeal merely masks conventionally grounded rights as "natural" ones--yet another instance of the self-ignorance of civil man and his actual estrangement from nature. These deluded claims to freedom, cannot, therefore, even be free: the privileging of private interests, as I stressed above, only makes men slaves of their vanity. It masks the worst corruptions of civility as natural freedom (note the similarity here to the Marxist critique of bourgeois ideology).

The civil state lacks, apparently, the categories necessary for restoring its self-understanding, especially an intelligible concept of freedom by which to educate itself. The state of nature supplies us with that concept in the form of perfectability, a radical freedom-from, but renders it unusable as such in our re-education: the discontinuity between nature and society requires us to find a social version of freedom. Here finally is where anthropology emerges as an intellectual necessity; as the method of exploring social perfectability. For it is perfectability which gives anthropology its object of study in the first place: the diversity and indeterminacy of social life, the plasticity of man as a social being, a plasticity which yields virtuous societies as much as corrupt ones. We cannot return to the empty general humanity of nature, but we may draw upon, and import, the range of substantive particular humanities to which it gives rise. By leaving our own particular humanity behind, we may find a 'universal knowledge of man' residing in the contrasts with particular social worlds which co-exist with us: 'When one wants to study men, one must consider those around one. But to study man, one must extend one's range of vision. One must observe the differences in order to discover the similarities'. In other words, because of the subtle emptiness of Rousseau's state of nature, because it contains already the possibility of a plurality of denatured social life, consideration of it leads--"naturally"--to social analysis and to a relativistic theory of culture as the consequence of this perfectability. The philosopher's task, to restore the soul of civil man through education, becomes the ethnographer's, to show us how the other, more human half lives.

Rousseau offers, in the Second Discourse, an idealized ethnographic sketch of such an alternative society in what he calls 'nascent society', the form of society said to exist after the development of kinship bonds and language but before that of agriculture and the consequent institution of private property. It largely resembles, in fact, paleolithic hunting and gathering communities[4], combining loose-knit relations of material dependence--' they applied themselves only to tasks that a single person could do and to arts that did not require the cooperation of several hands' (Second Discourse, 151)--with strong bonds of cultural solidarity:

> People grew accustomed to assembling in front of the huts or around a tree; song and dance...became the amusement or rather the occupation of idle and assembled men and women,

> Each one began to look at the others and want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. (Second Discourse 149).

The underside of this public esteem is the breeding of a strong, crude vanity and the emergence of revenge as a regulative social relation:

> As soon as...the idea of consideration was formed in [men's] minds, each one claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to be disrespectful toward anyone with impunity. From this came the first duties of civility, even among savages; and from this any voluntary wrong became an outrage, because...the offended man saw in it contempt for his own person....Thus, everyone punishing the contempt shown him by another in a manner proportionate to the importance he accorded himself, vengeances became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel. This is precisely the point reached by most of the savage peoples known to us... (Second Discourse, 149-50).

We are reminded of societies like the Nuer, where feuding is a systematic relation, and where the competition between lineages generates overall structural incorporation; similarly, the vanity of nascent society does not undermine it, as does the vanity of European society, but somehow becomes the means to orderly relations: '...it was necessary for punishments to become more severe as the occasions for offence became more frequent; and ...it was up to the terror of revenge to take the place of the restraint of laws' (Second Discourse, 150). Whereas competition in civil society necessitates the public overseeing of law, here it heads it off; for in spite (or rather because) of its bloodiness, the members of nascent society have not become the slaves of escalated needs. With its emphasis on personal respect, common physical activity and story-telling, the inability of its members to conceive their person apart from relations to others, yet without submission to others, this form of society is the best one possible, giving the advantages of solidarity with no erosion of independence:

> ...this period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our vanity, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. The more one thinks about it, the more one finds that this state was the least subject to revolutions, the best for man, and that he must have come out of it only by some fatal accident, which for the common good ought never to have happened, The example of savages, who have almost all been found at this point, seems to confirm that the human race was made to remain in it always... (Second Discourse, 151).

Nascent society is the 'best for man' most of all because it is free, but this is to mean something quite different from liberal, or any form of civil, freedom. Civil freedom means freedom of the will, the capacity to act according to the perception of one's interests. In nascent society there is, in a sense, freedom <u>from</u> will and from interest, freedom from the compulsion to act; this is why Rousseau emphasizes its idleness, in contrast to 'the petulant activity of our vanity'. There is a self-acceptance which issues in two seemingly contradictory aspects of nascent society: its independence and its solidarity. Because solidarity is based on an ideal of commonly-acknowledged self-esteem, personal bonds are minimal at the same time as they are psychologically absolute; but both these aspects reflect a

freedom from the impulse to self-constitution or self-transformation. There is indeed freedom from almost everything but membership in the community itself; this is the sole, but the essential, difference in relation to the state of nature. Where civil freedom issues in laws and enjoins citizens to duty--the paradigm of freedom-for-- nascent society is 'prior to law' (150) and enjoins men only to leisure: '...they lived free, healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their nature, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse' (Second Discourse, 151).

If nascent society is a sketch of what the anthropologist has to offer civil man for his delectation--and Rousseau clearly develops the concept from his own reading of the ethnographic travel literature--we are left more with a vague feeling of disappointment than a healed soul. However free and human, nascent man seems irrelevant to the citizen, and Rousseau knows it. Despite savages who have rested in this way of life, he presents the description elegaically ('must have been the happiest and most durable epoch'). Like the state of nature, once nascent society is left, it is left utterly. Thus Rousseau would, I think, dismiss the project which Lévi-Strauss grants to anthropology, the project of integrating the 'neolithic intelligence' back into civil society:

> If men have always been concerned with only one task--how to create a society fit to live in--the forces which inspired our distant ancestors are also present in us. Nothing is settled; everything can still be altered. What was done, but turned out wrong, can be done again. (Tristes Tropiques, 1975:393).

For Rousseau what has been done wrong cannot be done again: 'L'humanité ne rétrograde pas.' But this amounts to saying that anthropology cannot answer Rousseau's call for it: it cannot show us a new world in order to make us know our own. We cannot restore to the soul forms of freedom that the emergence of civil society has effaced.

Rousseau makes the call to anthropology in two (probably) contemporaneous texts, the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and the 'Essay on the Origin of Languages', both written in the early 1750s. By the final version of the Social Contract, published in 1761 but the fruit of a decade of work, the anthropological perspective seems completely abandoned. No reference is made to nascent society, or any other form of non-civil society; the only important movement is the one from the state of nature to the civil state. In contrast to the Second Discourse with its open-ended emphasis on perfectability, the Social Contract has few traces of a pluralistic theory of society; civil freedom is the only form to be analyzed. The philosopher does not go travelling in order to show us who we are; he remains a citizen and becomes a political theorist. He takes the categories of law, interest, will, politics in general, for granted, and seeks a way of rendering them legitimate from within. The form of freedom he seeks is no longer the naturalistic freedom-from, but the freedom-for of the citizen's autonomy and responsibility. This shift is no mere necessary evil for Rousseau; in reading the Social Contract and the Emile, we feel not only that the entrance into civil society is irrevocable, but also that it is a step upward, however painful, for humanity. Rousseau's highest form of moral freedom--the willing acceptance of duty, 'obedience to the law one has made oneself'--is civil. In these later texts politics is the only appropriate solution to the problem of political society. The philosophe who spends too much time abroad is only evading his calling.

I do not want to elucidate much this new strategy of educating civil man from within; suffice it to say that it is the basis for the strategy of the Social Contract, the basis for the radically political freedom of the general will which Rousseau announces as the foundation of the just society. Louis Althusser's commentary on the contractual act itself summarizes this:

> ...the total alienation of the Social Contract is the solution to the problem posed by the state of universal alienation... The solution cannot come from outside, and even within the world of alienation it cannot come from outside the single law governing that world. It can only consist of returning in its origin to that law itself, total alienation, 'while changing its manner of existence', its modality. This is what Rousseau very consciously states elsewhere when he says that the remedy of the evil must be sought in its very excess. In a word, a forced total alienation must be turned a free total alienation. (1972: 127-8).

We are far here from the idle freedom-from of nascent society and from the call to philosophers to shake off their national prejudices and to travel far away. Political inquiry has replaced ethnography because, in a sense, politics rather than a theory of culture is what is called for. However radical his vision, Rousseau's aims remain civilized and Eurocentric; this is why, even in the Second Discourse, he signs himself citoyen de Genève and begins it with a dedicatory epistle to his native city.

Such a Eurocentrism and a consequent détournement from anthropology to political philosophy characterizes the central strand of Enlightenment social theory, and it will characterize, I think, any view of anthropology as a vehicle for civil education--of which Dumont (1965, 1972, 1977, 1978) and Lévi-Strauss (1975) are two principal modern exponents. This turning-away at just the moment of anthropology's noblest ambitions--to be an unacknowledged legislator of the world--may account for our initial difficulty in finding precursors; the ones we do find (evolutionists, racial theorists, colonial expeditionaries) are so much less ennobling than the philosophes who always seem to have us on the tip of their tongue, but never seem to speak us. And when we do invoke names like Rousseau as founding fathers, and dedicate books to them, perhaps the authority we gain is not an anthropologist's authority at all. Perhaps, without knowing or acknowledging it, we want the theory of culture to instruct us in things that only a theory of politics (or more generally, a self-knowledge gleaned from within our world) can give.

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NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the text I have quoted the First Discourse and the Second Discourse in the Masters translation, The First and Second Discourses (Rousseau 1964), and have cited the page number of that edition. The quotation and page citation for the 'Essay on the Origin of Languages' are from the Moran translation (Rousseau 1966). Both Masters and Moran are Americans and American spelling has been retained in their translations. Quotations from the Social Contract are my own translations of the French and are cited by book and chapter.

I would like to thank Steven Holtzman and Daryl Koehn for discussions relating to the subject of this paper.

1. This discussion of the development of anthropology in the Enlightenment is influenced heavily by Michele Duchet's Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumieres.

2. Note that Rousseau does not disagree with Hobbes about the description of the state of war, only with Hobbes' equation of it with the state of nature. For Rousseau the state of war is a conventional state just prior to (and making necessary) the institution of contract, law and civil society. Hobbes' mistake is in not going back far enough, in attributing to nature relations and passions that can only be the product of primitive society. As I say later in the paper, he makes the same criticism of the liberal version of natural right.

3. Compare to the analysis of the enslavement of the master in Hegel's master/slave dialectic.

4. Levi-Strauss in Tristes Tropiques (1975:391) and Geertz in his commentary on it (1973:357-8) identify 'nascent society' with contemporary neolithic communities. In one important sense this is mistaken. Rousseau makes clear that nascent society is pre-agricultural; it lacks the division of labour and the institution of property entailed in cultivation of the land. Indeed the appearance of agriculture, and of these accompaniments to it, signals the end of nascent society and the start of the decline into civil society. Levi-Strauss 'science of the concrete' notwithstanding, Rousseau's ideal time is before the neolithic revolution.

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