

Male and Female

*Girls are an asset,
Boys will only cause damage...*



Values and Roles

Values



“Both boys and girls bear great values”, a Murle states, cutting short a discussion on different social values of boys and girls. True, all people (and not only Sudanese) would agree with a statement which underlines the private and social importance of both girls and boys. But of course, both girls and boys have also their own and very particular value: while boys are absolutely essential for the survival of the family, only girls can allow people to marry and to produce the children which are of such an existential significance. “The boy is considered to be the pole of the family: he will always remain in-

side the father’s family... When the mother dies, it will be him to bury her and he will even marry and thus maintain his mother’s line”, a Lango explains, adding “...but a girl is considered to be a kind of visitor to the family, because she will be going away when marrying: she is called by the people ‘kwenyitai’ what means ‘bird’. So the mother will consider her to be like a bird, leaving her parents’ home”. But a Sere-man contradicts, saying “Nowadays, people prefer girls: they care more for their parents! A woman does everything a man does not. Boys will only cause damage: when they connect, one has to pay first a fine and then the price for marriage..”.

What needs to be stressed here is the deep love the people of the Southern Sudan feel for children: indeed, children are a truly sacred value and are supposed to be respected by adults:

may it be because of their vulnerability or their innocence, may it be because of their existential importance for the family and indeed for society, the respect due to children is an obligation of spiritual relevance, and whoever breaches this law will face bitter consequences, lose his self-pride, get cursed and will die. (Other persons to be respected are old or bald people, handicapped and otherwise disabled persons).

The relationship between parents and children changes or at least becomes more transparent after the children's marriage: while during childhood, mother and girl and father and boy are forming one unity and thus are naturally very close, adulthood and marriage bring about a change in this basic structure in the sense that the sentimental bonds will be strengthened between a father and his (now married) daughter on one side and between a mother and her son on the other side. Even when married and thus living in a foreign family, the daughter will count on the support of her father or her brother, and the family of the daughter's husband will always be aware of this special relationship and show utmost respect to their in-laws.

Social roles

*“The girl is considered to be a resource in social values”, a Pãri-informant explains, “while a boy is considered to be responsible for social values”. This statement stresses in a non-emotional way the different roles of women and men: indeed, in all Sudanese communities, the active role to be played in society is linked to the male sex while the women are given – and this in spite of their tremendous workload – a more passive social function. Even if a *Murle*-man pretends that “A woman is the master of everything!”, he would only refer to her role as a labour-force: “Women are constructing houses, producing milk, bringing water, carrying heavy loads, especially when he people are moving for grazing-places... ..and then, the girls are needed at home, they should serve the parents and generate bride-wealth (for their brothers' marriage)...”, “...because they are a source of income...” (as a *Didinga*-man emphasises), and “a wealth”, as an *Acholi* echoes.*

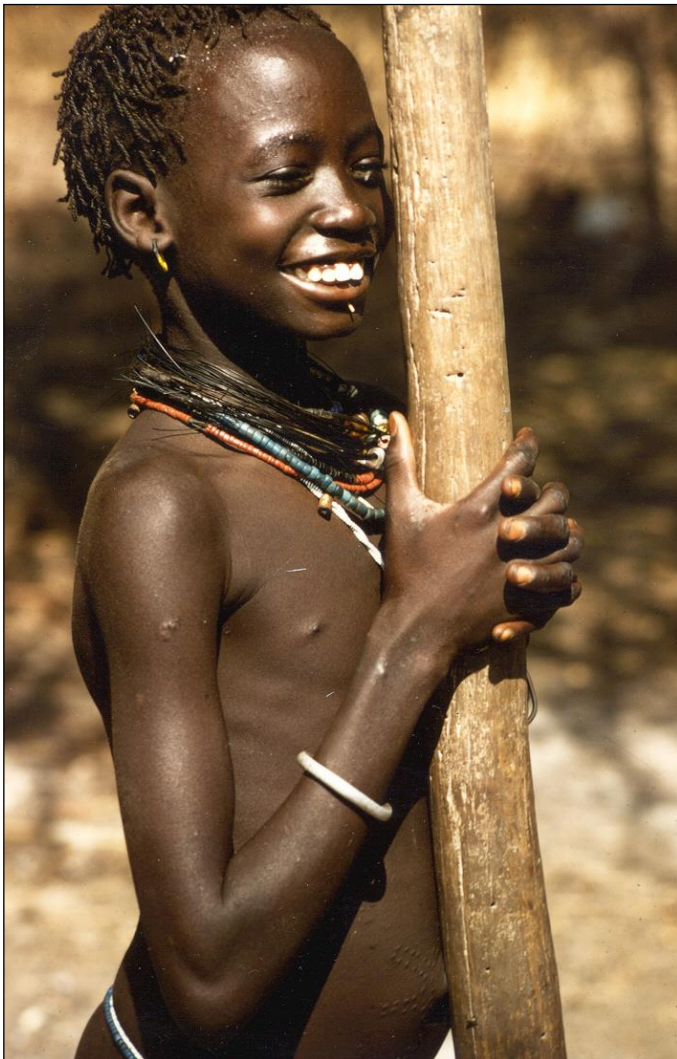
Separation of Work

“Boys and girls have their specific tasks, the girls being more deprived”, a woman of *Dinka* origin explains. Indeed, generally, the work incumbent to a woman, to a man and indeed to their children is clearly defined. There are considerable differences in the work of men and women all according to the ethnic groups (these differences concern, just for example, the milking of cattle, the building of houses, the work in the fields), differences which are in each culture of a great importance but which are of no relevance for this paper. What is identical in all cultures is the belief that the woman should take care of the household, serve her husband and look after the children while the husband is to represent and to defend the family, his clan and his village to the outside by taking part in political decisions or the deliberations at court, and of course in case of fighting.

Children are brought up by their fathers or mothers in view of their future tasks.

The work of women

- The girl fetches water and firewood, is nursing the children and she prepares the food for the family. (Päri)*
- The woman is taking care of the children and the husband's welfare, she will fetch water, pound and cook, and she is milking the cows which are at home (Nuer)*
- *The girl is to keep control of the house in general, fetches water, cooks food, sweeps the compound.(Lopit)*
- *Girls produce milk-products such as ghee, butter-oil etc. Moreover, they control the crop- production. (Ingessana)*
- *The role of girls is to fetch water and to sweep the room; she is cooking food, feeding the children, cultivating the garden and is generally looking after the household. (Jur-Bel)*
- *The girls are cooking, caring for the children, collecting rubbish when the husband is digging..., they are fetching firewood and harvesting the fields (Baka)*



And this is how women feel their daily workload:

Song about the Condition of Women (Anyuak)

A woman pounds and cooks, she gets tired.
A woman pounds and cooks, she gets tired.
A woman pounds and cooks, she simply gets tired.
A woman pounds and cooks, she simply gets tired.
When she gets tired, when she gets tired –
A woman is like being a bachelor,
she gets tired to death.
A wife becomes fire and dies.
A wife is like being a bachelor,
she gets tired.
A woman pounds and cooks, she fetches water
And collects firewood.
When she gets tired, when she gets tired.
A woman is like being a bachelor,
She gets tired:
A wife gets tired to death!

The work of men

As most of our informants were men, it is only natural that they have a very high opinion of the importance of their own work. It is astonishing to see that only a few of our informants thought of mentioning a man's public tasks, such as

the one of defending the village against enemies or his political role within the community. Only one *Toposa*-man hinted at the latter activity by explaining that the men sitting and talking under a tree were actually doing "a very important duty": "these men are not lazy, as the Europeans love to believe, but they are actually engaged in the administration of the village... ..the space in the shade of the trees..., ...it is actually their office!".

Nobody has of course hinted at one important duty of men which is directly linked to his status of being a married: this “work” consists in the administration of his own household, including the only duty he has to fulfil there: to provide his wife with the much needed love and tenderness and to give her sexual satisfaction. This duty is actually very important for the peace and prosperity of the family and therefore can’t be over-emphasised! If it is mentioned here as a “work” and not rather as a pleasure, it is because polygamy puts much stress on the husband of several demanding wives, and because a husband who fails to administer his house in a proper manner will cause much quarrel and eventually produce divorce.

While this aspect of life will be highlighted once more when discussing the life after marriage, the following answers on questions regarding the activities of men are clearly focusing on the more private (sexual) tasks of a man, thus – as mentioned – completely neglecting the men’s many public functions:

- *All the difficulties which can be expected have to be faced by men and boys. (Murle)*
- *The men/boys are to protect the family, to provide food, to look after cattle (Päri)*
- *The boy is a labour-force, needed for the protection of the house and the village (Acholi)*
- *The social role of the boy/man is to protect the homestead and to clean the cattle’s byre: the man is the head of the household.(Nuer)*
- *The men are to assume the responsibility of being the head of the family. (Päri)*
- *The man is the head of the family, - not the woman! (Nuer)*
- *The boy is to look after animals only, cultivating etc. The orders are given by the father. (Lopit)*
- *Boys and men look after the cattle, go for fighting and join in national development; they participate in the education of their children and cultivate in the fields...(Jur-Bel)*



- *The boys are rearing cattle, cultivating, hunting animals, building the houses, clearing the fields*

before digging, administrating the family....(Lango)

- *Boys rear and protect animals from the wild beasts (lions, hyena etc.) and they participate in*

the agricultural activities during the rainy season when they have come back with their

animals to the permanent villages. (Murle)

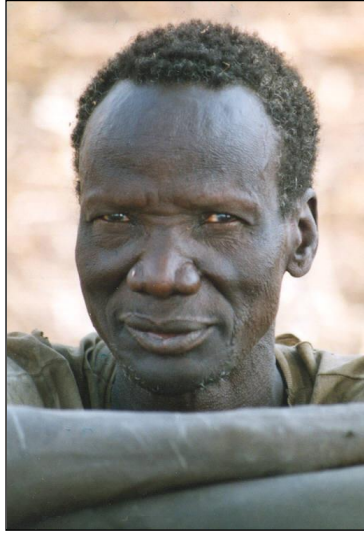
- *All the wealth is under the man (at the exception of the grains used for daily consumption)*

(Nuer)

- *They play a very big role in feeding the whole family by*

hunting... and by looking where the relatives are such that they get a contribution or their share when one of their relative girls is married. (Murle)

Discussion by some *Anyuak* on the value of the work of men and women:



Otholi Bongajoga

Otholi and Ojullo conversing with Ajullo

Otholi: *Is there any woman who is planting something nice?*

Ajullo: And what then the males are producing?

Otholi: *What about all the things we bring from over there in the grass?*

Ajullo: Like what? All what you do, we can also do it!

Otholi: *Huii! Is there any hoe in the work of a woman?*

Ajullo: What?! Didn't I kill an antelope the other day?

General laughter....

Ajullo: Ayangaaa! (Mother!) this is true!

Otholi: *Huii, you are joking. Did you kill it with a wooden club?*

Ojullo: *How did you kill it, really, you don't even have a spear!*

Otholi: *Perhaps like the other day when they killed an antelope just here behind the fence, with a flail!*

Ajullo: *(talking at a same time) ...The antelope came to the village and we took a stick and it ran away to the river where we hit it.*

Otholi: *Huii, that one was killed by the mud, like all those antelopes caught there in great numbers. You better say: "The day I make all the males drunk with my beer I killed an animal! The animal of a woman, isn't it just the beer? What else can you use a woman for?"*

Ajullo: Well, If you mean that beer is the animal of woman... If a woman who had made a lot of beer has died, at least her name will be remembered!

Otholi: *Remembered for what? We the men are doing everything, we care for the field, we put the grain into the granary... And what do you do? Really not much! So why do you complain of being tired?*

Ajullo: And you, you men, what are you doing then?

Otholi: *In the whole world it is the same, you are just sitting on the ground...*

Ojullo: *(all the time interrupted by the girl) ...A man is going to the river spearing fish, pim-pim-pim, and he is going for hunting, bringing home a lot of meat, giving everything to the woman. And the woman just rushes on it and starts biting until their gum is bleeding....*

Ajullo: The work of a woman is very hard indeed. All the time she is working, doing this, doing this, doing this, doing that. She is going to the river, she is fetching firewood and returns home and does there a lot of small work. It is really a lot of work. The men, they are going to the field, and when they return home, some of them – the weak ones – do not even return to the field but simply hide inside the hut and sleep... In the afternoon, they go and put fire on the dry durra-stalks...

(Ojullo yawns several times aloud)

Otholi: *So you say that he does not return at all... Why don't you say that he is not even returning to the field!*

Ajullo: But I have said that he returns... ..but just to put fire on the dried durra-stalks!

Otholi: *When we men think of what could make a woman tired, it is the "rido", the making of yeast; that's really work, the brewing of beer is work, and you have to fetch firewood and go for water. But these are the only things you are doing.*

Ajullo: And what about the pounding of grain?!

Otholi: *Pounding is just playing. It is not like hoeing! It is amusing.*

Ajullo: May be, pounding is somewhat good, not so bad. But the fetching of firewood...!

Otholi: *...is nothing!*

Ajullo: ...and the fetching of water!

Otholi: *Ahh! The fetching of water... Is that not simply taking a bath in the river?*

Ajullo: What do you say, Otholiii!!!

Otholi: *In one day, how often do you go to the river?*

Ajullo: *(many girls talking at a same time) Five times... ..Like some days... when you do a lot of cooking, you go early in the morning to the river...*

Otholi: *...and you pretend to go five times!*

Ajullo: *Five times? You don't go five times, but if you are making beer you certainly go five times!*

Otholi: *Well, that's what I said before when I said that the making of beer is the moment when a woman really works. I know that you are tired then. But all the rest, these simple things like cooking... Does this really make you tired?*

Ajullo: *It is tiresome!*

Otholi: *Nonsense! Well, it is for working a woman is born!*

Ajullo: What????!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Otholi: *If a man is calling for a woman it is to send her for firewood or for water. That's what a woman is needed for.*

Ajullo: *Oh!!!! Otholi!, really, you are hating women!*

Otholi: *Why? Don't you know that women are bought?*

Ojullo: *You are a matter of exchange, a trading-object, for sale... Don't you know that?*

Otholi: *Perhaps because she is still young and not yet sold. But she will find somebody who will buy her. When the people say that hey give the girl for four bead-necklaces, isn't that a deal, isn't that selling somebody for something? It is selling a human being while still alive. But it is a deal which never comes to a real conclusion, because you will always have something left to pay, some tiny things always remain unpaid. So why do you say that you are not sold while in fact you are?*

Ajullo: *Yes, and if a man takes a club and kills the woman, there will not even be a murder-case! Simply because the man can say that he has bought her...*

Otholi: *Not that. If you are killed, there will be a case.*

Ojullo: *Of course there will be a case! What about the father of the woman?*

Ajullo: *Ok then. One better stays alone, and then one does not get tired with firewood and water.*

Otholi: *That has nothing to do with tiredness. That is simply a task.*

Ojullo: *That's the road of the food, isn't it, it is the food-road.*

Otholi: *Why are you already thinking of refusing to work while you still have no work of your own?*

Ajullo: A woman knows by herself what is to be done. But if someone gives me orders, telling me "Do this, go there, fetch that", then I shall refuse. I shall not move... ..and if I am beaten up, I shall not move. I shall refuse!!!!

Otholi: *Huiii! We shall see that in the future!*

Ajullo: *I assure you of what I said!!*

Otholi: *Do you know the person knocking out the teeth, the teeth-knocker? You are still far from it at present, but who knows, perhaps already in the rainy season...*

Ajullo: *The fetching of firewood, I agree, that is the road to the food. But pounding...*

Otholi: *If you are pounding today and your husband is sent to sleep with an empty stomach, tomorrow, will you refuse to cook for him simply because last night you did not get that (sexual) thing...?*

Ajullo: *If he talks to me in a very nice way, may be that I would agree.*

Otholi: *A man having slept with an empty stomach one day, shall he remain hungry the following day?*



Ajullo

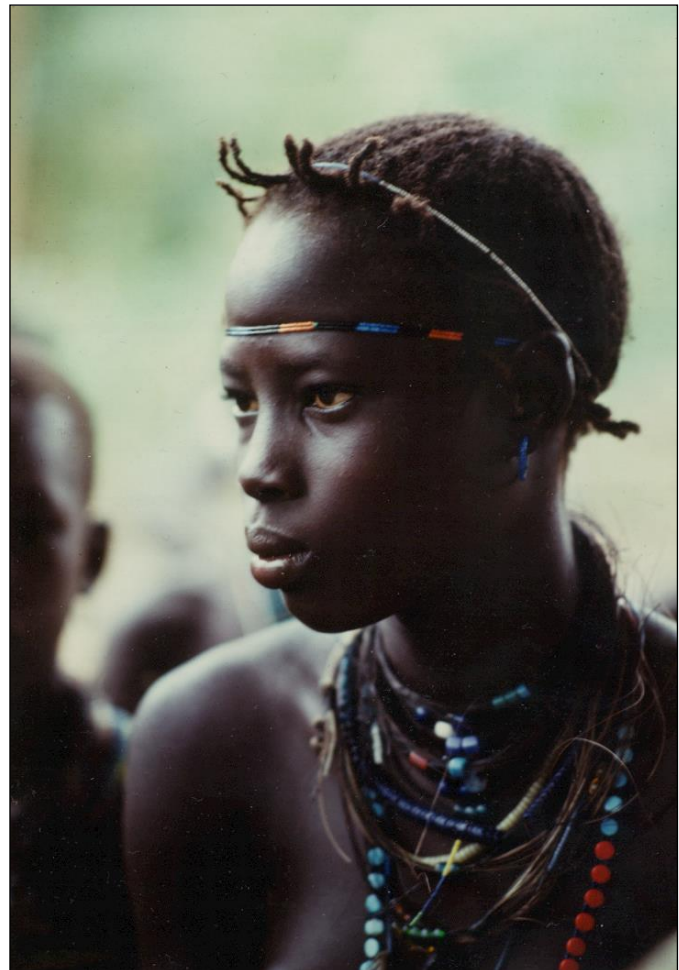
- Ajullo: And if there is only unclean flour left for food? Well, me, I can eat it, I don't mind.
- Otholi: *That's it! Women are just like hyenas, happily laughing when they have got something between their teeth... ..and then they go and hide the rest....*

Women's Rights

"I tell you... The women's character is very strong indeed... They like to fight!!!!!" (Acholi)

The responsibilities and the tasks given to a woman are very high indeed, and yet the role she plays in the community is not a public one: except as a claimant or as an accused, a woman does not participate in the deliberations at court and thus has got only very limited means to take influence on political or social issues (she exercises a certain amount of influence through the discussions with her husband at home): while as a person she is usually well-protected (either by her husband or her own family), she is not expected to become active in a (political/social) field which is supposed to be handled by others (the men). If it would be wrong to say that a woman has no saying (through her husband she may actually have considerable influence), but she nevertheless remains voice-less in a socio-political context and thus lacks both the means and the occasions to convince others. Being not used to appear in large public gatherings (such as in the court), women often lack knowledge of procedures and don't know how to express themselves in a particular situation: they either are scared and keep silent, or on the contrary they want to profit of the opportunity to empty their heart and start never-ending speeches; all this of course convinces the men that women better stay at home and that they are, in any case, not made for taking public responsibilities (except of course if it comes to work to be done by them).

But as the discussion between two men and one woman shows, the women are ready to pay back and to fight... The Nilotic women in particular seem to be brave and intelligent fighters when it comes to the defence of their human rights; often they are mentally so strong that the men seem to fear them: the cry heard during that discussion "*I shall refuse! I shall refuse*" seems to sound all over the place. At this time, women seem to refrain from claiming any other "hum an" right than the one to sexuality: "*What for am I getting tired?*", many women explain their refusal to prepare food for their husband (but they always cook for their own children), complaining about the lack of affection and love. During the time a woman is on strike, the husband will share



the food brought by his friends and relatives (the Nilotes hate to eat alone and therefore always share the food with some other people), but if the strike lasts for some days, the man will be asked by his eating-companions to put some order to his household. If the woman's complaints are well-founded, she will find the necessary support from her own family which will reluctantly agree to her divorce and – in most places - to the necessary return of the bride-wealth (or at least a part of it). The support a woman gets from her father or her brother is allowing the woman to feel strong in all circumstances; violence exercised by women on their husband is less exceptional than one could believe.

In present times, there are women's association which allow the women to make their voice heard; while women were formerly all alone, they have now found together to a collective power which has already helped the – mainly conservative – men to listen to arguments and occasionally even to change their mind. Yet, the times where women enjoy equal rights and are not only strong in self-defence are still remote, especially in all those uncountable regions of a difficult access.

The following song expresses the self-consciousness of some progressive women (the white cloth may be understood as a symbol for the brightness of their mind):

Song of Ladies: "If I pick an axe..." (Anyuak)

If I pick an axe and kill my husband,
 I shall be questioned: "Who killed your husband?".
 When I become angry, get completely fed up and utter an insult
 I am just given a blow;
 and all the men gathering in the house will express their appreciation,
 saying "*War Acar mar Othuol ngoth ngwiny!*"¹
 and they will leave the woman to die...
 Gentle ladies, we have discovered all about men!
 When it is about the death of a man,
 the whole year is completed in mourning with the head shaved.
 But when it concerns the death of a woman, the hair is combed and in the next
 autumn the fellows proudly escort already other women.
 We move freely today, we are proud of our white clothes,
 we are proud of our new clothes, we are proud!
 If I pick an axe and kill my husband, I shall be questioned:
 "Who killed your husband?".
 When I am asking for a knife, I shall be questioned:
 "Who killed your husband?".
 And when I get angry and abuse him, I am given a blow.
 And the whole bunch of men assembled in the hut will express their appreciation,
 saying "*War Acar mar Othuol ngoth ngwiny ko odiea!*"²
 When it is about the death of a man,
 the whole year is completed in mourning with the head shaved.
 But when it concerns the death of a woman, the hair is combed
 and in the next autumn the fellows proudly escort already other women.
 Gentle ladies, we have discovered all about men!
 We move freely today, we are proud of our white clothes,
 we are proud of our clean clothes,
 we walk proudly with our white clothes!
 Death is with its cousin poverty, misery follows it.
 Our white clothes, we proudly walk in them!
 Death is with its cousin poverty, and misery follows it.

¹ "War Acar mar Othuol, fuck her anus!"

² "War Acar mar Othuol, fuck her anus with the elbow!"

Equality of rights

It is not to be disputed that girls or women do not enjoy the same rights as boys or men and that the traditional set-up of all the different cultures offers practically no space for a change in the women's condition. Dr. David Sahitini³, describing basic features regarding gender in Zande culture, seems to speak for all the different communities found in the Southern Sudan: *"What are the sexual modalities that are peculiar to Zande culture?"*, he asks, and answers: *"Given the uniformity of the culture, certain stereotypes prevail, particular with regard to gender identity. Thus masculinity in Zande culture signifies superiority, aggression, dominance, strength, achievement, leadership. Femininity on the other hand signifies warmth, sympathy, tenderness, deference, docility, attachment, compliance, inferiority. For the most part, the private familial domain is female, while the public, social one is male. The relationship between a man and a woman is often in part a physical one. In the traditional Zande culture women suffered discrimination of all sorts. They were undoubtedly inclined to be what the men gave them to be and men were not entirely to blame. In the past, women had only a nominal voice in selecting their mates and were sometimes treated more or less as chattels. Though today women assert themselves more than they used to and be rather more sharp, the relationship between the sexes does not seem to be fundamentally different to what it has always been"*.

Marriage-procedures in which the woman plays generally only a passive role are perhaps the best illustrations for the woman's weak position: a man has to *"pay"* for his future wife, while that wife *in return* has to produce children *for him*; even though a girl may choose her lover, her choice may be rejected by the boy's parents (usually because the man has not the needed means to marry) who, most of the time, have the last say. In many places, the boy's parents may even arrange themselves his future marriage with a girl of *their* choice, - a selection-procedure which may hardly be appreciated by a girl in love with someone else! When married, a woman is not supposed to sleep with other men, while men are free to move and to look for other women. It happens, for example, that a girl refuses to marry. *"Such a girl would be tortured"*, a Murle relates, *"tortured until she accepts... The girl is the source of income of the family. Sometimes, this leads to the suicide of the girl"*. It is only a small consolation when we learn that *"nowadays, some families are ready to make some compromise in what concerns the freedom of the girl"*.

Surely, the women are not always submissive and often revolt against the behaviour of men, but on the other side they contribute themselves much to male dominance by clearly preferring "strong", proud and self-conceited men: while scorning men who appear to lack "true male qualities" such as courage and arrogance, they show much admiration for all those men who have a dominant behaviour in all matters, - last but not least in the field of sexuality. As the women are restricted to homework and praised only for their achievements in this domain (mainly when brewing beer for the men), the women's ambitions are naturally limited to these practical matters and generally would not even think of disputing the "natural" "superiority" of the opposite sex.

Exclusion from socio-political life makes that their intellectual potentials are not or only badly used; the fact that women have a very hard and tiresome life but rarely get an occasion to enjoy some change in their daily routine does not really stimulate their minds either. No wonder that the women feel extremely frustrated if the men are not even willing to give them affection and love.

³ In his unpublished paper "A sex-revolution in Zande culture?", Yambio, April 1993, p.3 (communicated at the Cultural Workshop in Lokichokio 1993)

Equal chances for education

Boys and girls do not have a same access to education, especially when the schools are not in the own village (what is almost everywhere the case after having completed primary education). For some years ago, I listed up some of the most common arguments for not sending children abroad for education⁴:

“Parents are reluctant to send their boys and even more their girls to school because:

- *it is a loss of human substance* in the homestead and in the village, children keeping the spirits of a village alive. A home and a village without the presence of youngsters is dead...
- *it is a loss of cultural values, knowledge and skill: it is a loss of traditional education:* Children who do not participate in traditional life will not learn how to cope with the particular conditions of the place and rather learn things which are not practical in the social, economic and ecological context at home.
- *it is a loss of man-power*, both girls and boys being important economic factors in any household, boys helping the father, girls assisting the mother and taking care of young sisters and brothers.
- *it can affect the household-security* in case children are not assuring the important task of crop-protection during the month preceding harvest.
- *it is a loss of social substance*, the absence of young men reducing the military and economic power of the village.
- *it increases the burden of the parents, especially the one of the mother.*
- *it reduces the quality of child-care* because infants will be exposed to the hard (and for the child dangerous) working-conditions of the mother.
- *it is a loss in social prestige* by the father who may lose his right to vote when it comes to decision-making (because his son is not contributing to the fighting-force)
- *it is a loss of a family's reputation, its self-respect and pride* in case an educated girl has brought shame to the family by getting pregnant or by showing bad, socially unacceptable manners. In extreme cases, such girls will not get married at all and thus prevent the family of creating new social ties with in-laws.
- *it is a loss in the relationship with one's kin* in case a man's daughter has not been married in the traditional way (what deprived the kinship-group of their share in cattle which they need for their own marriage);
- *it is a loss in wealth*, as the educated girls are expected to marry from outside or to get married by educated but poor men, or to move to towns where they find work.
- *it is a loss of a man's social identity* (in case he has missed his initiation) what may force him to marry from outside.
- *it is possibly dangerous* for the children to attend a school at a foreign place, because of possible



⁴ Cf. Kwacakworo's "Background-information regarding the education of young girls in the Sudan",

Lokichokio 1994 (Unicef/OLS)

negative influences on their character and behaviour, because of their safety (when walking to far-distant places, especially in times of insecurity and war), because of the various temptations offered by the life in town and, possibly for their health (when falling sick, nobody cares).

- *it is too expensive*, especially if several children want to go to school for a number of years (living-costs, clothes, travelling etc.). The need of money for education reduces the children's chances to finish school.
- *it is generally considered to be "a waste of time"* because the schools are closed "most of the time" as a result of lack of school-material, lack of teachers or for other reasons.

Last but not least,

- *it is generally considered to be "useless"* because school does not lead anywhere (except perhaps to foreign places of a doubtful reputation, such as the "twilight of towns"⁵ or the army⁶): employment of educated youngsters inside a village is, generally speaking, non-existent. Such a situation leads to *frustration, anger and despair*, and it increases the wide-spread feeling that the people of the Southern Sudan are left alone in their struggle for more development and more generally for a more human existence."



The arguments against education in general (outside of the village) and the one of girls in particular did not change much during these last years: people speak about purely practical obstacles (distance to schools, lack of money etc.), remind of the girl's importance not only for marriage but also as a labour-force and of course about the people's fear to see their girls ending up as prostitutes. "*The girls are the wealth of the family, are its 'current account'; there must be very good reasons to let it go. Nobody would do it just like that...*", our Toposa-friend explains, "*The girls have to marry in order to bring cows*" a Lotuho confirms, a Lopit-man would not deny that there is the fear "*that if you send your daughter to school, you as a father will never get any bride-wealth.*" And a Murle simply reminds of the fact that for the Southern Sudanese "*girls are a source of income*". In their reluctance to see their daughters leave, the Lango are not different from most ethnic groups: "*We the Lango believe that when the girls leave their home, they will not bring wealth*" someone stated," and that's why the parents want to keep them near to them: *when she gets married, she will bring cattle.* "Also", a Nuer adds, "*they don't go*

because of lack of money: while a boy can go naked, a girl cannot", an argument which holds true for many other people lacking money (Lotuho, Anyuak etc.). "*The distances are very great*

⁵ "*In some instances, girl fall out of school because of pregnancy and go into the twilight of towns... Such cases are highlighted in poor families...*" (Dr.Monywiir Arop Kuol)

⁶ The army has always been the great beneficiary of school-boys who either started their "military carrier" as servants of soldiers while still at school or who after school could not find any better employment, the boys' thirst for a more adventurous life contributing to such a decision.

so that most cannot make it to get a higher education” a young Lango stresses, referring perhaps also to the dangers girls may encounter on the way, and this especially during the present times of war and lack of security.

A Sere from Western Equatoria seems to blame early sexual life for the girls’ lack of higher education: *“A girl has a lot of work”, he says, “so usually she is pregnant before finishing school”*. The fear of becoming a prostitute has certainly not decreased during the last years when prostitution became more widespread than ever: this fear was best expressed by a Murle-man who notices that *“schools are misunderstood as camps for prostitutes...!”*. Our Atuot informant perceives a more general reluctance against education outside of the village: *“For the girls, our fears are not so much about a girl getting pregnant but that she may get a wrong education, and that she will mix with people who have an unknown, doubtful background, perhaps even perform witchcraft. But more fundamentally”, we are told, “the Atuot see towns as a kind of hell: only truly human beings will return to the village, the other ones will disappear in the towns forever: they are called ‘dog-heated persons’. Sending children to schools is like gambling: it can turn out to be profitable or it can end in catastrophe: a boy going to school abroad is often considered to be ‘a lost boy’...”*. The explanation provided by a Lango when he states that *“the people themselves are illiterate so they cannot really understand the importance of culture”* may give some hope for the future (when people understand the importance of education); our Ingessana-informant discovers as well a gleam of hope in what concerns education when he explains that *“Girls do not go to school because the parents fear that once the girls are out of the house they may not come back”, adding that “the education of boys and girls has been neglected in general but more recently it has been accepted as a social and moral value”*. So hopefully, the fear expressed by a Lango may be the only one surviving these sad times when girls seldom reach up to a higher education: *“...a girl is considered to be “a flying bird”, so if you send her for higher education and she gets married, she will take all her knowledge away to her husband....*

