

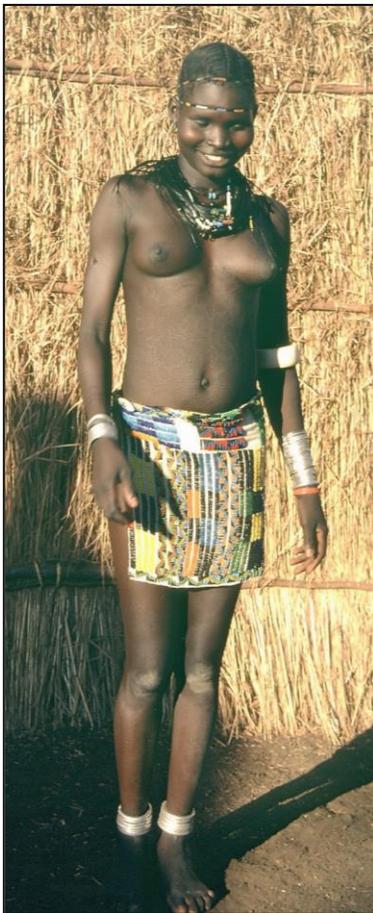
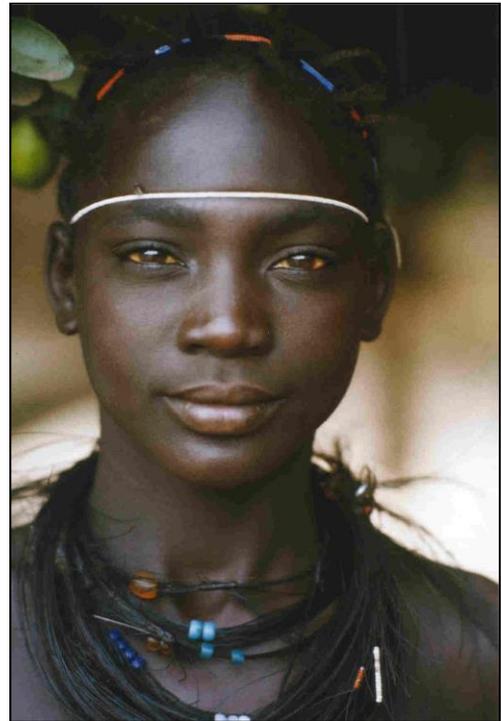
ANNEX A

OBJECTS OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE IN THE SOUTH SUDAN

A short overview by Kwacakworo/Unesco¹

Even though the material culture found in the South Sudan cannot rival with the one found in the North, many tribes in the South Sudan are rich with objects of cultural and historical value. With the advent of war, in the South of the country variegated assortment of artefacts were either vandalized or simply lost in the confusion caused by the conflict. However, a lot can be saved if concentrated efforts are made to rescue these cultural and historical relics.

For practical reasons, the following overview has been classified according to the objects' use or significance.

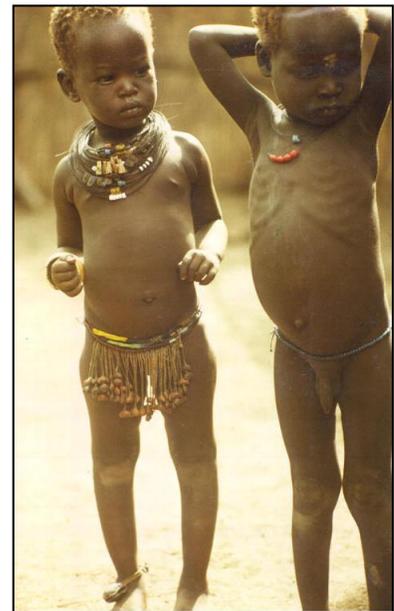


I. CLOTHING

Clothing in the modern sense is a relatively new habit; traditionally, only the women wore a loincloth while men used to go naked. But nakedness looked for the Nilotes different from the one seen by foreigners: clothing was needed for the protection of a human person and his dignity, not for moral, practical or climatic reasons: a person was only seen “naked” when not protected by beads, bangles or charms... This happened only when a person is in deep sorrow (such as after a deathcase) when even his/her hair is shaved.

a. skins, tree-bark, leaves, bead-loincloth

The traditional dress for South Sudan's tribes is the **skin**. It is made from a hide that is made soft after prolonged soaking in the water. It is then beaten and carefully massaged to



¹ Mareng Cuor s a Dinka from Aweil with very limited knowledge of other tribes. His notes are therefore just indicative.

make it softer. The women wear such skins as loincloth while the men go naked. The Anyuak use **bark of trees** made into a piece of cloth to protect their bods against cold and rain. The Dinka from Bor wear a cloth made **out of beads** when wrestling. The Luo of Northern Bahr el Ghazal use **tree-leaves** attached to a string on the loin. When the loincloth gets dry, a women will simply go a nearby bush and pick some fresh leaves; such a loincloth out of leaves usually lasts one day. Their male counterpart wore a bottomless pant made from the bark of the tree. Under that pant is another stretched piece of cloth going in a curve from the front loin to the back.



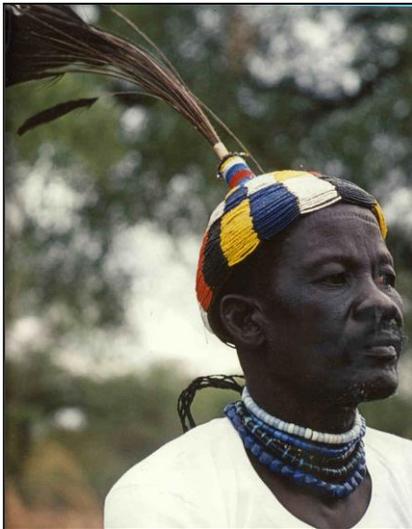
b. shoes

Especially in regions with a lot of thorny-trees, people move in sandals: they are cut out of the skin of buffalos or giraffes, the skin of elephants being too soft to be worn.

II. BODY DECORATIONS

a. Hair dyeing, head-gears, wigs etc.

The Nuer and the Dinka are famous for hair-dyeing. Especially youngsters staying in the cattle camp and dancers are fond of this. It has no special meaning apart from being a manifestation of beauty. Wrestlers adorn themselves in such a manner; young men use to shave their head, leaving only a tiny portion of hair in the middle of the head; that one is then dyed to look like the head of a cock. Women never dye their hair unless on a special cases such as during a ceremonial dancing when sacrifices to God are made. The dye commonly comes from the cow’s urine. The Murle girls also braid their hair in a very beautiful manner, using a mixture out of cowdung and cow-urine.



There exist all kind of headgears, wigs, feathers, hats etc. They are all used during festivities and for increasing the spiritual appearance of a dancer.

b. Body Painting

Body painting is done for special purposes. When going to war with the neighbouring clan or tribe, any able-bodied young man paints his body. The main reason is to scare the opponent. If an important person such as a chief in the the *Lotuko* community dies, the warriors stage a mock fight while being painted in white and black colours. The Dinka have similar traditional but with different meaning. It is done during marriage; that is also the time when the best jumper is seen, displaying his courage and skills.

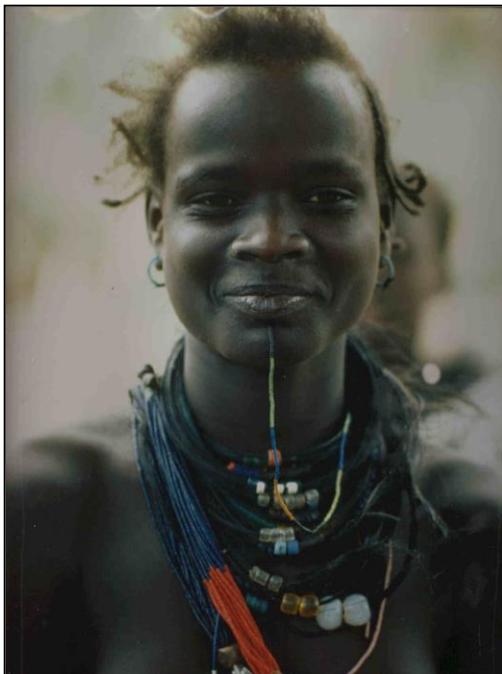
Body-painting finds its most beautiful and elaborated expression in the Nuba Mountains; Faris:1972 has analysed these paintings and decorations in wonderful details.

c. Scarification

Scarification can be found in many tribes in the South Sudan and – in extraordinary density – in the Nuba Mountains. It is done for specific reasons or just for beauty. Sometimes, men like to cut their skin to give evidence of their courage. The Toposa and other tribes of Eastern Equatoria cut lines in their body to show how many people they have already killed in fighting... However, scarification is also done for medical purposes.



III. BEADS AND CHARMS



a. beads

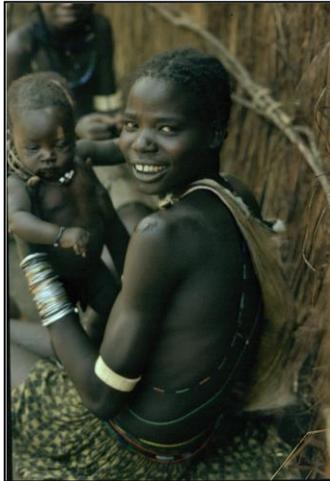
Beads are of a central importance all over the South Sudan as well as in the Nuba Mountains; they are of a social importance, of significance especially for beauty and in the relationship between a boy and a girl; the Anyuak of Eastern Upper Nile use their very precious beads “dimui” as a dowry for marriage. A special type of bead among the Dinka (called *guen-jieng*) has become so precious that no one can exactly tell its value; its source of production is unknown. Young men adorn it to woo girls and this is manifested in the songs they compose about these beads. Even cows of personal admiration are called with the name of the beads in order to show how beautiful a particular cow looks. Among the Dinka Bor, hundreds of tiny beads are bound together and worn as a loincloth among young men.

During the coronation-ceremony of the Anyuak King, a bead containing the spiritual essence of Anyuak Kingship is put on the neck of the new ruler, transforming him from a mortal human being into an immortal being of spiritual essence. Beads are not just for decoration but always carry a spiritual message, and if it was only to enhance the spiritual and physical beauty of a woman or a man. Beads have often medical powers, can heal and protect.

b. charms

Charms are of various types, made out of leather, ivory or wood, they can have the shape of small bags (containing some magic) or consist out of teeth etc. They are used by persons exposed to or dealing with spiritual forces, such as magician and sorcerers but also by the common people fearing curses, sickness or other dangers; charms (especially beads) protect travellers from evil. Children get usually protected from the envy of

spiritual powers by charms. Among the Dinka, a man wearing charms is revered as he is believed to be resistant to all kinds of dangers. People with evil eyes have also charms which enable them to cause death to persons they hate. Witchcraft is popular amongst all people in the South Sudan, very common indeed among the Jurchol and the tribes from Western Equatoria, namely the Azande.



IV. RINGS AND BANGLES

Though it is of recent discovery, the Nilotes of the South Sudan especially among the Dinka section uses ivory bangles. The rings made out of metal only came in to existence in the 19th century. The newly wedded girl has to adorn an ivory bangle to show that her husband loves and adores her. Rings are worn at the upperarm or on the wrist; girls wear also decorated ear-rings.

Some tribes use rings dented with sharp spikes as weapons for self-protection, others cut for the same purpose rings' edges sharp like knives.

V. UTENSILS

Because of the rarity of material and the work contained in each handicraft, utensils of daily or occasional use are much more than just objects of practical utility: handmade, they often reflect human consciousness through their elaborated appearance. Great attention is paid for a utensil's quality and beauty, decorations providing the utensils with the dimensions of human spirituality, protecting the persons using the particular objects. This holds true for very simple objects such as load-rings, pot-rests but more especially for pots, gourds and other vessels.

a. **Pick-a pack**

Women are known to have a special in making this thing. This is because they are the housekeepers and men are either engaged in war with the neighboring tribe or in search of food in a far away places. They vary in types from tribe to tribe. The Southern most tribes have something like a modern one made from the skin and clanged at the back. In Bahr el gazal region among the Agar, they have a case made of reeds and mostly carried on the head.

b. **Gourds and Pots**

The making of pots is an art in itself, demanding much knowledge and skills. Pots and gourds for special use (eating-vessels) are especially beautiful and usually



decorated by abstract designs or drawings. There are pots of extreme spiritual significance, some of them having the power to bring rain. Such pots are of course impossible to move away from the place where they are kept.

c. Spoons and containers of spoons

The Nilotes traditionally do not eat with their hands but use spoons: this are either unsharpened mussle-shells or made out of metal. They are kept in containers which are either plaited or made out of the scrotum of buffalos or giraffes.



VI. LEISURE



a. Skins

The skin is/was the “bed” for most people in the South Sudan. In some regions, it consisted out of a reed tied together, but in other regions the skins of antilopes (or cattle) made a soft sleeping-place; attention was paid to skins offered to



women or to men. Skins would be carried when travelling long distances. This was common among the Anyuak, Shilluk and the Dinka tribes but also used by the cattle-keeping peoples of Eastern Equatoria. Important skins were reserved for chiefs’ or kings’ use.

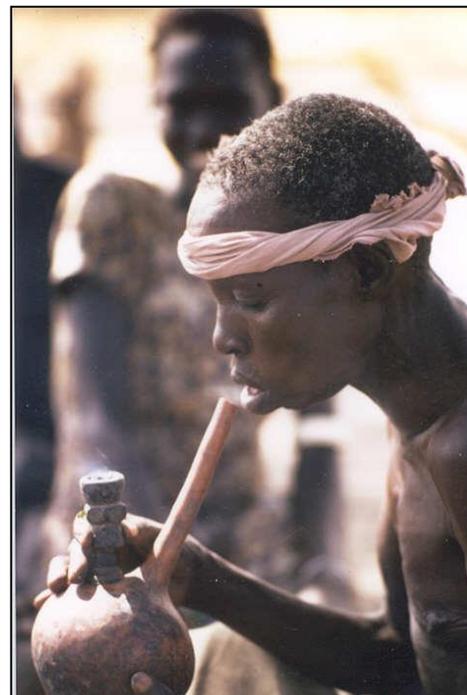
b. Neck-rest

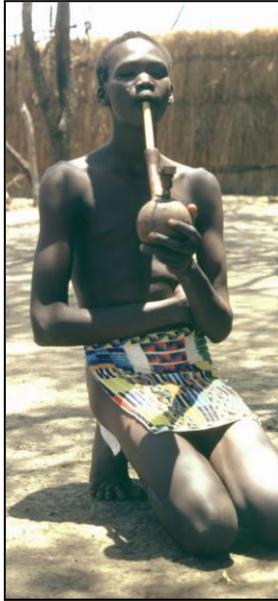
Used mainly by old men as a “pillow” and occasionally even as a sitting-chair. Women are usually not expected to use it. The Anyuak have neck-rests for women.

The Dinka Malual of Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal have a different type of neck-rest, long and light; is also used as a sitting stool and has a handle and a compartment for storing tobacco. Some tribes (like the Toposa) carry their neck-rest/stool wherever they go.

c. Pipes

Smoking is wide-spread in the South Sudan, especially amongst the Nilotes. While the Nuer and Dinka have short pipes made out of clay or iron, the Shilluk (and Nuer) have pipes with a very long tube which can only be smoked while sitting. The





Anyuak are famous for smoking the water-pipe made out of a gourd with a long neck; young people smoke it as well, even though with a less strong type of tobacco.

There are a great variety of different pipes, and many of them are extremely beautiful, often decorated with designs, beads etc.

The Toposa have special containers made out of bone and leather for carrying tobacco when travelling and rolling maize-leaves for smoking cigarettes; as the Toposa-men still go naked, they hang those containers on the ear.

VII. WEAPONS AND TOOLS

a. Spears

Though used for fighting, hunting and for self-protection, but besides of their practical use they stand for self-consciousness, pride, courage, respect, dignity and indeed for beauty. There are uncountable types of spears, some tribes using them as part of the marriage-dowries. Spears are very important as heirlooms and play an important symbolic role in political or judicial ceremonies. Specific powers are symbolised by the spear, especially with the so-called Spear-masters of the Dinka.

b. Fishing spears and hooks.

Fishing-spears look like long spikes; they are of a different size, some of them having a series of tiny but sharp flukes. The master of the fishing spear uses it among the Dinka to symbolize it powers.

There are many different types of hooks as well. Small ones are tied to a string while big ones are tied to a stick: in the latter case, a big fish gets simply caught by a stroke with that harpoon.



c. Shields

Most of the tribes of the Nilotic origin have their own type of shields; they are usually made out of buffalo-leather and vary in size. The Dinka, Murle, Nuer and the Lotuho are known to be so attached to their shields that they use it even during dancing-ceremonies. Because of the new type of warfare (automatic guns), shields are nowadays only of ceremonial importance and on the way of disappearance.

d. Canoes

e. Traps

For catching fish, people make eel-basket in different size and of various, sophisticated shapes. Amongst the beasts, only leopards are trapped in holes dug in the ground. There are traps for rats and smaller beasts as well.



IIX. FOOD PREPARATION.

a. Pounding

Amongst the Nilotes, pounding and cooking is the exclusive affair of women affair: a man seen hovering over the cooking place is ridiculed among

the Nuer, the Shilluk and most of the other Niloitic tribes from Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile. A song can be composed about him to show that he is not man enough while the women laugh about the men's incompetence, saying that their cooking is more like fighting. The pounding of maize or sorghum is done in a hollowed wood (mortar) and the pestle.

a. Grinding.

It is common among the tribe in Equatoria and few places in Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile. Two stone are use: a small one and a mother stone. It grinds the grains in to fine powder and will not require winnowing when this work is finished. The Pãri in Equatoria grind their grains in rocks which through long use have become soft and shallow.

b. Winnowing

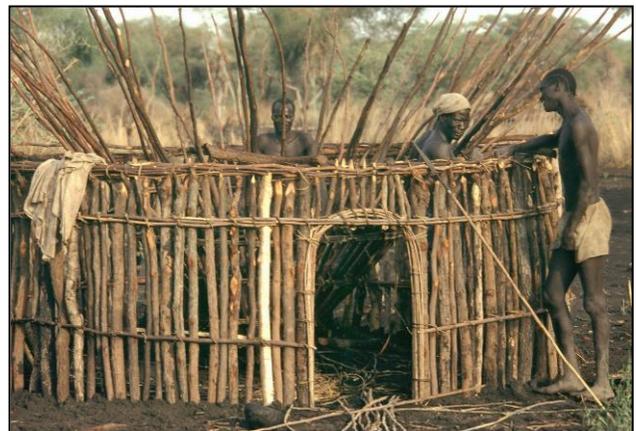
Before pounding is done, the grains have to be winnowed to separate the shaft from the grains. This is done by making use of winnowing trays and blown against the wind. Some of the wooden pestles are sculptured on the top.

IX. CONSTRUCTIONS

The styles of buildings vary tremendously between the different tribes, sometimes even among one single tribe (for example, the Dinka tribes in Bahr-el-Ghazal and the Dinka tribes living East of the Nile have different types of buildings). Ecological circumstances and the availability of material condition the way huts are erected. Pure nomads erect, for obvious reasons, less solid because not permanent shelters when moving.

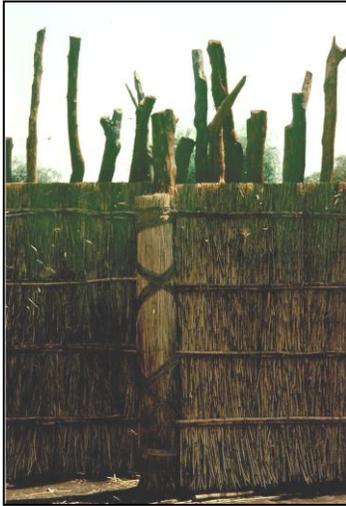
a. Huts

The huts of most tribes have a conical roof with mud-plastered, round walls. In the areas affected by the flood, the wall is raised from the ground; this is the case for the Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal. The Toposa of Eastern Equatoria, the Murle in Upper Nile and some other nomadic tribes have purely grass-huts



with a round roof touching the ground; they are quickly built and yet resist the weather for the needed time.

There are big differences in the quality of the huts: style, size and beauty differ all depending on the occupant of the hut (a man, a woman and her children or a royal person).



b. Fences

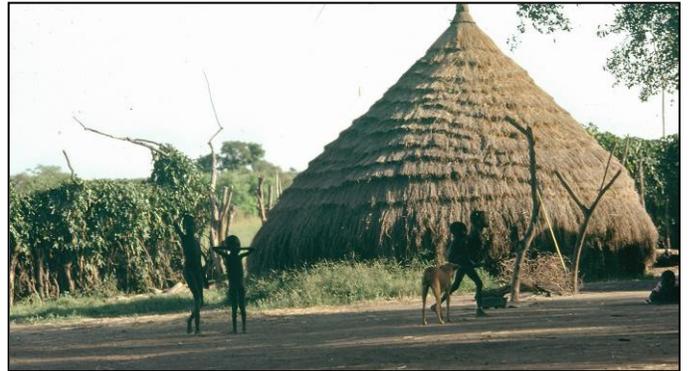
A hut is often used for storing materials and goods; women sleep there with their children. But men spend the night inside the hut only for sleeping with their women or when there is rain; otherwise they sleep in the open within the court-yard, surrounded by a fence. The fences are made out of grass tied together by rods which are kept by wooden posts; often these posts are shaped in a beautiful manner, for esthetical and sometimes for spiritual purposes.

c. Cattle byre

Cattle byres are used during the dry season often a

temporary opening set up purposely to house cattle. Each clan has its settlement to keep cattle. Sometime groups of small clans join up together to make one big settlement of cattle-byres (in Dinka mostly headed by the “*bany wut*” who usually is a man with more cattle than the rest. The Shilluk give him a similar name with the meaning of

“cattle-chief”. During the wet season, each family-unit brings its cattle to the village and keeps the animals in a so-called “*Luak*” – a big hut that houses more than 50 cows; boys use to sleep there. The Nilotic tribes from Bahr el Ghazal (with the exception of some Luo speaking group), in Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria manifest their wealth in and make their marriage-contracts with cattle. Some (such as the Toposa) even claim a divine right to cattle. Because of the social and existential importance of cattle, the building of a byre is considered to be the most important step in life; it spells a person’s status in society.

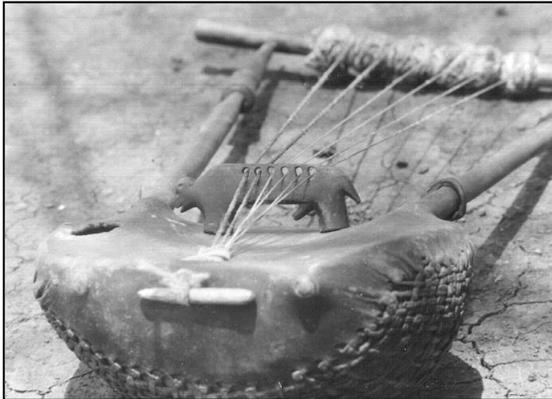
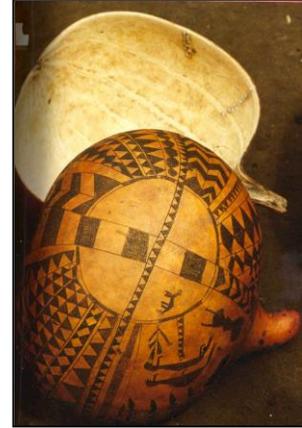


a. Ropes

Uses of ropes vary between thin and thick ones The cattle keeper tether their cows with ropes, the hunters trap animals with them but its most common use is to hold the roof of the huts. Experts make *Yuen weng* for the cattle, the strongest rope being made from animal skin; it is usually used to build Luaks (byres) and for tying up a naughty bull. Ropes for building houses are twisted out of grass.

X. ART

As already mentioned, almost all material *objects* of South Sudanese culture are art-work, a combination of practical utility and human consciousness, a strong expression of the human desire for beauty and inner quality and a materialized desire to resist time and to get protected when working, when moving, when sitting, eating or smoking. Art cannot only be seen on objects and buildings but even on the *human body* itself which gets decorated, worked on, shaped and embellished, making space for the human mind and protecting it against all evil.



Music is another way of expressing human existence, emphasizing feelings of happiness as well as of sorrow. The Nilotes at least do not discuss existential or psychological problems: *music and songs* are here to express such feelings, to praise and to celebrate, to mourn or simply to think aloud about what is generally perceived to be ‘the misery of the world’.

a. **Music-instruments**

Amongst the music-instruments, the *drum* is certainly the most prominent one; besides of dancing, the drum plays an important role in political or social events; through its powerful sound, it calls on people as well as on the spiritual forces of all kind. The drums’ body is carved out of a tree, the drum-head is a skin stretched by leather-strings. The drums of the Anyuak kings serve moreover as containers for the teeth of their children after having been removed at the moment of the end of childhood.

Other important music-instruments are the *guitar*, the *flute* and the *sanza*. The tribes from the Western Equatoria use the song when marrying and it is accompanied by the instrument like a simple guitar made from a carved stick with one string. Among the Nilotes of Bahr el Gazal and Upper Nile, the only accompaniment is the Drum.



b. **Songs and Poetry.**

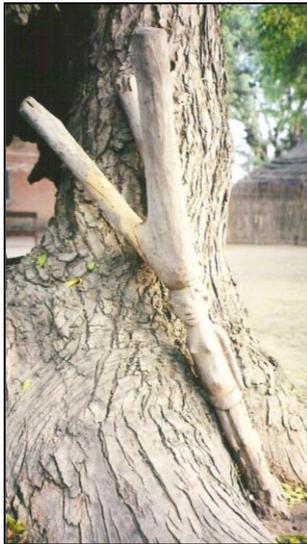
Poetry is expressed in songs: there are songs for mourning and celebration, lullaby and prayer songs, and most importantly songs about a given tribe, either in self-pride or for insulting others. Poetry is common among the cattle keepers who compose them either for the girls that one want to betroth or for their favourite bull. They always run in a

repeated verse where the importance of a particular subject is stressed. Songs are also composed for praise political leaders and their followers; when they abuse another village, fighting is the usual consequence.

Note that little work has been done in what concerns songs in general and their poetic essence in particular. Only the books of Francis Mading Deng (in particular the book '*The Dinka and their songs*') give a hint at the beauty and intensity of Nilotic poetry.

c) Sculptures

Sculptures can be found on many objects, such as tools, walking-sticks or on graves. All according to the use, they can be simply decorative or they have a spiritual meaning. Sometimes, sculptures are very abstract and simply, just leaving the sign of humanity on objects of daily use.



Sometimes, however, they are more elaborated and show human figures or faces and then possess a more specifically spiritual meaning, especially sculptures found on graves or places of historical significance. Notched sticks are placed at the head of the grave during the burial of an important person. Such sculptures are also found among the Dinka, Lango, Lotuko, Didinga and the Acholi. Others sculptures are in form of animals that a particular tribe mystified to represent their earthly gods. There are also sculptures which stand up as symbols for rainmakers and sorcerers which are expected to help the people during times of hardship.



XI. SHRINES and GRAVEYARDS.

a) Shrines

Shrines are erected in honour of a particular spiritual Being (a God) who is supposed to defend the people against evil and help them when in need or when looking for success. A part from being considered the place of worship and sacrifices, shrines can also be housing the body of a royal or a spiritual person.

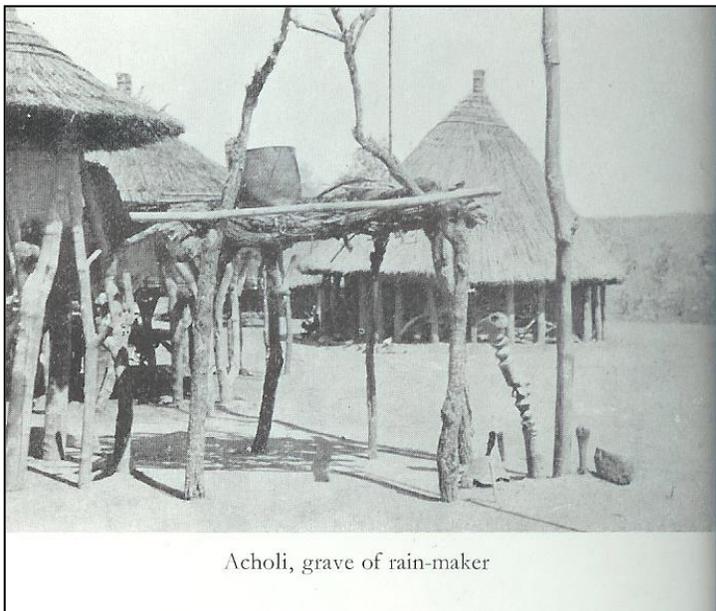
Shrines can consist of houses or just out of tree on which a number of objects are hung. There may be a guard looking after the shrine, the shrine may be near an important spiritual leader of the place or it may just be left alone for passing-by worshippers.

b) Graveyards

The King grave is regarded sacred among the *Shilluk* and the *Anyuak*. In fact the shrine of Nyakang in Shilluk Kingdom never hosts the King's body which is to be buried elsewhere while only his spirit is believed to be in the Tomb. The *Lotuko* of Eastern Equatoria value the skull and the bones of a rainmaker and keep them at the graveyard.

Among the Lokoya notched sticks are placed in such a way that it looks like a small house for the daytime rest. Food is offered in this shrine and the gods called upon to help the community. In other it is the resting place for god. The Bari of Western Equatoria had graves of rainmaker carved woods planted at the head of the grave. This is after his eyes and nose are gorged out before he is buried.

Anyuak
Grave →



Acholi, grave of rain-maker

(Picture: *Seligman*)