

ADMINISTRATION—WESTERN NUER

Before leaving the district Coriat addressed himself to the problem of economic development, which he saw as linked to the question of tribal integrity. His assessment of the situation among the Western Nuer and his proposals for the protection of the 'tribal' character of society and administration are given in this report.

As a postscript to his proposals, it should be noted that between 1932 and 1934 chiefs were brought under stricter control than Coriat advocated. Opportunities for graft were closed while at the same time pay was not increased (Coriat had suggested that an increase in salary would remove the temptation to extort cattle and fines from the people). In 1931 compulsory cotton cultivation was abandoned.¹ Though the government did not adopt Coriat's specific proposals on raising chiefs' salaries, it was in basic agreement with him on running an administration which limited the Nuer's access to the wider nation.

Governor²

U.N.P.

The Western Nuer were unadministered until 1922 and on Fergusson's first visit,³ ignorance of the people and the state of the country precluded any question of a definite policy being formulated even had it been considered desirable.

1. Romilly, 'Report Western Nuer 1929-1934', Nasir END 66.A.1.

2. C. A. Willis, who was in his last month as governor.

3. Fergusson first began visiting Western Nuer villages in February-April 1921. See *SMIR* 321 (April 1921), 6; Fergusson 1930: 118-29.

Fergusson's efforts at the outset were confined to acquiring what knowledge he could of the habits and customs of the people and it was not until this had been accomplished that it was possible to turn to the problem of administration of the Clans.

As has been enumerated in 'General Information Report',⁴ the Western Nuer, possibly owing to physical barriers, were not harried by the Slave raiders to the extent that were the Eastern Nuer clans and as a consequence the Tribal organisation exists. Not only in that there are Tribal Functionaries who continue to be an essential part of native life but the people themselves, not having been scattered and broken up into innumerable small sections owing allegiance to none, are disciplined and recognise the authority of their Leaders. Trouble when it comes is brought about not so much by the predatory instincts of young warriors as by the machinations of Witchdoctors and Chiefs.

Throughout the Western Nuer, it is the Bul Area alone that is different in this respect.⁵

The existence of a Tribal Organisation and Tribal Leaders and also that there was no attempt to levy a Tribute or Tax until the Administration had developed, were primary factors in making the task at all possible without the aid of military intervention in the first instance.

Reference to a report written by Fergusson in 1923⁶ shows that his intention then was to build up a Native Reserve in which the administration was to be entirely in the hands of the Chiefs unaffected by outside influence in the form of Traders or a large staff of Officials. Writing in 1927⁷ he says:

Looking into the future it is hoped that once having established a firm system of control we shall be able to develop gradually a craving for trade and luxuries of civilisation.

Referring to the training of boys at the Mission school and as Clerks and Dressers:

If we can do this we shall have done much to preserve Tribal unity and control until the people have been sufficiently educated to fight or we should say absorb the many undesirable traits and ideas which civilisation must eventually press upon them to the detriment of local customs and authority. . . . As soon as there is sufficient money to allow of more merchants making fair profit, they will be increased.

4. See above, doc. 4.1, sub-section 2(b).

5. See above, doc. 4.1.

6. I have been unable to find a copy of this report, but he clearly expressed this intention in 1921 when he wrote, 'If I get this place, it is to be closed to everyone except myself—not even a native merchant or clerk to be allowed in' (Fergusson 1930: 119). See also the extracts from an early report of Fergusson's cited in 'Dok and Aak Nuer', 01.01.45, SAD P.P. Howell MSS, file 66.B.

7. Fergusson, 'Report on Eastern District (Nuers), Bahr el Ghazal Province', June 1927, NRO Civsec 57/1/5.

From the above one can infer that a Tribal Administration and development of the economic resources of the country was the keynote of the policy to be adopted.

It is here that one is uncertain, even were there a latent wealth in the Nuer country,⁸ whether economic development can be made to fit into an entirely Tribal system of control.

In my opinion economic progress in the Nuer country can only be attained in one way; by creating a demand for some luxury which will eventually become a necessity as they develop a civilisation in our meaning of the word and by compelling the Nuer to supply a commodity required by civilisation and in return for which they will be given the wherewithal enabling them to obtain that for which we have inculcated a demand. In reality barter in which money becomes the medium and which on the one side is unwanted and unnecessary.

To do this the country must be opened to Traders and the corollary is penetration of foreign and anti-Tribal influences.

In the Western Nuer we gave the people cotton seed to grow in order that they should supply that which we required and to enable them to purchase something we could supply.

Cotton was valuable when first introduced and the more they could supply the better were we pleased. By encouraging the people, and encouragement is sometimes compatible with compulsion, an output of 250 kantars in 1925/6 was increased to 6000 kantars for 1929/30. False prices were paid to a cultivator who knew nothing of fluctuation of values and who did not in fact even know what to do with the money given him. Other than payment of taxes, the penalty of administration, no regard was paid to whether the Nuer had learnt to want something which his surplus cash would enable him to acquire.

In exchange for the cotton thrust on him we have attempted to create a demand in the Western Nuer for cloth, sugar, tea, iron, beads and other trade goods but in 8 years the amount purchased in proportion to the population is infinitesimal. The one want which is a vital and essential part of Tribal life, the supply of cattle, we have been unable to offer in sufficient quantities to keep pace with the amount of money put in to the country for cotton and there is probably hundreds of pounds worth of silver lying hoarded in holes under Nuer homes.

Even were economic development considered essential in the administration of a backward people such as the Nuer and presuming their country can be made a source of wealth to them, it would seem a surer and safer method of attaining this would be by allowing normal and voluntary development consistent with cultural progress under an enlightened Native Administration.

Personally I feel that economic development by a system of forcing can but lead to tribal disintegration.

8. Oil in exploitable quantities was first discovered in the Sudan in Western Nuer District in the 1970s.

There may be Tribes similar to the Nuer where material development has not affected their Tribal outlook or organisation but without wishing to plead that the Nuer is of a different character it is hard to believe that in such Tribes the Chiefs, unless there have been years of peaceful administration behind them, are Leaders in practice and not merely in name.

There would appear to be two alternatives, a Tribal Administration from which all outside influences are excluded and Government assistance is confined to improving the moral welfare of the people, betterment of health conditions and sanitation and gradual improvement of the quality of livestock and food crops; any desire for material progress would come from within. The other alternative is an Administration permitting the intrusion of foreign ideas and influences in the desire to foster trade and material development of the country. The people would be forced to cultivate whatever crops were deemed of value in order that money and other benefits of civilisation could circulate freely. The result would I believe be a collapse of Tribal custom and though it might be possible to point to clothed and wealthy Chiefs and a semblance of Tribal life, this could not exist. There would be new modes of living and new codes.

If the first alternative is to be the choice, it seems to me that two things are essential, firstly that the authority of Chiefs within their own areas should be paramount, secondly that Tribal Chiefs should be given sufficient incentive not only to rule their people loyally and with the aid of Government but to rule their people loyally and for the Government; the difference between the Tribal Leader whose strength is the Government at his back and the Leader whose strength lies in his own ability.

The first to some extent exists but whether it will continue seems uncertain. If administrative progress is to mean imposition of Ordinances and the conferring of Magistrates' powers on Chiefs,⁹ the Tribal Code will become obscured. Although it may be necessary to grant powers to Chiefs enabling them to cope with anti-Tribal offences, the greater latitude allowed in this respect the better. In their present stage the people cannot understand hard and fast rules for the exercise of Chiefship. If a Tribal Leader is able to do this and unable to do that where his individual authority is concerned, he must to some extent lose prestige.

As regards the second essential, it will be sufficient to cite an example in this District. Buom Diu, the Chief of Area A,¹⁰ received £E.1,500 m/ms per month in pay from the Government. He was a Tribal Chief of the Dok in the early days when he amassed many cattle and wives by witchdoctory and raids against the Dinka. During 1930, Buom paid in £E.254 in Tribute based on a Poll Tax of 10 pt. per adult male & cattle received as Court fees and fines to

9. Then being discussed in proposals concerning the Chiefs' Courts Ordinance; see Collins 1983: 158-65.

10. See above, doc. 4.1 n. 32. The Dok were known as area C.

the value of £E.400. He also collected several hundred head of cattle raided from the Dinka in 1927 by the Nuong [Nyuong] clans¹¹ and distributed among friends in Buom's territory. Numbers of cases heard by him, both recorded and unrecorded were settled and decisions were carried out. There were two appeals against his decisions. 1335 kantars of cotton were grown by his people in the rains of 1929/30 and brought in to Adok for sale. In addition 40 miles of new road were cleared. This was done without the aid of a single Government Policeman and except for calling at Adok, I only twice passed through his country, both times en route for some other Area. It is impossible to expect that Buom is doing this for £E.1,500 m/ms a month. If one is not to ignore a tendency to be dishonest on the part of an efficient Chief, there should be greater reward from the Government. In Buom's case I believe that £E.200 per year would be a more suitable pay.

It may be said that greater emolument from the Government will not detract a Chief who wishes to be dishonest, but the fact that a Chief receives sufficient reward should give one a greater pull in combating dishonesty.

The only effective check on a powerful and efficient Chief is by the contentment or not of his people, which should be obvious, the number of would be migrants and emigrants and the manner of life of the people generally. This should be an adequate test in spite of the fact that 'ramps' [i.e. 'swindles'] of a petty kind must be inevitable in a Native Authority, yet if cognizance is to be taken of more flagrant offences of this nature and unless Chiefs are properly compensated for their services, we shall be faced with a long series of dismissals and appointments to the ruin of any Native Administration.

In order therefore that my successor shall have a clear line to follow, I should be grateful for your views as to future Nuer Administration and the possibility of substantially increasing the pay of deserving Tribal Leaders.¹²

SGS *Kerreri*
5.2.31

P.C.
District Commissioner
Western Nuer

11. Administered separately from the Dok; see above, doc. 4.1.

12. Willis's answers to these proposals can be inferred from the marginal notes in doc. 4.1 above. The chiefs were to be given no further rewards, and their powers were to be restricted.

SECTION FIVE

The Administrator and Anthropology

THE ADMINISTRATOR AND ANTHROPOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

THE campaign against Guek, the murder of Fergusson, and the rebellion of Dual Diu combined to convince the government in Khartoum that it knew too little about the Nuer to be confident of future peaceful administration. 'I believe the fact of the matter is', Sir Harold MacMichael minuted to the governor-general,

that to obtain an understanding of the recesses of the savage mind one must either be a savage or a very highly trained anthropologist of wide technical knowledge on the one hand and of a broad human sympathy on the other. At present we fall between the two stools. (MacMichael, quoted in Johnson 1985a: 144-5)

It was for this reason that the government decided to commission an anthropological study of the Nuer, and pressure was brought to bear on E. E. Evans-Pritchard, then studying the Azande, to undertake it.

Coriat had been DC in Western Nuer District for under a year when Evans-Pritchard arrived in the province to begin his work. The two men agreed that Evans-Pritchard should go first to Coriat's district, and they arrived together by steamer at the mission station of Yoynyang on 19 January 1930. Evans-Pritchard's early fieldwork among the Nuer was fraught with difficulties, many created by governor Willis, and he left the Western Nuer on 15 February 1930 to begin work in Lou country.¹ Two months later, when he left Nuerland to return to the Azande, Evans-Pritchard briefly visited Adok. 'The Poet (Evans-Pritchard) came here while I was away and has left for Zande again', Coriat recorded. 'He writes that the Nuer are harder to know than ever. He can get nothing out of them.'²

Evans-Pritchard's second period of fieldwork in 1931 went little better, aggravated as it was by malaria and by Willis, who retired as governor that year. A projected trip to Yoynyang had to be cancelled when Evans-Pritchard returned to Malakal from the Sobat ill with fever in June (Johnson 1982c: 239). He had

1. 'Diario stazione Yoynyang dal Nov. 1923 al Nov. 1935', AMC A/145/15. For Evans-Pritchard's first year of fieldwork among the Nuer, see Johnson 1982c: 234-6.

2. Coriat to Kathleen, 18.04.30, 'En route Adok', Coriat MSS. Collins (1983) assumes that Evans-Pritchard was generally known among members of the Sudan administration as 'the Poet', when in fact this was a private joke between Coriat and his wife and appears in this letter only.

to abandon further fieldwork among the Nuer until 1935, by which time Coriat had left the province and was working in Kordofan. It is possible that the two men met again during the Second World War, when both were serving in Libya, but the period of their collaboration on the Nuer was confined to short periods in 1930 and 1931. When Evans-Pritchard finally began to write his own ethnography he disagreed with Coriat over a number of matters of interpretation, but the two men respected each other, and Evans-Pritchard acknowledged Coriat, not just out of courtesy, as 'a man who knows far more about the Nuer than myself' (Evans-Pritchard 1934: 45).

Evans-Pritchard's publications on the Nuer, beginning in 1933, transformed the administrative perception and description of Nuer society. For the first time abstract principles of Nuer actions and social organization were proposed. A later generation of more scholarly minded officials working among the Nuer often disagreed with his ethnography on specific details and interpretations. Yet frequently they found themselves more in agreement with Evans-Pritchard than with Coriat. This raises a final question about Coriat's writings. How many of his conclusions were based on partial evidence and generalization from only a few cases, and how much of what he described represents an earlier period of Nuer society, before it was affected by more comprehensive administration? This question can be answered only through extended fieldwork and the thorough study of oral history in the districts where Coriat once served, which can then be brought to bear on continued source criticism of contemporary records.

**NOTES ON A PAPER ON THE NUER
READ BY MR. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD AT
A MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE,
SEPTEMBER, 1931**

When Evans-Pritchard left the Sudan in 1931 he was uncertain whether his research on the Nuer could continue. In the middle of that year he presented a preliminary paper on the Nuer to the British Association for the Advancement of Science. While convalescing in Malakal he consulted with Coriat before writing this paper.¹ The paper was copied and distributed to various government offices in the Sudan. In its revised and expanded form it was published in three parts as 'The Nuer: Tribe and Clan', in SNR, 1933-5.

Coriat's comments on the paper were also copied and distributed (with Evans-Pritchard's initial, as D, instead of E for Edward, incorrectly given in each copy). They were forwarded to Evans-Pritchard who cited some of them in the final version of his paper.² As this is one of the few ways in which Coriat's observations have been introduced to a wider audience, it is appropriate to reprint the entire text here as Coriat's final contribution to Nuer ethnography. Some differences in ethnographic observation which follow can be explained by the fact that Evans-Pritchard's experience was confined mainly to the Mor Iou, the Eastern Jikany and the Leek Nuer, while Coriat's lay more with the Gaawar, Gun Lou and those Western Nuer south of the Bahr el-Ghazal.

1. Coriat to Kathleen, 02.07.31, 'Kerreti', Coriat MSS.

2. See Evans-Pritchard 1933: 10-12; 1934: 44-5; 1935: 56, 66-7.

I have read with interest the paper on the Nuer by Mr. F. Evans-Pritchard.

Further study of the Nuer by Mr. Evans-Pritchard should be of great help in the future to officials working in their country and the following few notes may be of use to him in his researches. They are necessarily limited in scope but may provide information on one or two points which Mr. Evans-Pritchard appears to have overlooked.

Para 1. Mr. Evans-Pritchard states that natural conditions have to a great extent made the Nuer inaccessible to foreign influences.

If we are to believe the testimony of early observers it is because of foreign influences that these people have lost much of their ancient culture and social organisation.

Casati, writing of them in 1898 [in fact, 1891], said they were a timid and shy people who became savage and warlike after the incursion by the Arab.³

To foreign influence, intrusion would be a better term, must be attributed their change of outlook and their mistrust and resentment of the foreigners.

There can be little doubt that the slave era was primarily the cause of our difficulties in dealing with Nuer tribes. Arab raiders broke up the clans and sections to such an extent that the tribesmen became predatory and uncontrollable and lost respect for their leaders. It is because of this that the clans became disintegrated and that we were faced with innumerable internecine feuds which impeded a peaceful administration. Particularly has this been so in Lau and Gaweir.⁴

Administration of the Nuer has been disturbed and hazardous, but the killing of Captain Fergusson in 1927 and the rebellion of Gwek Wundeng [Guek Ngundeng] in that year,⁵ were only incidents in a long succession of killings and minor revolts. En passant, it may be mentioned that there was no connection between the outbreaks in 1927.

Para 2. It is unfortunate that except for Jackson,⁶ the officials who have worked in the Nuer country have lacked either the ability or inclination to record their knowledge of the Nuer but a study of files in District offices should provide fragments of information of value to the scientific worker.

Para 3. It is doubtful even were there no untoward conditions, such as a military control of the country,⁷ to disturb the observer, whether much can be obtained from the Nuer without long and patient residence in their midst.

3. See above, doc. 4.1 n. 17.

4. See above, doc. 1.2.

5. For Fergusson, see above, Introduction, n. 4; for Guek, see above, Section 3.

6. At this time the work by Jackson (1923) was the only attempt at a comprehensive account of the Nuer. Other administrators wrote shorter pieces; see Stigand 1918*a*, 1918*b*, 1919, and 1923; Fergusson 1921, 1924.

7. The aftermath of the Nuer Settlement, 1929-30.

They are shy and suspicious of the stranger.

Para 4. It is of interest that the Nuer and Dinka themselves admit a common origin. The story is similar to that of Jacob and Esau in the Bible.⁸

As regards their character and mental outlook there is in my opinion contrast between the Nuer and any single Dinka tribe including the Atwot that I have come across in 9 years dealing with representatives of all sections of Dinka and Nuer except the Dinka of the far west of the Bahr el Ghazal Province.

Para 5.—⁹

Para 6. It is incorrect to state that the tribe is the largest political unit within the nation.

Their history can show many instances where two or more tribes have combined in common offence or defence. As for example Lau and Jekaing [Jikany] against the Annuak [Anuak], Gaweir and Lau against the Dinka. In fact the tribes combined in their first conquests of the Dinka.¹⁰

Since the disruption of the clans following the advent of the slave raider the political unit has tended to diminish. So great has been the disruption that often the clan or family group became the political unit. The efforts of the present administration in recent years have been to reunite the groups in a Tribal organisation. As the power of hereditary leaders decreased the machinery for settlement of disputes became practically non-existent.

In the past acts of homicide as between members of different Nuer tribes were dealt with by leopard-skin chiefs [*kwar muon*] in the same way as with members of tribal groups.¹¹

Tribal and clan segmentation is not only mutually dependent but is also coincident. If the Gajok [Gaajok] and Gajak [Gaajak] are different tribes but one clan, so also are the Leik and Kilwal [Karlual] and Lau and Rangyan [Rengyan].¹² It is not always possible to trace this relationship by name.

8. For the story of the cow and the calf see Evans-Pritchard 1940: 125.

9. Evans-Pritchard here stated that the Nuer were a 'homogenous nation', a point that Coriat felt needed no comment.

10. What Coriat means by 'alliances' is unclear. Very often, individuals from different sections would join raiding parties organized by other sections (as some Lou joined Dual Diu in raiding the Nyareweng and Ghol Dinka in 1928). In the nineteenth century some Lou did combine with the Jikany in raiding the Anuak, but there was no concerted coalition between the whole of the Lou and Jikany. Similarly the Lou and Gaawar did not combine in raids against the Dinka in the nineteenth century, but each fought independently of the other, usually also fighting different groups of Dinka. Evans-Pritchard replied, 'I was aware of these combinations, but preferred to regard them as alliances between two political units' (1933: 12). He later referred to temporary coalitions of different Nuer tribes, using the examples of the Lou and Gaawar and the Lou and Jikany as well as examples of his own (1940: 121), but he tended to treat them as more recent phenomena than Coriat, and as fostered by prophets.

11. Evans-Pritchard (1933: 10–11) acknowledged that this may have been so, but that he was only reporting the principle, as stated to him by Nuer, and not the practice.

12. The Gaajak (Thiang) and Gaajok are two of the three main divisions of both the western

Division of the tribe amounts to division of the clan.

The Gajok will admit that he is a member of the same clan as the Gajak but both claim membership of the Jekaing clan.¹³

To ask the Nuer what his tribe is, is to ask what his clan is. It is merely a matter of how far back one refers. What is your shieng?—TENG [Teny]. What is TENG's BAB (ROOT)—KERFAIL.¹⁴ Of whom is KERFAIL?—Of Gaweir. What are the Gaweir?—Nath (the people)—Nuer.

Until the clans became disintegrated the tribe was the clan.

In every tribe the sections or groups admit a common ancestry and will trace their descent back to a common ancestor.

The name alone of the Gaweir implies this. GATWEIR—the sons of Weir.¹⁵

Para 7. It is not necessarily only those which are nuclei of a tribe who form a kind of aristocracy, if such can be said to exist among the Nuer.

In the assessment of blood money for homicide it is the 'DIEL', or pure bred, who receives a special assessment. A diel may long ago have ceased to live with or acknowledge his original clan but pure Nuer ancestry on the paternal side ensures recognition as diel.¹⁶

Para 8. The subject of totemism is inextricably bound up with tribal spiritual worship.

Whether or not Nuer clans are totemic, I have found invariably that members of the same clan possess a common totem or form of spiritual ritual, though they may also have a distinct and particular family totem or ritual.

Absorption of strangers, intermingling of sections and dispersal has made this a difficult subject for enquiry. The attitude of the Kir of Jekaing to the gourd also the Gaweir and the inderab tree [*Cordia rothii*] does not mean that members of these tribes have no other totems.¹⁷

In Gaweir, the Kerfail section, one of the oldest and purest of Gaweir

and Eastern Jikany. Karlual is one of the three main divisions of the Leek Nuer, and at this time there had been extensive hostility between it and the other primary sections (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 146). Both the Lou and Rengyan were founded by the Jinaca clan, as Evans-Pritchard subsequently pointed out in many of his publications.

13. Both claim membership or association with the Gaatgankir clan. The Jikany are not a clan, in Evans-Pritchard's usage, but the name of a tribe centred around the Gaatgankir clan.

14. Teny, an earth-master lineage of the Kerpeil section, which is the dominant section of the Radh primary section of the Gaawar. See above, doc. 1.2.

15. Gaawar is the name of both a clan and a tribe. The clan around which the tribe was formed are supposed to be descendants of War; thus Gaa (*gaat*, children) of War. See above, doc. 1.2.

16. Evans-Pritchard (1940: 212–20) presents an analysis of the *diel* within the lineage system, but emphasises that it is a relative term (p. 235). The *diel* are not so much 'aristocrats' as 'original settlers' around which 'strangers' subsequently settle.

17. Kir, the ancestor of the Gaatgankir, was supposed to have been found in a gourd (*kir*). War, the ancestor of the Gaawar, is sometimes said to have fallen from the sky with the branch of an inderab tree in his hand. Members of the Gaawar clan sometimes perform ceremonies praying for rain with inderab branches on the strength of this association (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 82).

sections, has a lion totem as a wife of an ancestor of theirs [who] was said to turn herself into a lion at night.¹⁸

One must assume that apart from clan or tribal totems or spirits, a new totem or spirit is liable to crop up at any time in a family through some supernatural birth or death or other incident.¹⁹

Except with the Kir of Jekaing,²⁰ sacred spears do not in my opinion have any great totemic significance. They do not influence the life of the community to the extent that worship of other totems or spirits do and their origin is obscure. Possibly they are connected with war and conquest. Particularly as the sacred spear is common to Dinka tribes.

It is of the utmost importance to note that the Nuer word for a totem—Kwoth—is also the word for the sky, God or spirit. To ask a man what is his totem is to ask what is his Kwoth.

Any object of worship, natural or spiritual and anyone or thing possessed by spirits or of supernatural power is Kwoth. Thus one is, has or is of Kwoth.

Reference has been made to the Gul Weech [*col wic*]. Families with a Gul Weech tradition, the Gul Weech may be an ancestor or near relative, perform certain recognised rituals at birth, marriage and death ceremonies. These are in the nature of propitiatory acts and have nothing whatever to do with the family Kwoth (Totem or God).

It is a common belief that the Gul Weech of a family was spirited away to Heaven in a whirlwind or cloud of fire. He is respected as an entity capable of causing good or evil to the living and his behests which are transmitted by dreams are scrupulously carried out.²¹

Para 9. It is conceivable that at one time the age classes were regulated for the entire nation by one functionary. At any rate two of the oldest age classes within living memory have a common name throughout the tribes.²²

18. While Coriat is probably correct in this statement, the fact that an ancestress was able to change herself into a lion could have other implications. Nuer call such persons *let*, and the *let* often figure in historical traditions as dangerous and unknown foreigners, much in the same way as lions in Dinka lion stories do. According to Gaawar traditions I recorded in 1975–6, most of their current country was originally inhabited by *let*.

19. Evans-Pritchard (1956) discusses at length the accretion of totems in chs. 3 and 4. His evidence basically substantiates Coriat's comment.

20. Kir was supposed to have been found with an iron spear in his gourd. This spear has been retained by the Eastern Jikany and is currently kept in a special shrine in Ethiopia. It was described by Stigand (1919), Jackson (1923), and MacDermot (1972). Coriat's comparison of the spear of Kir with Dinka sacred spears is highly appropriate. He probably had in mind the spear of Lirpiou among the Gualla clan of the Bor Dinka (see Bullen 1982). In fact the Jikany claim that Kir was originally found among the Ngok Dinka, and the Ngok of the Sobat are said to retain part of the spear of Kir and keep it in a shrine of their own.

21. See Evans-Pritchard 1956: 52–5, 60–2, and Crazzolara 1953: 88, 98, for other descriptions of the *col wic*, the departed spirits of persons killed by lightning or lost in the bush.

22. He is referring here to the Tharpi and Thut age-sets (see above, doc. 1.2). There were still

The classes are not regulated by a cattle expert; the Wud 'Ok [*wut ghok*] or man of cattle is responsible only for the initiation ceremony itself. Age classes are now regulated and named by certain 'Kwar Mon' [*kwar muon*] land chiefs with traditional powers.²³

Whatever their special or general social significance and origin is, the classes have a definite military value as fighting organisations.

In war a man accompanies his village and district and takes part according or not to his age and fitness but he also groups himself with his age class and each particular class singles out those of its own in the enemy to do battle with. In effect they become tactical organisations and are under control of the Niel [*ngul*] or War Leader.

Para 10. The hereditary Kwar Mon was at one time the sole authority for settlement of disputes connected with land or water rights. His powers were autocratic and semi-divine and the practice of hearing disputes in collaboration with older men is born of the present administration.²⁴

Both the land and cattle men possessed semi-divine or magical powers. That is, they had 'Kwoth' in them.²⁵

The magician who is not also a tribal authority is a growth of the last 50 years [and] probably originated from the Dinka. This class increased as it was found to become lucrative and fundamentally is anti-tribal. The magician contrary to the dictates of Tribal custom was always prepared, in return for suitable emolument, to absolve a Tribesman from the performance of some ritual duty.

The magician and what Mr. Evans-Pritchard terms the Shaman or prophet are one and the same type which has now become either hereditary or acquired.²⁶

The Kwoth or magician is said to have 'Kwoth' in him and every wizard possesses his own particular Kwoth spirit each of whom goes by a particular

a few old men of the Thut age-set alive in the 1930s.

23. Earth-masters and prophets have in the past been involved in sacrifices made during the initiation of young men, but men of cattle are still the experts most closely connected with the opening and closing of age-sets, conducting the initiation ceremonies, and choosing the age-set names.

24. Evans-Pritchard doubted this and commented, 'I find it hard to believe that the *kwar muon* even in the heyday of his power ever exercised such judicial or executive authority outside the sphere in which he functioned traditionally as a ritual agent' (Evans-Pritchard 1934: 45).

25. This point is an important one, and one that Evans-Pritchard seems to have underestimated. The *kwoth* of the earth- and cattle-masters is *kwoth rieng*, the divinity of Flesh, and it functions in much the same way that the clan-divinity Flesh (*rieng*) functions among the Dinka spear-masters.

26. Coriat was not alone among administrators in confusing the different roles of the prophet (*guk kwoth*), diviner (*tief*) and magician (*guan wal*). As a rule prophets were opposed to magicians. It was because of this persistent confusion among administrators, and perhaps in reply to this criticism of Coriat's, that Evans-Pritchard wrote in the revised version of his paper (1935: 54-5) that the use of the term 'witchdoctor' to describe 'all the people who seemed to do "odd" things is disastrous to ethnological description and to good administration alike'.

name. The Kwoth of Gwek of Lau was Dengkur²⁷ that of Dwal Diu of Gaweir was Diu. In Dwal's case the family assumed the spirit name.²⁸

The Kwoth should not be confused with the Guk or lesser spirits. These generally 'possess' Healers a class of minor Witchdoctor who confine their work to the cure and relief of ills.²⁹ It is incorrect to say that Wundeng contented himself with performance of ritual while Gwek exercised Government functions. *Both* father and son were notorious for their secular activities.³⁰

Para 11. There is one point in this extremely interesting chapter where Mr. Evans-Pritchard is at fault.³¹ A widow may and does marry again if she has no issue by her first husband or other relatives. In rare cases such as this she is paid a small dowry on her second marriage which she retains herself. Her issue become sons of her second husband but with the dowry cattle the woman will eventually marry a girl in her original husband's name. That is she will pay dowry for a girl and obtain the services of a male friend for purposes of procreation. The issue are named after her first husband. It sometimes occurs that a Nuer family or clan will trace its descent back to a woman e.g. Shieng Nyadkwon of Gaweir.

When a widow has married sons, any one of whom has male issue, she is at liberty to contract a woman marriage similar to the practice described in the preceding paragraph.

In this case the issue take her own name. Thus she finds her own line and in due course becomes founder of the family. I do not think it is accurate to say that a man stresses his descent through his mother in proportion to the length of her stay in the matrilocal residence.

On marriage a woman will always live in a hut set aside for her in her family village and will remain apart from her husband for at least a year and sometimes until after the first child has been weaned. This becomes the matrilocal residence and the husband will spend his time equally between his own home and that of his wife.

27. The divinity possessing Ngundeng and Guek was Deng, not Dengkur. Dengkur was Ngundeng's ox-name.

28. Diu is used only sometimes as a family name by the children of Deng Laka. His younger children also took the names of the divinities to whom their mothers were married and in whose name they were conceived and born (see Gau Bang, above, doc. 1.3 n. 15).

29. Coriat appears to be confusing the name of the type of person who is seized by a divinity with the divinity itself. The *guk* is the 'sack' or container of a seizing divinity.

30. Evans-Pritchard cited this criticism (1935: 56) but stood by his original conclusion. If by secular activities one includes hearing complaints about theft, adultery and killing (the sorts of activities the administration asserted were its responsibility), then Coriat is confirmed by modern Lou testimony, and Evans-Pritchard underestimated Ngundeng's influence and authority.

31. Section 11 in Evans-Pritchard's paper read: 'A widow is already married and therefore cannot enter upon a second marriage. She can only cohabit with one of her husband's heirs or with a lover.' Howell (1954: 78-81) essentially substantiates Evans-Pritchard's statement and presents very clearly a complex situation which evidently confused Coriat here.

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**GOVERNING THE NUER: Documents in Nuer History and
Ethnography, 1922–1931, by Percy Coriat**
Edited by **Douglas H. Johnson**

Percy Coriat was the first Nuer-speaking British official to produce a substantial body of informed and detailed reports on the Nuer. This volume brings together all of his most substantial writings found in Sudanese and British archives to date, and makes them available for the first time to a wider audience interested in the history and ethnography of the Nuer. These papers give the most comprehensive account yet published of Nuer life in the 1920s, describing the events which preceded and led to Evans-Pritchard's own fieldwork in the 1930s and providing a much-needed historical context for his famous Nuer trilogy. Douglas Johnson has added a biographical introduction and extensive explanatory notes on the basis of official records and historical field research.

Douglas H. Johnson, a historian, is a Research Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford. He has worked in the Southern Sudan since 1972, the same year he began his research on the Nuer. He is the author of *Nuer Prophets* (Oxford, 1994).

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