

# ORIENTATION TO THE MANY PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN

The Sudan is a country of extreme cultural diversity which can't be summoned up in a few words. There exist, however, a considerable number of good books of both popular and scientific significance where the interested readers can find more ample information; they are easily available in bookshops, a good number of them being at the disposal of the fieldstaff at the libraries in Lokichokio. (*Persons leaving Lokichokio for good are invited to donate or to sell their copies of books, maps etc. to the libraries.*)

## **Introduction:**

There are about 177 languages in the Sudan, a figure which does not include the many dialects differentiating many of these languages!

When speaking of "*the Arabs*" or "*the Northern Sudanese*", one should keep in mind that these people are in their great majority of a *mixt (arab, nubian and african) origin*: The Kingdom of Funj brought military slavery to Sennar, its capital (1504-1820), bringing many captifs from the Nuba, Hamaj, Burun, Ingessana, Dinka, Berta tribes to the North. The slave-trade took even bigger dimensions during the turc-egyptian occupation (1820-1881) and further displacement took place during the time of the Mahdiya (1881-1898). Once in the North, many of these people remained and intermarried with the Arabs and Nubians. Like many people in similar situations, they are most intolerant towards the Southerners, preoccupied by their "purity" and their origin. Speaking about the Nubians, a scholar (Ibrahim Hayder) says that they are "more arab than the Arabs", that they have a complex of being arabic and calls it a "pathological ethnocentrism". But because of their dark-brown skin-colour, they have also a complex of inferiority which results in aggressivity towards the (white) Egyptians (by whom they are called slaves). Much of the racism found in the Northern Sudan can be explained by the people's mixt origin and the difficulty to find and/or to accept their roots. The fact that the descendants of former slaves continued to be disregarded by the original habitants (themselves often of a mixt origin) in the North encouraged them to look down on other people of an even darker colour. Difference in physical appearance (racism) as a cause for discrimination, exploitation or oppression may not be conscious, but the people concerned have an instinctive feeling for it. One could imagine that the mixt origin of the inhabi-

tants of the North would facilitate the understanding between the different people, but social, economical, linguistical, religious and generally human factors seem rather to complicate the relationship.

**FAMILIES OF LANGUAGES IN THE SUDAN:**

The following classification of languages has been published by M.Lavergne in his "Le Soudan contemporain"; it reproduces the findings of Tucker and Bryan, Greenberg, Bender, Stevenson, Schadeberg, Thelwall and others. Some of the languages are on the way of disappearance.

**AFRO-ASIAN**

1. Semitic
2. Kushitic
3. Tchadic

**NIGER-KORDOFAN**

1. Kordofanic
2. Niger-Congo  
West-Atlantic  
Benue-Congo  
Obangien

**NILO-SAHARIEN**

1. Saharien
2. Songhai
3. Maba
4. Fur
5. East Sudanese  
*Oriental*  
*Occidental*  
*Nilotic*
6. Central Sudanese  
*Moru-Madi*  
Kresh  
*Bongo-baguirmi*
7. Berta
8. Komuz

**AFRO-ASIAN**

1. Semitic

Arabe	Centre-North
Tigre	Est

2. Kushitic

Beja	Mountains of the Red Sea
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3. Tchadic

Haoussa	spoken by immigrants from West at the end of 19th century. Most important community on the Blue Nile are (at Maiurno) the Fulani.
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- Tid (*Upper Nile*)

Eastern mountains:

- Ingessana (Gaam, Tabi) (*South of the Blue Nile*)

B) Western Sudanic

Nyimang:

- Nyimang (*Nuba mountains*)
- Afitti (*Kordofan*)

Temein:

- Temein (ronge) (*Kordofan*)
- Keiga-jirru, teisei-um-danab (dese) (*Kordofan*)

Tama:

- Tama (*Darfur*)
- Sungor, Erenga (*Tchadien border*)
- Mararit (*Tchadien border*)

- Daju:

- Shatt (*Kordofan*)
- Liguri (*Kordofan*)
- Lagawa (*Kordofan*)
- Nyala (*Darfur*)
- Nyagulgule (*Bahr-el-Ghazal*)

C) Nilotic

- Northern Nilotic:

- Dinka-Nuer-Atwot (*Bahr-el-Ghazal, Upper Nile*)
- Burun (*Blue Nile*)

- Lwo:

- Acholi (*Equatoria*)
- Pari (Ojwan-Boy) (*Equatoria*)
- Anyuak (*Upper Nile*)
- Shilluk (*Upper Nile*)
- Jo-luo, (*Bahr-el-Ghazal*)
- Belanda (Bor) (*Bahr-el-Ghazal*)
- Maban (Burun) (*Blue Nile*)

- Central Nilotic:

- Bari (*Equatoria*)
- Latuho (Latuka) (*Equatoria*)
- Toposa (*Equatoria*)
- Nyangatom (*Eastern Sud.Eth.border*)

Equator

- Jie (Eastern Equatoria)
- Turkana (Northern Kenya)

## 6. Central Sudanic

### A) Moru-Madi (Equatoria)

- Avukaya
- Käliko
- Lugbara
- Madi
- Moru
- Logo
- Luluba

### B) Bongo-baguirmi

- Bongo (Equatoria)
- Baka (Equatoria)
- Beli (Equatoria)
- Morokodo (Equatoria)
- Yulu (Bahr-el-Ghazal)
- Binga (Bahr-el-Ghazal)
- Kara (Bahr-el-Ghazal)
- Fongoro (Bahr-el-Ghazal)
- Sinyar (Darfur, Tchad)

### C) Kresh (Kreish) (Bahr-el-Ghazal)

## 7. Berta (Blue Nile)

## 8. Komuz

### A) Gumuz (Blue Nile, Upper Nile, Eth.border)

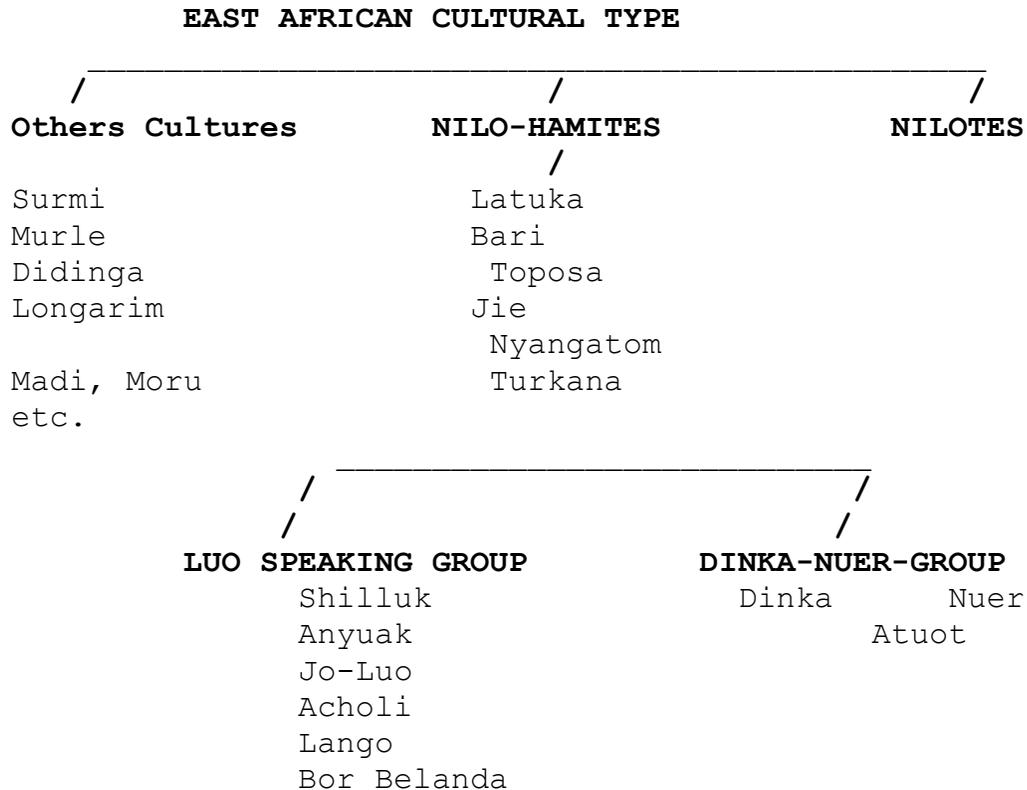
### B) Koman

- Uduk
- Koma
- Ganza
- Gula

*Linguistical* characteristics are of an utmost importance, but they cannot alone be taken as an indication of a unique ethnic group. Other criterias are equally important, such as *physical characteristics*, their *mode of life*, their way of *dress*ing, their *ornamentation*, their *traditions* and their *history*, their *religious and magical beliefs* with their *rituals*, their *social organisation*, their *reaction to the environment*, their *economy*, their *material culture* or their particular *patterns of behaviour*.... In spite of similarities, the real relationship between different people is sometimes very difficult

to establish, because people living in a similar environment tend to share same values and have similar patterns of behaviour; this holds particularly true for pastoralists.

The following chart has been reproduced by *Butt:42* and is meant to give a general idea of the relationship between the different people living in the Sudan



In the following, I shall reproduce the geographical indications given by *Butt* and add some extracts regarding the Shilluk, the Dinka and the Nuer from the Swedish anthropologist *Per Säfholm*'s book on "The River-lake Nilotes" (this because most of the present relief-work relates to these people).

### TRIBES OF EQUATORIA

This is an extremely complex region, rich in tribal diversity.

The **LOTUHO (LATUKA)** live between the rivers Koss and Kinyeti (their centre is Torit, but their mythical origin is situated at mount Calemni).

In their South live the **LOGIR (LOGIRI)** and the **DONGOTONO** on mount Imatong and Dongotona (Their life-

style is similar to the one of other mountain-people like the Nuba or the Ingessana). The Logire and the Dongotona are also known as LANGO.

Nearer to the Nile are living the LOKOYA of Mount Liria and their neighbours the LULUBA who speak Madi. Their biggest enemies are the BARI who control the river since the 16th century.

On the other side (of the Nile) live the KAKWA in the Yei-region and the MUNDARI, relatives of the Bari, along the swamps; the latter are the only pastoralists of the region, neighbouring with the NYANGBARA and the ALIAP-DINKA.

The ZANDE are dominating the region in the West; they originated from the conquerants who came in the 18th century from the river Mbomou (along the central African Rep and Zaire). The Avu-Ngara form their nucleus together with their A-Mbomu-warriors and many other small ethnies around it, all speaking the "pa-zande".

Other tribes had to suffer from the Zande and slaverers though they survived, such as the NDOGO-SERE (in the W of Wau), the GOLO, the TAGBU and the BAI, the BELANDA (composed of Ndogo speaking BVIRI and the Luo speaking BOOR) living at the reunion of the Bviri and the Boa, the KRESH in the West of Raga with the GBAYA, the KPARA, the AJA and the WORO, the FEROGE in the North-east of Raga (islamized in the 19th c.) with the INDRI, the TOGOYO, the NGULGULE, the MANGA, the NGBANDALA and the DONGO, the immigrants from the North-west (border of Tchad and the Central African Republic) such as the BINGA, the KARA and the YULU, the BANDA who are living South of Raga, the BONGO (who live in two groups South of Wau and South of Tonj), the BAKA (around Maridi), the JUR-BELI (South of Rumbeck), the MOROKODO (in the North-west of Amadi) and small tribes belonging to the large groups (living South of Amadi and South of Kajokaji) of the MORU and the MADI, such as the AVUKAYA, the BALI'BA or the KEDIRU etc.

### DIDINGA-SPEAKING TRIBES

This group includes the Didinga, the Longarim and the Murle; they all speak a same language with slight dialectical differences though there are cultural differences due to environment and to a greater admixture with neighbouring tribes. These people are said to have moved from North of Lake Turkana to their present countries.

The DIDINGA live in the Didinga-mountains on the border with Uganda. They are both pastoralists and agriculturists, the latter by necessity, the former by inclination. Their mode of life resembles that of the

Toposa in many respects, but they are better agriculturists.

The **LONGARIM** occupy a territory adjacent to and north-west of the Didinga while the **BOYA**, agriculturists, live in the hills south of Kapoeta.

The **MURLE** inhabit the centre and southern part of the Sobat-Pibor area, roughly between 6° and 7°N. Their neighbours to the west are the Bor-Dinka and to the east the Anyuak. They are pastoralists and their mode of life is determined by the requirements of their herds; hunting and fishing play also a considerable part in their life. The so-called "Hill-Murle" are living on the Boma-plateau and are entirely agriculturists, the Tse-tse-fly preventing them from keeping cattle.

### **TOPOTHA-SPEAKING PEOPLE**

To this group belong the Topotha, the Jie and the Nyangatom in the Southern Sudan, the Turkana in Kenya, the Karamajong in Uganda. They are classified as Nilo-Hamites (see above).

The **TOPOTHA** occupy the territory north of the Sudanese border with Kenya; their neighbours in the South are the Turkana whom they raid frequently. In the extreme east are living the **JIE** and the **NYANGATOM**, the latter moving between Ethiopia into the Ilemi-triangle and Topotha-land all according to the season.

### **NILOTES**

#### **Luo-speaking people:**

*In the Province of the Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal, a number of small tribes of Nilotic origin are living: The **JO-LUO** are the most important amongst these peoples; they are living North of Wau (in direction of Aweil) and South of it as far as Tonj.*

The **BOR-BELANDA** (Jo Bor) live in the triangle formed by the rivers Wau, Sueh and Bor in the Bahr-el-Ghazal-Province (Note that the Biri-Belanda are not Nilotic). Other Luo-speaking groups are found scattered in the area immediately north-west of Wau, such as the **JO-TURI** (known as SHATT), the **JO-BODO** (BWODO) (known as Dembo) and the **JO-COLO** (Shilluk Luo).

As mentioned when enumerating the people living in Equatoria-Province, that whole area is a puzzle of names and groups: the Azande, Bongo, Bukuru, Jo-Luo, Dembo, Shatt, Ndogo-groups are sharing a same area.

The **ACHOLI** live in the North of Uganda on the borderlands with the Sudan. They are one of the largest Nilotic people, in close contact with the Alur (Nilotes living in the extreme NE of Zaire, South and West of Mahagi and along the NW-shores of Lake Albert), the Madi, the Pări and the Lango (who are Luos living in Uganda in the Central/Southern Kavirondo-District up to Lake Tanganijska).

The **PARI** are a relatively small community living around the rocks of Lafon Hill in the East of the Nile in Equatoria Province. They are an old offshot of the ANYUAK-people and still speak an Anyuak-dialect. They are also known as the JO-LOKORO, the OJWAN-BOY or the JO-OJWA.

The **ANYUAK** live in the East of the Southern Sudan along the tributaries of the Sobat- and Baro-rivers on both sides of the Ethiopian-Sudanese border. Unlike most of their Nilotic brothers in the Upper Nile and the Bhar-el-Ghazal they had to abandon their former pastoralist life-style and became fervent agriculturalists.

The **SHILLUK** are the northernmost group of the Luo-speaking Nilotes, occupying a narrow strip of country in the Upper Nile along the West-bank of the Nile from lake Nô to the South and along the lower reaches of the Sobat.

Their neighbours in the North are the Baggara-Arab tribes.

In the course of history (they once had lived as far as Khartoum), they had to retire because of Arab pressure.

*(about the Shilluk, see ANNEX I)*

### **Burun-speaking people:**

The **BURUN** -speaking tribes inhabit the country between the White and Blue Niles in Dar Fung Province, on the borders of the Sudan and Ethiopia. They are divided into two groups:

The Northern Burun called **JUMJUM**, a small group living on rocky hills and the Southern Burun or Plain-Burun called **MEBAN** who live in the marshy or forest country in the extreme South of Dar Fung. The Burun were the main slave-suppliers for the Arabs.

### **Atwot-speaking people:**

The **ATWOT** are a people speaking a language a long time thought to be a Nuer dialect. It is now considered to be a distinctive language and not a dialect. The people have adopted Dinka habits. They are living in the South of Dinka-land, in the Lakes District south of Yirol.

The Atuot tribal markings consists out of ca. 4 V-shaped lines.

### **Nuer-speaking people:**

The **NUER** call themselves **NAATH** (sing. *Ran*). They live on both sides of the Nile South of its junction with the Sobat and Bahr-el-Ghazal-rivers and on both sides of its tributaries. The Nile divides Eastern and Western Nuerland:

- Eastern: *Thiang, Lak, Gaweir* and *Lou*  
(*Naath door*= Bush-Nuer)
- Western: *Bul, Jagei, Lek, Nuong* and *Dok*  
(*Naath cieng* = homeland-Nuer)
- *Jekany*-tribes westbank of the Nile and far east of the Sobat up to Ethiopia.

The Nuer tribal marking consists out of 6-7 horizontal lines on the forehead.

**(About the Nuer, see ANNEX II)**

### **Dinka-speaking people:**

The **DINKA** call themselves **JIEN** or **MONYJANG** ("Men among men").

The *Northern Dinka* live in the Upper Nile, in the South of Bahr-el-Zeraf and around Lake Nô in the Bahr-el-Ghazal.

The *Eastern Dinka* occupy the right bank of the Nile, from the South-East of Ayod to Malek-

The *Central Dinka* inhabit the country on the left bank of the Nile up to the West of Tonj.

The *Western Dinka* are found in the South-West of Nuer-country about the Jur-river-area from Tonj in the South and the Bahr-el-Arab in the North and westwards of Aweil. This area is inhabited by MALUAL Dinka and other lesser tribes.

The *Manangeir* live in the swamps among the Rek Dinka between the rivers Jur and Lol (They are Jo-Luo people who took refuge amongst the Western Dinka to avoid Arab slave raids.

The Dinka have tribal markings on the forehead either in form of parallel lines (like the Nuer) or in a

V-shape. *Parallel lines* are marked for the Agar(5-6) in Rumbek, the *Luac* (4) in Tonj, the *Ngok* (8-9) in Abiey, the *Reng* in Northern Upper Nile, the *Abiliang* and the *Dungjol* in Upper Nile. *V-shaped markings* are found amongst the *Gok* (4, meet behind the years), the *Rek* (4, meeting behind), the *Malual Ger-nyang* (3, not meeting) and the *Dinka-Bor* (one above the other, not meeting at the base).

**(about the Dinka, see ANNEX III)**