

NUER RELIGION - a supplementary view

I

This essay emerged out of an undergraduate course on the study of conceptual systems. I make this pedagogic reference at the outset not only because it relates to my sub-title but also because it is as a teacher of social anthropology that I choose to express my gratitude for the works of the late Professor Evans-Pritchard.¹ I have called the essay 'a supplementary view' because it does not presume to be in any sense corrective but rather reports upon a method which I have found convenient for introducing students, early in their second year, to the totality of Nuer life as it emerges from the classic trilogy.

If social anthropology has emerged since the late war as one of the humanities able to offer itself as an education for undergraduates this implies a range of preoccupation which owes much to the width of Evans-Pritchard's anthropology. But this evolution raises new problems: the social anthropologists of previous generations had their formation in other disciplines and when they wrote it was for fellow professionals. The excellent introductions to the subject currently available reflect to a considerable extent this earlier stage: they do not have the undergraduate clearly in mind. The most fundamental problem of teaching at this level is that field-work is still represented as the essential qualification while students are required, nevertheless, to acquire a proficiency in the subject without that qualification. We can try to escape from this double-bind by tackling an associated problem. The undergraduate can scarcely be blamed if, left to himself, he tends to turn his 'required reading' into so many texts which are to be learnt, rather than as material presented by another human mind like his own to be thought about, questioned, rehandled.

One way of approaching the problem is exemplified by this essay. The attempt is to demonstrate to the student what one means when, in all seriousness, one advises him to read a book backwards as well as forwards; the implication is that he should not feel bound by the titles or chapter headings of the author which merely reflect the author's own choices, but rather attempt his own synthesis which he can then interact with that of the original. In this essay, therefore, I move freely backwards and forwards in the Nuer trilogy and attempt to show that there are certain conceptual preoccupations structuring Nuer experience. The propositions which emerge are both simple and crude. The point of the operation is to show the student that there can be alternative views and to send him back to the material in a spirit of research with the wholesome ambition of proving me wrong.

A second problem is connected with the word 'religion' which is, for the modern student, whether he has a denominational loyalty or not, a special area of experience in some way. The word 'religion' in a title is likely to set off certain defensive reflexes to the extent that 'religion' is something that other people have, something which rests upon presuppositions, faith, insight and the like which the student defiantly or wistfully, but either way disastrously, does not share in the way in which he can suppose himself to share, at least as a

starting point, certain suppositions about kinship or politics. The aim is therefore to demonstrate that we are dealing with simple, human thought which is the same whether people are thinking about their kinfolk, their chiefs or their gods.

A third and more general aim of this essay is to suggest how the student can grasp, as far as is possible from a literary experience, not only the specificity of Nuer life but also make some kind of meaningful and question raising comparison. Here I have limited myself to a few suggestions only of the lines along which a comparison between the Nuer and the related Dinka might run.

The discussion here presented rests upon a previous examination of the implications of the concluding three paragraphs of Lévi-Strauss' Totemism² in which he invites a reconsideration of the notion that 'religion constitutes an autonomous order, requiring a special kind of investigation'. The student is invited to consider the legitimacy of the grounds on which he might be disposed to distinguish between the concepts 'mother's brother' and, for example, 'ancestor' in such a manner as to subsume them under the distinction knowledge/belief. Following this discussion one turns to a consideration of the word 'religion' and, following Cantwell-Smith,³ looks at the history and use of this term in western thought. It is useful to set against Cantwell-Smith's persuasive argument the assumptions of representative exponents of traditional comparative religion, with whose dicta the student is likely to sympathise initially. Zaehner, for example, provides a good debating topic with his axiomatic: 'If we are to know what religion is we must also find something in common between the great religions of the world.'⁴ The sum of these discussions leads us back to Cantwell-Smith whose welcome rejection of the term 'religion' leads him close to a sociological position from which he veers away at the last. We are, nevertheless, in a position to develop his argument and to reverse his theological proposition that it is faith which constitutes society as a community and say, rather, that society constitutes itself as faith for a community. For finally it is impossible to understand, in the sense of having something which can be communicated, in what way a man's 'belief' in his cults differs from his 'belief' in his kinship 'system', or his 'belief' in his language for that matter.

II

The terminology of Chapter I of Nuer Religion creates difficulties: one is asked to explain the force of the capital K in Kwoth as opposed to kwoth or kuth and to indicate how seriously the approximation to Hebrew monotheism is to be taken. If it is to be taken with any seriousness then a new question arises: what is it, exactly, which is 'in itself quite independent of the social structure' but 'broken up along the lines of segmentation.'? Confronted with problems of this nature one has recourse to an earlier article from the Azande period, "Azande Theology"⁵ and, initially, the statement: 'In treating a religion we have only to translate primitive religious terms into our own language, and our interpretation of them is already made by the very process of translation.' The student can be invited to set the whole of the ensuing analysis of the concept mbole as a background to Chapter I of Nuer Religion and to see what he can achieve by a comparison of

the terms mbole and kwoth. This juxtaposition has the advantage that the student for whom the term 'religion' is problematic can relate that chapter, via the Azande material to his own experience.

Such a comparison should not lead to a simple equation. The most obvious difference between kwoth and mbole is that the former is both specified and unspecified whereas the latter lacks specification. To compare the two terms in this way has the immediate advantage that we are liberated from the problem posed by the presentation Kwoth and kuth, substance and fragment. Once liberated we see that we are dealing with words related as science/sciences, meaning/meanings, cause/causes and the like are related, and not with a disjunction between beings. Of kwoth unspecified we can surely say what Evans-Pritchard says of mbole: 'it⁶ is the name which 'takes the place of understanding the horizon that rounds off knowledge and tradition ... When Azande do not understand something, it is vaguely explained by citing Mbori.'⁷ But in addition kwoth is systematically specified and it is to these systematic specifications that I now turn.

The broadest specification of kwoth is, of course, kuth nhial/kuth piny - above/below. This hierarchical distinction appears to shape, or be concordant with, a set of related distinctions which are found in areas well outside the 'religious'.⁸ The first associated attributes of the distinction present us with something of a puzzle. The superior has to do with the apparently fortuitous in Nuer daily life while the inferior is associated with that daily life itself. The kuth piny are largely associated with the world of lineage and descent. They are, in Evans-Pritchard's terminology, 'totemistic spirits.' The world of descent, it needs no arguing, receives a heavy emphasis in Nuer consciousness. The value (descent) is associated with what, in another context, is relatively devalued (below).

The corroborative evidence for this comes from the Nuer themselves. They, or some of them, say that originally there was only kwoth and the col wic. The kuth piny came later, they came from or with the Dinka. If one accepts that history, especially among non-literate people, has to do with now, then the factual truth of the proposition is irrelevant: for the present let us simply note that there is an association between kuth piny, second-comers, the day-to-day and the Dinka.

The idea of second comers associated with inferiority and with the Dinka puts us in mind immediately of a passage in the first part of the trilogy in which we learn that the term diel means something more fundamental than 'aristocrat'.⁹ The diel are the firstcomers, the original and authentic Nuer. It is essential to note that the term is a relative one for this reassures us that we are still in the world of idea and are not dealing with substantial identities. The members of the same clan can be diel in one area and rul in another.

People who are accepted as Nuer can also be rul but the term has its own primary association expressed by the Nuer themselves. The typical rul are Dinka. We can anticipate here and refer across to the Dinka material. Whereas the Dinka include the Nuer in an inclusive category of humanity, the Nuer draw a clear hierarchical distinction in humanity at their own cultural frontier. The Dinka are less fully human than they. The cross reference suggests some of the force in the diel/rul distinction. We are certainly dealing with ideas, but they are ideas which belong very much to the day-to-day of Nuer life, a world which, the suggestion is there, is somehow depreciated and, in some way yet to be discovered, inauthentic. What are opposed as concepts,

diel/rul, relate to what is mingled in the actuality. Nuer not only can be rul, the majority of them are.

What else do the Nuer say about the relation of diel to rul? The rul as second comers receive wives from the diel and are, therefore, sisters' sons to them. This is ideally and often actually so. The relationship expresses once again the hierarchic principle already twice noted. As affines the wife receivers remain permanently in debt for the life that they have received. The parallel with the feud is striking. Neither bride-wealth nor blood-wealth truly cancel out the life which is owed. The feud festers on to break out again. The debt incurred through alliance is registered in respect. Although the marriage is practically complete when payments are concluded and ruagh (affinity) becomes mar (kinship) the respect and avoidance owed to the mother-in-law by a man is inherited by his wife's brother's wife.¹⁰

We may at this point accumulate the following distinctions:

<u>kuth nhial</u>	<u>diel</u>	<u>nath</u>	MB
<u>kuth piny</u>	<u>rul</u>	<u>jaang</u>	ZS

which are associated with:

first-comers	authenticity	humanity	abnormality
second-comers	inauthenticity	subhuman	normality

What we have here is a complex of Nuer thought and it is useful to remind the student at this early stage that this is the beginning of analysis and not the analysis itself. When we are dealing with literary material it is all too tempting and indeed easy to extract a set of semi-equations of this nature. The very neatness of the extraction should alert the student to its hypothetical and provisional nature. A rich mass of material remains to be integrated; much will not be integrated by this particular formulation. As the discussion moves on one has to be on one's guard against the temptation to reduce new facts to the formula, and work, rather, towards a new formulation which might have some claim to be called analytic.

The exploratory rather than classificatory nature of the formula is usefully demonstrated by examination of the way in which relations between kuth nhial and kuth piny are represented. As we might expect the opposition is harmonious with diel/rul. Birds are distinguished in three classes - gaat kwoth, gaat niet, sisters' sons to the former and jaang. This lowest class is also described as gaat nya dila, sons of the daughters of diel. The implication is, as Evans-Pritchard points out, that they are Dinka - jaang. Similarly fetishes are said to be gaatnyadeang - children of daughters of Deng, inferior affines of Dinka therefore, 'spirits of a very inferior order.'¹¹ The kuth nhial are diel, the totemic spirits, jaang. All this is satisfactory and expected. What is interesting is the claim of the man who respected pythons 'that the python is the maternal uncle of the air-spirit deng.'¹²

The formula points us towards a more significant reversal: that is the relation of the so-called Leopard Skin priest to the diel of a territory. I say so-called because, following the development of Evans-Pritchard's thought in the matter, I shall henceforth refer to him as

kuaar muon - priest of the earth.¹³ This personage appears to be ideally rul - stranger. He is also thought of as standing in the relation of mother's brother to the diel of the territory. In fact many kuaar muong lineages are of Dinka origin.

It is possible to approach this problem by consideration of another possible complementary opposition in Nuer categorization. This must be tentative as it does not as clearly emerge from Evans-Pritchard's presentation as do the previous ones. I suggest a relation between the kuaar muon and the prophet - gwan kwoth. The kuaar muon is by his very name associated with the below, is conceptually associated with rul, has to do with the reparation of disunity within the tribal sections, belongs to the world of the day-to-day and the expected. The gwan kwoth, possessed by or rather possessor of the sky-spirit is preeminently of the above, he has to do with the political unity of the Nuer as Nuer, or better, with the realization of the concept nath which unites all in opposition to the external jaang. The gwan kwoth is strikingly associated with the abnormal and the rare.¹⁴ Perhaps there is something to be made of the fact that the gwan kwoth, in the past at least, was associated with the curing of barrenness while the kuaar muon cures incest.

The gwan kwoth belongs to the world of the above, that ideal world which the Nuer locate in the past. It is a world where there are only the sky-spirits, the col wic and the pure nath, where all is diel. This brings the present into sharp focus. The conceptual relationship between diel and rul as mother's brothers to father's sisters would preclude marriage and therefore lineal continuity for the diel males. There is a situation of conceptual hypogamy in a field of informal endogamy - marriage outside the tribe is risky. In fact the diel, who are in a minority depend upon rul for the continuation of their lines and in real life must be in the relation of sisters' sons to them.

More light is thrown on this by the origin myth of the Jikany tribes¹⁵ - in which Kir is found in a gourd, is reared by the Dinka Yul, and becomes the founder of the Gaatgankir clan - reflects a reality upon which the concept Nuer (nath) depends. Seligman's account (he speaks of the origin of the Nuer without qualification) makes Kir marry into the lineage of Gaa, eldest son of the founding ancestor Gau, who is kuaar muon. Kir, in this account, founds certain sections of the Jikany.¹⁶

The association of the kuaar muon with the mother's brother in relation to the diel reverses the diel/rul relationship as, I suggest, it is reversed in real life. Positively it expresses the dependence of the diel upon the rul for lineal continuity and for the reparation of disunity resulting from feud. When the kuaar muon divides, as in the rual ceremony following incest, it is to allow lineal continuity to develop where before incest prohibitions had precluded it. So, according to Seligman, the first kuaar muon was created when Gau divided his daughters between his two sons (all children of one mother) to allow his line to develop. He performed the first rual ceremony which imposed exogamy on the descendants of the two sons and made the elder of them, kuaar muon.

The performance of the rual ceremony by the kuaar muon may be seen as something making for lineal continuity, something upon which that continuity depends as it depends upon the bride givers.¹⁷

I have said that there appears to be a contradiction between the conceptual distinction diel/rul and the facts of marriage. Asymmetry between affines, when combined with an endogamy whether formal, as in

the caste-system, or informal, as here, produces problems. It would seem that the greater the value placed upon descent the greater the problems must be in so far as a man's standing is affected by the marriage of a distant kinsman. The less descent is traced back the easier it is to preserve formal asymmetry combined with factual reciprocity of marriage. The Nuer concern for descent is obvious and is stressed by their habit of assimilating affines with kinsmen in the category mar. Seligman makes the point: 'Considering the wide conception of the incest barrier among the Nuer it is not surprising that the rual ceremony takes place fairly frequently'.¹⁸ Following Evans-Pritchard we should qualify this by pointing out that there are degrees of incest from the most trivial to the most serious. Nevertheless the offence is built in as an inevitability of Nuer life. The Nuer inevitably fall short of their ideals just as, inevitably, diel stock is continued by rul women and no Nuer lineage can be truly nath.

This, if correct, is surely the most puzzling aspect of Nuer life. The term diel seems to speak of a preoccupation wider and deeper than a purely political one. The Nuer are concerned, the literature stresses it, with lienal continuity. But the term diel associated with nath suggests a valuation of purity of descent. Leaving aside the political implications, the achieving of that purity in reality would involve incest of the direst kind. (We have already seen how the Nuer desire to widen their kinship at the expense, so to speak, of their affines, involves them in frequent, if minor, infringements of incest prohibitions.) But this condition of ideal purity is located in the mythic past. Their recorded statements relating to the proliferation of kuth piny and associated phenomena with the Dinka can be taken historically but they must also be taken as symptomatic of Nuer life at the moment when they were recorded. The contradiction is profound: the Nuer are nath not jaang, but in life they cannot be nath. They cannot maintain a strictly hierarchical organization with strict hypogamous marriage. In the Indian caste-system the dilution of purity involved in formal or informal hypergamy between castes is to a considerable extent, but not entirely, corrected by a heavy emphasis on descent. There, however, the rule of hypergamy is strict. Among the Nuer the ideal would have strict hypogamy, but an informal endogamy (or a strong tendency towards it), precludes such a solution. Nuer statements about the past have justificatory and in that sense explanatory value. We have a parallel in the hierarchy of kwoth. The movement from the above to the below is a moral decline from kwoth to jaang, even to jur. At the same time it is a movement of increasing involvement in life as it is lived. The hierarchy presents in the vertical dimension what Evans-Pritchard presents in a lateral dimension by concentric circles¹⁹ and what the Nuer themselves present in the dimension of time: to be Nuer is best, for all that this state can never be achieved.

The contradiction seems to be related to the Nuer tendency to at once emphasise and deny affinity. The affines of a mother's children are associated with the mother's family and simultaneously merged in the all-embracing mar. The world of mar is, again, the world of day-to-day. The world of ritual and agnation, however, is the world of agnation - buth. Those who do not have buth between them are rul.²⁰ The connotation of the opposition seems clear by now for those who have buth between them must marry rul. Nevertheless it is from the affines and from the children of the same mother that the lineage (literally, we remember, thok dwiel - mother's hut entrance) springs and fission results. Fusion on the other hand is between the gaatgwan - the sons of the father. Can we go so far as to suggest that this discussion points towards a re-examination of the feminine principle in Nuer society? Is it the case that the woman only achieves value by becoming male?

Certainly in rereading the trilogy I am reminded of Postumos in Cymbeline: 'Is there no way for men to be but women must be half-makers?' Evans-Pritchard expresses the same impression: 'agnatic descent is, by a kind of paradox, traced through the mother.'²¹

III

I turn now to consider the material on the Dinka. If the preceding account is both tentative and partial the remainder of the discussion will be even more so. I shall consider only those aspects of Dinka life which directly offer themselves as comparable with the Nuer concepts already mentioned. An alternative, separate and necessary operation would involve approaching the two societies from the point of view of the Dinka. One would expect as a result to be in a position to ask questions of the Nuer material such as might not arise without this juxtaposition.

When we turn to the Dinka we certainly feel ourselves to be in a familiar world. Indeed the initial impression is that simple translation will convert similarities into identities; the concepts and manners are easily recognised. I shall touch on this question of similarity in my conclusion. For the present I am more concerned with differences. And indeed from the outset we sense a significantly different distribution of emphasis in Dinka values. Certainly we find the distinction of the above and the below and indeed the Dinka seem to be more concerned with the distinction than the Nuer: but we note that their myths concentrate on the reasons for this distinction rather than upon the fact of it. They are myths of separation not of opposition, if I may so put it. We can note, incidentally, that the one such myth recorded by Evans-Pritchard 'although it accords well with Nuer conceptions in general' is believed by him to be of Dinka origin.²²

What strikes one about the Dinka myths is that the spatial reference is, so to speak, blurred. The separation brings loss but it also defines man. The Dinka emphasize the positive together with the negative and the very stress on separation suggests continuity and rejoining. This is all succinctly expressed in the Dinka song:

Deng brings the rope of the finch
That we may meet on one boundary
We and the moon and Divinity
Give the rope of the finch
That we may meet on one boundary with the moon ..²³

The rope here is the rope which originally connected men and Divinity, the possibility of its restoration is associated with the concept deng in which the attributes of what Lienhardt calls free and clan divinities are con-fused. The same tendency to merge the opposition is found in the comparison between kuth nhial/piny among the Nuer, and the Dinka yath (pl. yeeth). Yath is no equivalent for kwoth. The area of experience associated with kwoth among the Nuér is, among the Dinka, divided between jok and nhialic. To what extent it would be possible to relate one of these terms to the Azande mbole and then compare the Nuer and Dinka degrees of specification, or to what extent it would be profitable, is not yet clear. For the present what is noteworthy is

the lack of indigenous verbal distinction in yeeth which would correspond to Lienhardt's distinction between free and clan divinities. We note in this connection firstly that in another context Lienhardt speaks of a sky-spirit but this is in relation to a prophet;²⁴ more significantly in his list of clan-divinities the vast majority relate to earth - this includes earth bound or low-flying birds. Those which have deng as emblem, in his terminology, also have an earthly yath. He also reports as 'listed in various parts of Dinkaland' the planet Venus, and Comets together with Cloud emblems.²⁵ Evans-Pritchard has also reported that sky-spirits are associated with small lineages, 'especially lineages of Dinka descent.'²⁶ We may conclude that the spatial distinction made verbally among the Nuer kuth is not absent in fact among the Dinka yeeth, but it is verbally transcended and, in the actuality, mediated by earth associated birds and objects intermediate between sky and earth.

A striking reversal of Nuer concepts is the belief among some Dinka that their free yeeth are late-comers.²⁷ Again: "It is asserted by many Dinka that long ago (watheer) they knew only Divinity and Deng who was 'Divinity itself', and the clan-divinities."²⁸ Of these the most powerful were the divinities of masters of the fishing spear. Initially it would seem that whereas for the Dinka the proliferation of free-divinities 'in history' is associated with an expanding universe of experience which does not seem to challenge the lived social order, the Nuer associate the increase of earth-spirits with the dilution of their nath quality by jaang and jur.

We must add, as an aside, that it could also be argued that the difference is not so great if we take into account the claims of spear-masters, recorded by Lienhardt,²⁹ that their clan divinities have temporal priority. The divinities of spearmasters may be presumed to be deng and so sky associated. In this account clan divinities are also said to have proliferated.

What seems sure is that the Dinka do not associate moral decline with the presence of strangers or Nuer. Indeed, although the word jur is also used by the Dinka it does not refer to a category within Dinka society. The Dinka, less unified and unifiable as a people, do not appear to effect the equation diel = nath = men (or true men) as do the Nuer. Perhaps it is because they are less concerned with such unity that they include the Nuer in their own humanity and sometimes speak of them "almost as though they were one of the Dinka 'peoples'."³⁰ This does not mean that the Dinka lack any equivalent for nath, for they recognize a cultural unity in jieng.³¹

Despite this reversal the Dinka do, as we have seen, attach an importance to primacy. Where in the tribal area the Nuer oppose diel/rul, the Dinka oppose bany/kic. The similarities are obvious, the differences more important. The kic, commoner or, Lienhardt prefers, warrior clans are in no sense lesser men although the bany/spear-masters have more "life", nor are the kic strangers. I cannot find any Dinka term having quite the connotations of rul. The bany are first-comers and thought of as standing in the MB/ZS relation to the kic; they also have the peace-making and spiritual power which, among the Nuer is associated with the kuaar muon. But the spear-master is much more than a superior kuaar muon as Lienhardt makes clear. The implications of this are discussed after a brief consideration of the MB/ZS relation among the Dinka.

Given the way in which those Dinka distinctions that parallel Nuer ones are, at the same time, mediated, it is tempting to hypothesize that the relations between affines among the Dinka will be both more clearly defined and reciprocal than among the Nuer. We do not, as yet, have

the material on Dinka terminology and practice that would allow us to enter this field with such confidence. Francis Deng³² tells us that the bany, at least among the Ngok Dinka, have more wives than the kic whom he refers to as commoners. If this is generally true they would appear to be yet more dependent (and perhaps aware of dependence) upon the kic than the diel are upon the rul. Lienhardt tends to suggest a recognition of mutual dependence in this matter.³³ Again he has somewhere pointed to the MB/ZS relation as providing the model for friendship. It is unfortunately not possible to even speculate from the terminological information recorded by the Seligmans.

It is more fruitful to consider Dinka spear-masters in relation to the aciek - prophet. The spear-master is closely associated with the river and, like the kuaar muon, with ring - flesh. But he is no less certainly associated with the sky and the above: they "are sometimes called bany nhial, 'masters of the above', and are representations of Divinity on earth."³⁴ Here they may be equated with Nuer prophets as opposed to kuaar muon, just as in other aspects they can be equated with the latter.

When Lienhardt speaks of the transcendence in Dinka thought of what he calls 'experiential opposites'³⁵ we can see, even from this rather crude comparison, how inappropriate would have been the use of this term, in its strict sense, if applied to the Nuer. The tone of Nuer categorical oppositions is, if one may so express oneself, privative and exclusive. The real, the authentic is opposed to the actual in such a way as to make the Indologist, at least, think of Sankara. The Dinka on the other hand appear to solve their problems by the use of synthetic categories which contain and transcend the opposition. Further examples of the difference would be the important Dinka words ring and wei. For the Dinka both terms synthesize spirit and matter. Among the Nuer they have spiritual associations, but whereas for them ring, apart from its association with the kuaar muon, is only flesh, it is also the divinity of the spear-masters among the Dinka. The Nuer word for chyme - wau (Dinka wei) is important in sacrifice but has material meaning only. Among the Dinka it means not only chyme but also life and breath. It is not surprising that the Dinka remark upon the Nuer habitual recourse to private prayer and compare this with their own emphasis upon the formal and the collective. Their own need is less.³⁶

It would, no doubt, be surprising if the Dinka lacked all suggestion of monism. But, to follow the history of Indian philosophy, Dinka monism is 'qualified'. There is an ascending scale of life, a moral hierarchy among the Dinka but it emerges as a continuity, a series of transcendencies, not a series of cleavages. We could not draw, for the Dinka, a series of concentric circles to represent their political cosmology without overlaps to indicate the inclusion of what are simultaneously excluded. The pattern is given in the difference between the Nuer opposition nath/jaang and the lack of anything quite so clear cut among the Dinka who have a series of overlapping categories indicating degrees of humanity: jieng is a subjective reference, thai includes jieng together with other Dinka, the Nuer, Europeans and other peoples known to the Dinka. The two latter classes (not the Nuer) are also jur who are in turn distinguished by colour. There are finally "opprobrious terms for the Azande and other Sudanic-speaking peoples, whom the Dinka seem scarcely to regard as 'people'."³⁷

Without speaking of causes I think that we could associate some of these differences in thought with differences in population size and environment. In Evans-Pritchard's time the Nuer numbered about 200,000 which compares with the Dinka 900,000 at the time of Lienhardt's work.

Those marked cultural differences among the Dinka which led the Seligmans to refer to 'congeries of independent tribes' are not lacking among the Nuer.³⁸ But they are either less marked or less significant to the Nuer. Either way 'the Dinka recognize that Nuer are able to unite on a larger scale' than themselves.³⁹ For the Dinka, life at any one time is more settled in the sense that it is not marked by such striking ecological changes as are found among the Nuer. On the other hand the Dinka conceive of themselves as a far ranging people over time. Their own geography and history contain diversity.

Much has been left out of this account of the Nuer and the Dinka. Much will appear to have been simplified unpardonably, many exceptions seen to be ignored. For these faults I am quite impenitent. The whole Nilotic area is, I believe, ethnographically unique in our literature. Nowhere else do we have such detailed accounts of related peoples making possible the development of detailed comparison and the theory of comparison. This potentiality is largely the achievement of Evans-Pritchard. In 1940 he spoke of some future definition of the 'characters of Nilotic culture and social structure.' I have always believed that such definition was possible but clearly it could only be begun by very small-scale and simple operations. It is in the hope that the present venture will provoke more informed and complex comparisons that my tribute is paid to Evans-Pritchard's inspiration.

David Pocock.

FOOTNOTES

1. The paper was originally composed for the festschrift to be presented to him.
2. Needham translation, 1963, pp. 103-4.
3. The Meaning and End of Religion, Mentor Books, 1964, Chapter 2.
4. R.C. Zaehner, At Sundry Times, London, 1958, p.15.
5. Reprinted in Essays in Social Anthropology.
6. I have eliminated the word 'He' from the original to let the emphasis fall upon 'it'. Evans-Pritchard tells us that Mbole is not given a personal pronoun but is distinguished from male and female persons and shares what he calls 'the animal pronoun' 'u' with 'animals, ghosts, ... certain of the heavenly bodies, and a number of vegetables and tools which have an especially intimate relationship to human beings'. Essays in Social Anthropology, p.199.
7. Ibid., p.201-2.
8. Exception has been taken to the use of the word 'hierarchy' here and throughout. I cannot find a better term because the kuth nhial are described as superior, more powerful, etc. and part of the present demonstration is to show how we can understand this as an expression of a hierarchy of being.
9. The Nuer, p.214. I shall henceforth refer to the three parts of the trilogy in order of publication as N., KMN., NR.
10. KMN, pp.96, 101.
11. NR, pp.90, 100.
12. NR, p.78.
13. Cf. NR p.173 and NR, p.291.

14. NR, p.305.
15. N,231. See also KMN, p.31. To avoid further incest 'ba bak ne kir - it (kinship) is split with a gourd.'
16. C.G. and Brenda Seligman, Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, 1932, p.207.
17. N.B. 'There is an opposition in thought between the two (kuaar muon and wut ghok)' and 'Mr. Coriat's observation suggests that Nuer tend to think of the man of the cattle in relation to the above and of the leopard-skin priest in relation to the below. This may be so, but I have no clear evidence that the former is classed as a ran nhial, a person of the above'. NR, p.302. This opens up a line of enquiry in connection with the above discussion which might be followed up.
18. Seligmans op. cit., p.221.
19. In African Political Systems,
20. KMN, p.7.
21. KMN, p.122.
22. NR, p.10.
23. R.G. Lienhardt, Divinity and Experience - the religion of the Dinka, p.38. Henceforth, this work and the article "The Western Dinka" in Tribes without Rulers, ed. John Middleton and David Tait, will be referred to as DE and TWR respectively.
24. TWR, p.131.
25. DE, pp.109-10.
26. NR, p.34.
27. DE, p.104.
28. DE, pp.104-5.
29. DE, p.168.
30. TWR, p.108.
31. TWR, p.107.
32. Law and the Challenge of Modernization in Dinka Society, an unpublished typescript. I am most grateful to R.G. Lienhardt and Mr. Deng for a sight of this very valuable work.
33. DE, pp. 129, 200.
34. DE, p.198 fn.
35. DE, p.158.
36. DE, p.129.
37. TWR, p.108.
38. C.G. and Brenda Seligman, op.cit., p.135.
39. TWR, p.108.