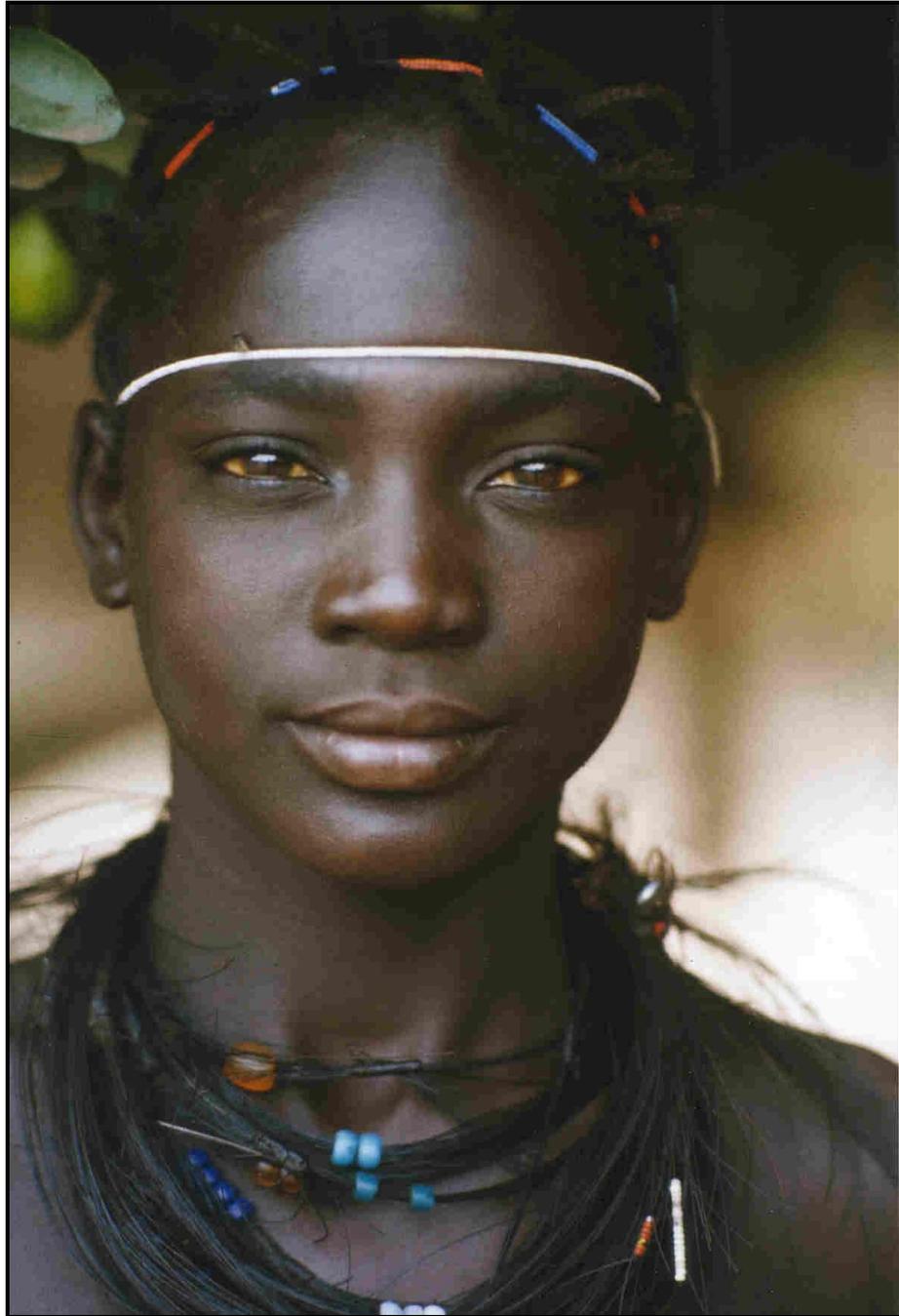


Sexual Life during Adolescence

“Weer cieth acin yol”

At night walks the tailless... ¹

(DINKA)



¹ Bellario Ahoy Ngong: *“Dinka Wisdom in Proverbs, Idioms and Metaphors”*: Proverb W.6.134
Dr. Ahoy explains that “under the darkness of the night anything can happen”, and more explicitly that, “under the darkness of the night, anything that should not dare to show itself during the day can appear. The following are examples of what can happen: Humans: stealing, witchcraft, sexual activities, ambushes, plot...”

The period described here stretches from the beginning of real sexual life (the moment of the girl's first monthly period) up to the moment of marriage, thus including all those girls who got "married" by their parents at a very early stage (sometimes, we learn, already at the moment of birth!) and all those men who marry – for different reasons - relatively late.

In many cultures, the passage from childhood to adolescence and indeed adulthood is a clearly defined space of a certain period of time during which boys are isolated and mentally prepared to their future life as "real" men: when they leave that place, their entry to manhood will have left *marks* in their face, cuts which will not only separate them forever from childhood but also from



people of different places or other cultures. Someone who has no marks will be considered to be a child², even if old, will not find a wife, have a place in age-groups and no say in public discussions of any importance. These and other ethnic groups use *teeth* as a kind of identification-mark of adulthood and indeed of being human: "now he/she is really 'dhano', a human person", the Anyuak would note with satisfaction when the six lower incisors have been removed from their child. Teeth are indeed the instrument by which animals use to kill their victims, and the removal of teeth could well be found in this effort to differentiate oneself from beasts³.

When gathering some private information on the subject of sexual life before marriage, our focus was put on the places where young people have the occasion to meet, on courtship, praise and formal procedures, on the time which elapsed between the first contact and the moment of love-

making, on the places where lovers would sexually come together and on some issues concerning behaviour (expression of shame) as well as possible obstacles to sexual relationship; naturally, the question about the number of lovers one may have before getting married has also been asked. Songs and narratives are meant to complement crude information and to render it a little bit more entertaining.

Questions regarding adultery, rape and other particular types of sexual behaviour are not dealt with in this chapter, even though they usually (also) occur during this period of a person's lifetime.⁴

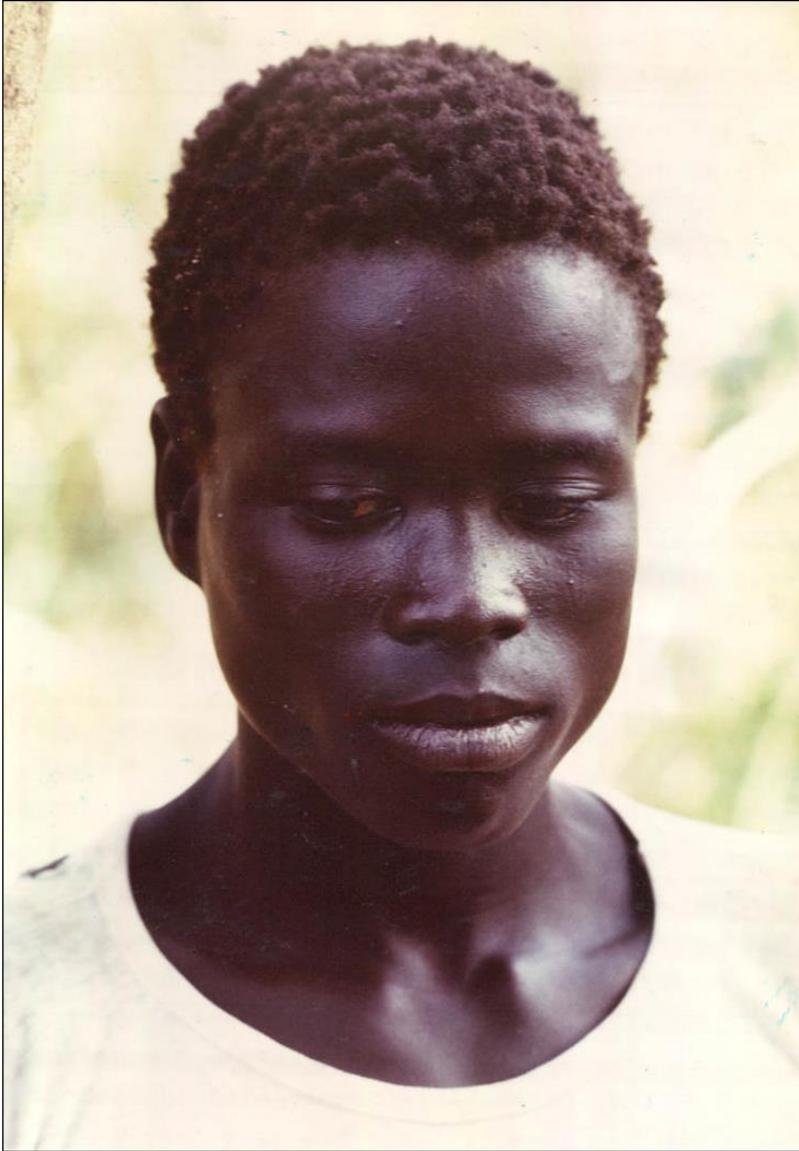
The information provided here is merely suggestive and possibly indicative but it is forcibly⁵ in no way complete let alone of any 'scientific' value: yet it can surely give a rough idea about the most exciting and joyful time in the life of the people living in different parts of the Southern Sudan.

² If a Nuer wants to kill a man who has not yet been initiated, he should quickly mark him as an adult – and kill him only afterwards...

³ "Am I an animal?", an Anyuak would reply when asked about the reason for the removal of their teeth. There are several other explanations (by foreigners, not the people concerned) for this habit but none of them seem to be really more convincing.

⁴ See the chapters "Sex and Violence" and "Sideways and Stigmas".

⁵ Please remember that the information was gathered during five weeks of field-studies only.



Love is...

“Love is a one-day-business”, a Toposa bluntly states, “you fuck and you move away with your cattle!... There, in the cattle-camp, it is already a gone-story, you don’t think of it anymore...”. What sounds like the obscene description of a rather immoral behaviour is in fact only a way of emphasising that it is pregnancy, not sex, which is of social significance: “Sex is not so important”, our Toposa interlocutor hurries to explain himself, “it’s all about procreation; sex doesn’t matter so much to our people, only if there is pregnancy..., ...but then of course it will be a completely different story”. How rough the statement about love may sound, it is – generally speaking – correct to say that a girl’s parents are less concerned by the feelings of love between their daughter and the boy of her choice than by the boy’s reputation (or rather the reputation of his family) and,

more especially, his family’s capacities to provide the bride-wealth; similarly, the boy’s parents want to be sure that the future in-laws are honest and hard-working people and not just parents of someone who happens to be charming and beautiful...

The children’s attitude of course does not fit into this rigid structure of the traditional principles of procreation: they don’t wish to marry someone imposed on them or selected for them by their parents but have their own sexual desires and their own tender feelings of love, - often for someone else than the person pre-selected by their father. Young people naturally also want to have fun and to go for adventures, they want to enjoy life and be responsible for their own future as lover or husband. The traditional structures with their age-groups and the need to celebrate one’s social identity come in support of the young people’s self-pride and desire of independence; ecological conditions force people to move a lot and allow young persons to spend much time away from home, in cattle-camp or just on visits to foreign places (*“my body wants to travel”, the Anyuak say*); this makes them to assume great social, economic or more private responsibilities but gives them at a same time also great liberties.

Courtship

“The menstruation begins to flow at the age 10-16... The boys start to produce sperm, their voice becomes deep, hair is appearing on the groin...At this time, boys and girls get the awesome opportunity of discovering as they are, start to learn *self-love*....

They also learn to love others who may have talents probably greater than their own, and who may be for them *a constant source of irritation.*” (PARI)

In spite of all the parents’ efforts to keep “*tight control*” over their daughters, courtship starts at a very early age: true, “*the world is boring*” and as this world in which people are living is generally nothing but a small village (indeed a “global village”!), *dancing* is the only way young people could get feel that life is something else (and more) than just hard work and suffering and that it is actually possible to *enjoy* it and to find some *pleasure*. “Dancing” is, in the mind and even the language of the people, synonymous with “playing”: children do it at a very early age, and it just continues throughout childhood and adolescence, gaining in intensity and sexual excitement all the time. Dancing is a kind of sport and good dancers (or indeed singers) are much admired, but this sport is not just a self-display of one’s artistic qualities but contains a lot of magic: the best of nightly dances are so enthralling, captivating body and mind, that one almost loses consciousness and turns into some kind of collective movement which puts everything into sudden flames of wild emotions... During adolescence, such “playing” leads to love and sex⁶ and is often the beginning of a strong relationship.

It is significant that *Lomodong Lako*⁷, when giving a short definition of the social identity of the *Lokoya*, makes specific mention of the importance of songs: “*The Lokoya are proud of their identity*”, he writes: “*In the beginning of the dry season which also marks the end of the harvest, the Chief Priest of Grain and the Mountain lift the order of silence which bans people from fighting or yelling. Hence forth, the people in the villages are free to make war cries, yell and dance. Every year, at about the same time, the girls and boys compose songs about their colleagues’ laziness, quarrelsomeness, dirty habits, impoliteness, prostitution, theft, cowardice, bravery, beauty, ugliness and so forth*”.

Dancing is not linked to what is usually understood as “music” but consists exclusively out of rhythm (dictated by the violent beatings of the drum) and *songs*, or more precisely out of rhythm and *singing*: it is a *collective performance* in which everybody carries the movement and provides it with the naked power of human consciousness, the density of human spirit and body. Dancing (and singing) is the joyful and instinctive celebration of human existence on earth, a feast for body and mind, a kind of *drogue* which captures the human person and takes possession of all his senses.

Sexuality in songs

There are, of course, many different types of songs. At this instance, we shall mention only those types of songs which have to do, directly or indirectly, with love and sexual activities.

Basically, we could distinguish three types of songs:

⁶ and sometimes to violence (see the chapter on “Sex and Violence”)

⁷ in his book “Lokoya in Sudan”, p.4

- a) love-songs where the story focuses on private problems related to love or the making of love
- b) songs where people get scorned for their behaviour and insults
- c) songs which are more crudely concentrated on sex and sexual activities

Naturally, these different types of songs are also used in a different context and song in a different manner: not all of them are really “dancing”-songs always are performed with a drum.

Regarding the mentioned last type of sexually significant songs, we regret that examples promised by *Shilluk*, *Toposa*, *Zande* and *Dinka* friends were not received in time. Thus, we have to content ourselves with some indications from the *Lotuho* who, in some of their songs, sing “Please, let me taste that salty thing...” or “Let me warm the thing”...“can I taste... My *Didinga* informant was singing a song for me which has a rather direct message as refrain: “HITIKTO, HITIKTO, HITIKTO..! HITIKTO THIGGIA, HITIKTO THIGGIA!” what verbally means “Let’s have sex, let’s have sex, let’s have sex...! Let’s have sex right now, let’s have sex right now”... Because I know the *Anyuak* somewhat better than other people from the Southern Sudan, a good number of songs focusing on sexuality are known to me.



The following example is sung in the so-called *Adhum-piny-dance*⁸ but gets also accompanied by the Nilotic guitar.

Ler’s *Odwela*⁹ is thick and stiff.
 The woman’s *odwela* has got a fatty throat.
 Ler’s *odwela* is thick and stiff.
 The woman’s *odwela* has got a fatty throat.
 Something with a reddish neck I shall give you.
 Its mouth is like the mouth of the Open-billed Stork.
 Its mouth is only seen by a gentleman.
 The penis rests on its upper part.
 Ler’s *odwela* is thick and stiff.
 The woman’s *odwela* has got a fatty throat.
 Ler’s *odwela* is thick and stiff.
 The lasses’ *odwela* has got a fatty throat.
 Something with a reddish neck I shall give you.
 Its mouth is like the mouth of the Open-billed Stork.
 Its mouth is only seen by a gentleman.
 The penis rests on its upper part.¹⁰

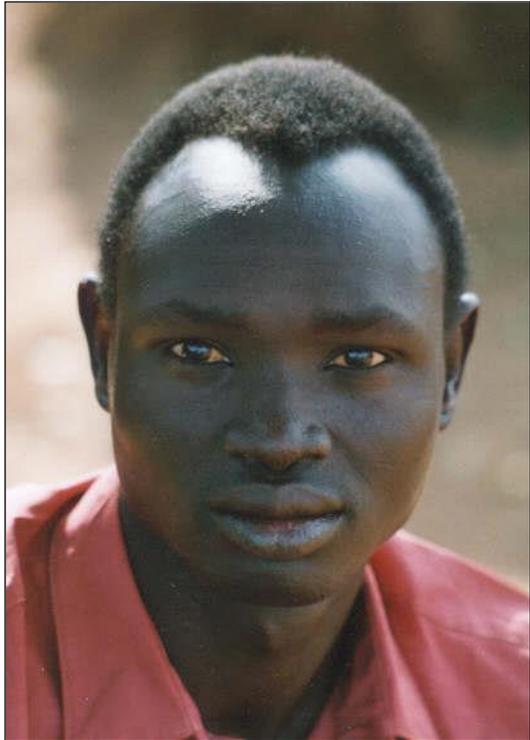
⁸ In the *adhum-piny* dance, girls and boys circulate around a central drum, singing abusive songs with often obscene subjects. The following example describes the sexual parts of men and women in a crudely physiological manner - though on an apparently poetic level.

What is particular about this kind of dance is its “drum”, a rigid skin brought to tension above a hole dug into the ground according to a method described previously. The drum is beaten with sticks; the sound produced is a rather dull and deep one which appears to stem from the depth of the earth.

The *adhum-piny* may not be of Anyuak origin: it is possibly an adaptation from the Nuer; this at least is suggested by the fact that only the inhabitants of the *Ciro* region (the Anyuak region extending from Akobo to Nyium Amiel) know this dance. The *adhum-piny* has been very popular amongst the *Ciro* youngsters, but nowadays it is almost forgotten, being replaced by the “dancy”-playing.

⁹ *Odwela* is a snake with scales, looking like a fish.

¹⁰ by Oruoth Ongac in Otol in 1980.



People who get scorned in public through songs are either personal rivals of the singer (usually men of a certain age who can marry the boy's girlfriend because of their riches) or persons who are disliked because of their behaviour, because of a sexual disease ("*this girl has attracted gonorrhoea*"...) or because of their sexual incapacity or the physical appearance of their genitals.

The type of songs which is more significant are the songs which concern love and all the problems related to it (most of the time they are of an economic nature). The following song (from the *Ngok Dinka*)¹¹ is expressing her love (for a husband who has divorced her) in such a beautiful and touching manner that it should be quoted here:

Sleepless nights

Will it not be the same with the tale of the horse of Ajak
O brother, the Crested Crane, Matem?
My heart, do not remain perturbed

And twist your horns
It was you who pushed my head into the bush (of love)
If only I could pull you out to stand like a man
I would pound you with a pestle and burn you with fire
Mine would caution the tribe to abandon marriage
Even the milk of goats would be abandoned.
What about the beautiful thing which smelt like ghea at
Monymau camp?
Now I spend my nights thinking, vexing myself with a
confounded heart;
We have bestowed a curse on ourselves,
O Kerieth of clan Pajok
A man of your age once said
The legendary man who blamed God said
'Divinity is blamed and yet is not blamed?';
I will not blame you
You were persuaded by others
To come and break our marriage.

The verbal "contents" of love-songs seem to be of secondary importance, but people are nevertheless attentive to the *poetical* qualities of the text; for outsiders, they are not always easy to understand as there is usually a personal story related to obstacles met on the way to fulfilment of love; without a comment on the background of the songs, their interpretation is sometimes quite difficult.

¹¹ Deng, *The Dinka and their Songs*, Oxford 1973, p.133-34

Deng's explanation of the song's background: "*The girl who composed this song was betrothed to a man she loved. Then the man suddenly, and for no obvious reasons, broke the betrothal. In this song, she expresses her sadness over the breach. When this song was presented in a dance attended by the man, he is said to have shed tears and reinstated the marriage.*"

The following *Anyuak* love-song has been recorded in 1976 in Otalo-village:

Adarac song : « *The world is boring...* » ¹²

The world is boring, the news is carried by wind.

Nyike-kude nyo-omedho nyike-abaro, cross the stream and come to this side to the homestead of those of *Mal wany rwan*, *kam gin rac*, *Ocuk* son of Abal.

She is everlasting from an eye, our wife, *dim nying rii*. She takes after my mother, Acan. I dreamed as if I had married her.

Akwanyi is like a mirror, like the light beam of a car. When I composed the song, it was heard by all people. *Liec wa Nyikula*, grandchild of *Ojolo*, *liec* son of *Akew*, in our village a girl is not given to a man for marriage. *Naam orum Otidi*, it is cowardice to advise. Those people talked against in the village, the brown girl has returned to us. The calabash of beer reveals the presence of *Nyidodo*. The young men are asked in the village when they will marry the women. Marriage-price for marriage are incomplete, war *Apol wany dhieng laare* we shall engage in trade, me and my cousin, *Pala pala* son of Ocar, *Ogal deye*, *Agal pemi war Apol nyingenyi*, grandchild of Adolo grandchild of Anyomi. A young man cannot remain like a tree, *nyikwana*.

If there is no wealth for the bride-wealth, Damballa is quite near, it is like Oboth-river from Otalo.

Those who backbited me were revealed to me by Olal son of Abor. He is really my coeval, Okur son of Kaga.

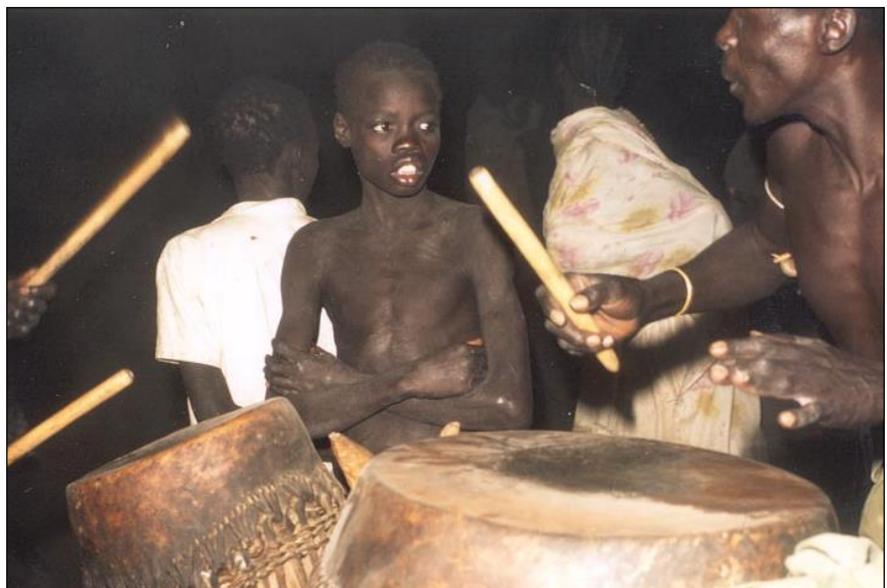
She disagreed with her father, the daughter of *but-otholo nyikwanyi*, *Nyipwola nyilaang* you prepare a calabash of beer for us, me and those fellows.

I have never come across an age-group of such beautiful girls as this one.

We have seen many villages, but in no village were there girls as beautiful as these of the age-group of Nyo-Otalo.

Where girls and boys meet:

Dancing-places provide in all parts of the Sudan – by definition – the best and easiest opportunities to meet and to start a relationship. Speaking about the *Lokoya*, *Lomodong Lako*¹³ states that “*Dancing occasions... provide good opportunities for all boys and girls to display their artistic ways of dressing, dancing and singing. Here they take note*



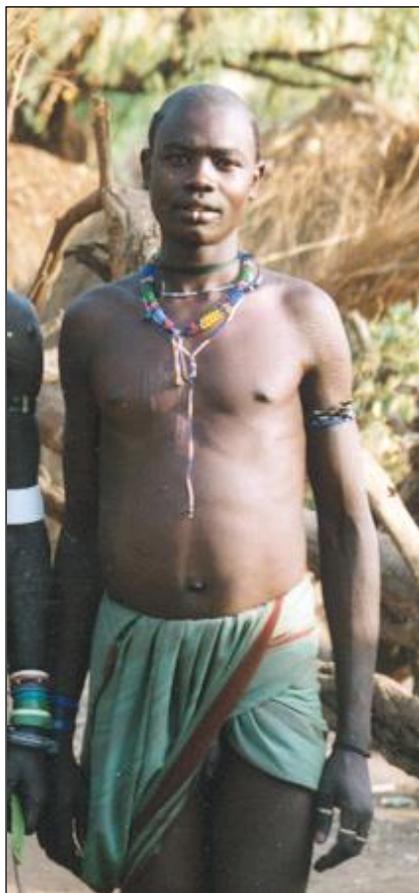
¹² A “*danci*” song by *Akwata*, a girl from Otalo.

¹³ In “*The Lokoya of Sudan*”, p.79

of suitable, prospective partners when noting the faults of unworthy ones. Songs of praise, mockery or insults are coined against rivals at these dances... ”.

Other places depend on living-conditions and existing facilities. Thus, the *Azande* start courtship not only in dancing-places but moreover “in schools, in market-places and in the church”¹⁴, the *Balanda* “in restaurants”, the *Moruba* “during funerals or at marriages” and the *Acholi* “in all these places and even at home”. In many regions, amongst the more popular meeting-places figure – probably because of the possibility to meet in private and in a more secrete manner – places near the *river-side* or - during the dry season of the year - at *waterpoints*: the *Lokoya*, for example, meet “on the road to the river or stream while going to fetch water or in the sleeping quarters where they sleep in groups”¹⁵. The *Shilluk*¹⁶ have got a special place – called “*wanye maan*” - where boys and girls come together, while young people just start conversing with each other, like the *Toposa*, “generally in the evenings after people have come home from work”, sexual relationship simply getting initiated, as a *Jur-Bel* explains, “wherever people gather”.

Praising a person



Anyuak Love-song (by Opara Ochalla)

“Imagine, she is like the barrel of a rifle! She is so beautiful, it is as if she was the product made out of gold (jewellery). My eyes refuse to sleep by night because of thoughts, my dear one... Agira, son of the Buffalo, I am happy to think of running away.

Apora-wany-Lero, this is the air of pride and happiness. Nyo-obok, I am happy to be sad, I wish you could be an airplane. The rich man has taken her. Rich man, you pay the bridewealth and I shall get her happily when I come back. What shall I say? My wife is beautiful and no other man can take her. I shall work with Mabar Jamac. Why don't you wait, my dear, lets go hand in hand, your body is like my body...”

Love-song (by Wacatha Agima) (*Anyuak*)

The love between me and Ocar cannot be imagined. That child has been created beautiful! If she is to be taken to the home of an old man, she could get broken! You, poor man, marry a good girl. If her father refuses me to get married to her, I could throw myself into the river because of this girl! Don't get despaired, daughter of Obok, I shall engage you when I come back from Ethiopia. A black girl like my girl is not found anywhere. She lives a civilised life, her hair is parted in Amharic style. If it wasn't because of the marriage-price, I would marry her. I want to change this bad luck which is mine. What the rich man said (“you move away from here”) can never be ignored. What has happened to Okwom Akwayo yo Okur? A boy who has no sister is bound to become a moving trader. God is looking at me, and he will help me.

“*Alina*” means in *Murle*- and “*Atido*” in *Päri*-language “you are beautiful” and in the language spoken by the *Lango* “*Ale Bachi*” - and “to say “you are beautiful” means in *Lango*

¹⁴ When a young Anyuak boy was blamed by his older brother to bear a Christian name and to go to Church, the boy replied by saying in a weepy tune: “...but the girls go also to church!!!”...

¹⁵ Lomdodong Lako, „The Lokoya of Sudan“, p.79

¹⁶ Cf. Hofmayr 282

culture “*I love you*”. ... But beauty is not the only and perhaps not even the most important quality of girls or boys. Personal qualities are as much important, - such as behaviour, skills and courage.

The *Azande* praise a girl’s “*structure, her beauty, her smile, her way of walking*”, the *Nuer* express their love by saying sweet words and by talking about “*her wonderful appearance, her way of talking*” etc. and like that she is “*respectful, not insulting or arrogant*”. The *Moruba* praise a girl’s “*beauty, behaviour, the degree of respect she inspires to other people..*”, an attitude shared by the *Anyuak* who like a girl who is respectful, not arrogant and generally good-humoured, or by the *Dinka* and other Nilotes who all are more concerned by attitudes than by exterior criteria of beauty. One can almost believe that hardship has left its mark on the character of women living under those harsh living-conditions and has made them very strong-minded, full of pride and courage: the *Anyuak* (men), though used to self-conscious women, for example, praise God for having prevented the *Murle* women to be men!¹⁷

The *Didinga* men admit that in their culture “*girls are feared by men!*” while curiously expecting their women to be “*strong-minded, not to fear to speak out, not to be afraid*”, and at a same to be “*social, entertaining, good in brewing beer and generous...*” . If the *Didinga* boys can also fall for “*a girl’s frame and appearance*”, the *Acholi* men do not hide that they secretly also look for girls who are “*hard-working*”; in this, they are not alone, because most of our interlocutors have mentioned this quality as being most essential: the *Toposa* boys, just to give one more example, “*praise a girl who is attractive, hard-working and has got nice manners*”.. The *Acholi* pay also much attention to a girl’s artistic talents and give their preference to girls who are “*good in dancing and other arts, such as for example singing*”. Only our *Avukaya* informant mentioned “*a girl’s social status*” of being important for a boy, meaning that the way by which a girl is seen and appreciated by others could also be of significance when making one’s choice.

Girls of course also have their criteria when accepting a boy’s demands (or when taking own initiative for starting sexual relationship). A young *Nuer* proudly explained to me that his girlfriend and mother to his child loves him “*because of my nice body, my education, my nice way of talking*” (he admits loving her for the very same qualities). Even though behaviour and beauty play a significant part in a girl’s appreciation of a boy, the most important quality expected from a boy and future husband is *courage*: “*Toposa girls like boys who create good songs, who are attractive but especially those who are courageous and brave*”.

There are certainly other and possibly more purely sexual elements which can make a girl to be happy with her friend. The example I can give is from the *Anyuak* who are extremely harsh with a



¹⁷ because then the *Murle* – who frequently fight with the *Anyuak* – would be even stronger and more dangerous than at present where of course only men are engaged in warfare.

lover found with their daughter: the poor boy will be slashed with hippo-whips until he loses consciousness... A boy who has undergone such brutal punishment because of his love will never be left or get forgotten by the girl, even if she is perhaps marrying (or already married to) another man¹⁸. And the girl's husband will always be reminded of the fact that he never proved to love his wife: *"you have not even be slashed because of me"*, she will complain bitterly, much regretting her former boyfriend.

Initiating sexual relationship

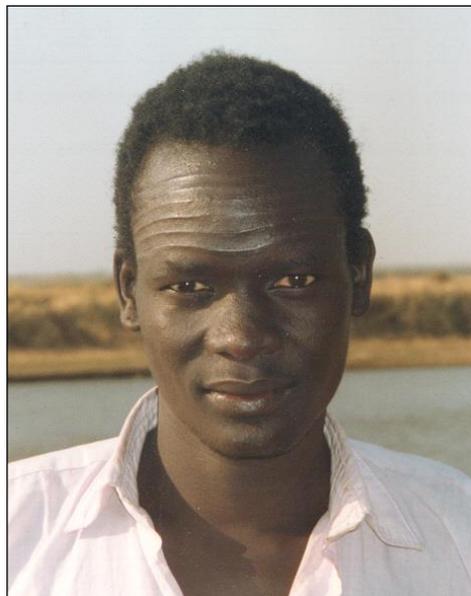
Different approaches should be distinguished:

- a) There is the sexual relationship occurring for sexual reasons only and which may not last long.
- b) There is the relationship which is to lead to engagement and marriage, which is based on love and which, in consequence, is not to be achieved in one day.

I am afraid that my interlocutors did not always differentiate, reason why the different answers should not be compared.

Even though many of my informants did not mention the possibility of people having sexual intercourse together for no deeper reason than sexual satisfaction, one can assume that such more temporary sexual relationship occurs everywhere and not merely amongst the *Avukaya*, the *Murle* or the *Didinga* (even though there might be not everywhere the same 'easy' approach).

The *Avukaya*, we are told, *"meet at the dancing-places. During the dance, people may just disappear in a friend's hut and make love there, - while the others may believe that they are dancing"*. The *Didinga* adolescents meet also *"during dances, when people dance in pairs. Most of them disappear in the middle of the dance, go to the bush"*, a behaviour which is apparently shared by the *Nuer*: *"I call my friend out of the dance to a secret place where nobody can see us and then we first start to discuss the sex orally until the point where we reach an agreement: at that time, I will start to touch her breast until we move to a dark place and we shall start to have our intercourse...."* *"After a dance"*, we are told by some other young *Nuer*, *"the boy escorts the girl home and thus gets a chance to sleep with her - ...but the lovers first discuss the matter during two or three hours, come together only afterwards"*, another *Nuer* interlocutor adding that *"people may not sleep immediately together, sometimes one month or more elapses until they have actually have sexual intercourse"*.



Young *Murle* *"come together immediately whenever they find themselves alone, at any time..."* and the *Balanda* girls and boys, too, get nowadays *"quite immediately"* into an intimate relationship (while formerly it could take a lover one to two years before he could sleep with his girlfriend). A similarly uncomplicated behaviour is reported from the *Ingessana*: *"Girls and boys come sexually together whenever they have agreed on their love. The girl promises the boy to meet him in a place of their choice."*

The other more serious and marriage-oriented type of sexual relationship takes infinitely more time and sometimes requires from the boy a great amount of patience and obstinacy.

¹⁸ See the story told by Kwot Ogala in the article on Adultery in the chapter "Sideways and Stigmas".

With the Lango, “it may take one to two weeks or one month for lovers to get sexually together” and with the Avukaya, “intercourse would take place after one month of talk” only.. The young people of the Moruba “need about four to five meetings” until they agree to sleep together and with the Azande it does take between one week and one month; however, if a girl is still virgin it may take much longer, between one and two years.

A Dinka boy would “go by night to the girl’s house, talk to her (she may be about fifteen years old); many other boys will come and do the same. Finally, the girl will choose one. If there is agreement, the boy gives her a special bead which she puts on the ear: now everybody will know that she is engaged; at that time, they already sleep together. The girl’s parents will enquire about the boy’s background, and possibly they will refuse.”

In what regards the Atuat who allow young people to interact throughout their adolescence, we are told that “Although there is no prove that it doesn’t take place among the young people, sex before marriage is culturally not acceptable: especially for the boys this could lead to conflict and perhaps disaster... In the past, other traditional methods were used to ensure the rule has been applied. Girls and boys go naked while in the cattle camp and other homely places. Only married men and women are allowed to wear cloth or leather. On the other side, young men who are interested in a girl are allowed to visit the girl after obtaining permission from the girl’s parents: the boy is allowed to spend a night with a girl at the girl’s home. Although they share the same bedding, sex is not allowed or would not be thought of at all... The girl’s mother will have time to learn more about the boy’s behaviour and his social background (and if something bad is found, the boy may be told to stop talking to their daughter). As these kind of relations go on for years before marriage, the girls can have many visiting young men who have been permitted by the parents to lobby her. These regular visits to a girl’s home are called ‘goor nin’ and can also be carried out by the boy’s brother, cousin or any other young male relative who will speak on the lover’s behalf, trying to convince the girl to accept their family. All this happens only one year after the girl had her first monthly period. It often occurred that some girls after having had sexual intercourse got pregnant what results into big fighting, though sometimes it is followed by a proper wedding.”

A Lokoya girl does “not take first contacts and discussions of love seriously. They show a lot of doubt and a negative attitude throughout the first two months of frequent appointments”, and an Acholi lover needs not only a lot of patience but moreover some physical strength: “Can be difficult, it may take one year of talking... But even once she has agreed, there will be fighting! She will defend herself by all means, as she does not want to appear to have given in easily: she does not want to be considered to be loose! Next time, it may be less violent. With the educated girls, there is less resistance”.

Often, go-betweens are used to inform the girl and indeed the boy about the other’s wish to start a serious relationship. “The negative attitude of Lokoya girls keeps the boys on their toes, mobilising their friends to go and persuade the girls to accept their love proposals. Boys may ask friends, sisters and sometimes their mothers and fathers to assist them as go-betweens in their difficult task of courting. This may be done through indirect contacts best known to them, using tactics to influence the girls or their parents to accept the proposal for betrothal.”¹⁹ Such a procedure is almost obligatory when it is the girl taking the initiative: “Another girl (or the sister) is informing the girl about his love for her”, a Nuer relates, adding that “Girls don’t express their love, but they may go and visit the boy’s sister at her home.” Shilluk, Anyuak and many other people initiate a serious relationship between a boy and a girl in a similar manner.

¹⁹ Lomodong Lako, p. 91f.

Besides of these two ways which lead to love and sexual relationship, one indirect and the other one more direct, there are even more discrete and somehow shy manners of showing one's sympathy for the other sex. With the *Azande*, first contacts always start with greetings, asking for the name and for the place where she or he stays. A *Didinga* boy would understand that a girl "has something in mind" when she comes to see him "at very odd times, as for example by night, when he is chasing birds in the field or when he is in other isolated places". An *Anyuak* girl would go and see a boy in his home asking for some tobacco or some other small things; when she is approaching him several times for such reasons, he will surely understand that the girl wants to start a physical kind of relationship; if he should not react, the girl may become more direct and ask him "frankly, why are you hating girls?", a question he will have to answer in a positive manner... This custom of getting near to a boy by using various pretexts is apparently also known by the *Dinka*.

The number of 'lovers' one may have before getting married

If it is not easy to get answers on questions regarding a person's sexual life, it is even more difficult to be sure of the truthfulness of the answers received. It is much regretted that the large majority of my informants were of a male sex, but it would have been difficult to make the women admit the number of boyfriends they had: the information provided by our only woman, a *Dinka*, shows how reluctant women may be to speak about this and indeed many of the other subjects. And this is what my interlocutors told me: An eighteen years old *Nuer* boy had, up to now, only two girlfriends; one got married, one is still with him (and this since three years back): she is called *Nyaroth*, has got a child from him and stays with him in spite of the fact that he has not yet paid the bride-wealth.

For the *Nuer* it is normal to have, before getting married, "several girlfriends at a time", - "more than five". This number strongly contrasts by the figure given by another, thirty years old *Nuer* friend who explains that "the number of my girlfriends before marriage goes up to one hundred..."; one understands, however, that sexual intercourse was probably not always involved, for he states that he "started at the age of seven"...



Only our *Avukaya* interlocutor, a man of a certain age already, had - if it is true - a higher number of relationship with girls: “*seventy before I married*”, he says, “*plus fifty married women*”... Too many to be true, one would like to comment, though one never knows, of course! The *Moruba* have “*several girlfriends at a time*”: our informant stated that he had himself seven girlfriends before marriage, “*but only one at a go*”.

In what concerns the *Anyuak*, the average number of girlfriends men have is said to be ten.

The *Lango* have one to three girlfriends before getting engaged, but they don't have several girlfriends at a same time.

Our *Sere* interlocutor got married at eighteen and he had only one girlfriend before that - and she was already married at the time...

This is different with the *Murle* where “*A boy may have about 10 girl-friends during one year, the boy having no intention to marry them, except perhaps one amongst them: the people would know that someone has got a sexual relationship, but they would not interfere immediately but wait until the girl is pregnant.*”

An *Acholi* interlocutor could not remember anymore how many girl-friends he had... “*up to now (sic!), could be twenty... ..or more?*” He said that he started at fifteen but did not spend much time with them.

A *Balanda* man counting his former girlfriends came to the figure of twenty as well, and a *Shilluk* friend of mine would admit to have had “*more than twenty girlfriends before marriage*”.

From our only female interlocutor, a *Dinka* woman, we learn only about the past and her regrets that things have, apparently, got out of control: “*Before the civil war*”, she says, “*some girls did not sleep with a boy before the marriage. Nowadays, everybody behaves as he or she likes...*”.

Frequency of sexual meetings

Many different answers on this point reflect probably rather the personal situation of the interlocutor and the particular circumstances of the cultural conditions: the situation of a married man can obviously not be compared to the one of a young man looking for girls at the dancing-place. The interest of the information obtained lies in the diversity of statements rather than in statistics.

The *Murle* provided a non-information by answering enigmatically “*As often as they like!*”.

The *Päri* share this liberal approach when they say to have intercourse “*according to the lovers' desire*”, an attitude shared by the *Lopit* where sexual life starts long before marriage and where a boy can sleep with his girlfriend “*as often as she is willing to*”...

The *Azande* equally leave the decision with the girl, adding that it “*could be daily*”; however, if there was necessity to keep the relationship secret, only one or two meetings in a month would be possible.

“*If the parents of a boy are not very strict or of the relatives of a particular girl are not serious*”, young *Lango* lovers could get sexually together twice a week.

A *Balanda* husband “*sleeps four to five times a month with his wife*”.

All our *Nuer* informants sleep about three times a week (“*or more*”) with their girlfriend or wife (“*every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday*”). Before one of the interlocutors was married, he managed to make “*up to twelve rounds a day*”, “*but when everything had to happen quickly (for example during a dance) three times a day had to be enough*”.

Where young lovers get sexually together

The Murle do it “everywhere where they are alone... Happens in remote, unknown places. A boy and a girl can come sexually and spiritually together without wasting a lot of talk. It happens when the parents are away, or when the girl is on mission, in the bush, at dancing places etc.”

The Anyuak make love “in the bush, in a narrow place”, the Nuer sleep “in the bush, or in a hut” and for the Didinga “Fornication takes usually place in the grass, sometimes in an isolated hut”. While Balanda adolescents get sexually together “on banana- or palm-leaves in the open,



normally in a hut”, the Acholi make love “in the hidden, a private place, inside a hut” and the Azande “in the house or under trees, lying on leaves”. Ingessana lovers sleep “at the place of the lovers’ choice, by night”, the Lopit and the Pärei “inside a hut” and the Avukaya more precisely “inside the boy’s hut”; In Lango culture, “Sexual life begins at the age of fourteen to seventeen and the places where the youngsters express their love before marriage are the dancing-places, the fields, near water-points or at home”. The Toposa lovers sleep, “during the dry season, in the open but during the rainy season in a hut” and the Moruba do it “normally in the girl’s hut, but after dancing in the bush: the Moruba girls have their own hut. The lover comes by night and stays up to four or five o’clock. When leaving, he gets sometimes ambushed and is caught. He will then be fined and will have to marry... ”.

Rape takes always place in the open.

Sexual practices

For the Shilluk, Frobenius:⁸⁹²⁰ has noted that “Intercourse takes place in the following manner: the girl is lying on the ground, with her legs spread in direction of the sky while the man is sitting in front of her; putting the girl’s legs around his hips or over his shoulders, he is conducting intercourse in a sitting position”. This position is also used by the Anyuak, who, however, frequently make love in a lying position.

The Balanda have the same practise and thus “sleep on the girl who lies on her back, though sometimes it is done in a sitting position, the two lovers facing each other.”

The Nuer, when in the bush and in a hurry, make love in a standing position but when at home it happens in a lying position.

The Murle either lie on the girl or on her side while the Jur-Bel have sexual intercourse while lying “side by side”, boy and girl facing each other.

Azande lovers seem to vary their positions: either “the man lies on the girl (and that’s the usual way of making love) or it happens sideways (only sometimes)”; at other times, “the girl lies on

²⁰ Frobenius, Leo: “Und Afrika sprach...”, 1913, Tome III, p.89”

her stomach and the man on her". Streck:268²¹ has described some of the most intimate moments in the relationship between an Azande man and his girlfriend:

„If a man has met a woman on his way and both feel sympathy for each other, they are looking for a lonely hut. When he starts putting her on the bed, she giggles. She is laying on her side and takes off her hip-robe and the loin-cloth (*rokko*). He is already naked. He pulls her towards him and rests a while between her breasts. Then he puts his *zibb* between her thighs and moves it two-three times from one side to another. Then he pulls it out again, she puts her leg over him, he moves between her thighs and places his hand under her head. Now she grasp his *zibb* with her hands and brings it into her *shagg*. When he extends himself, his *Zibb* enters completely. After having copulated with her for some time, she gets very excited. She starts to thank him, saying “Oh my brother, how wonderful is your *Zibb*; please make it very slowly”. Eventually she blows into his ears. When she has done this, he ejaculates into her. After that he takes his *Zibb* out of her *Shagg*, and she grasps her loin-cloth and cleans his *zibb*. He then gets up and puts his clothes, and she remains sitting naked. They are conversing in a whispering tune, and perhaps they are smoking together. If he gets excited again, he pulls her towards him. After that, he gives her some money.” The latter has of course nothing to do with prostitution but with exchanging gifts.”

Other sexual practises are, apparently, not known or at least are not admitted to be practised: speaking about oral sex, a *Balanda* informant confirms that it exists: “*I never did that, but I know that there are people who do it*”, he tells, “*they even put the penis into the girl’s ears or her nose...*”, but his beliefs or “knowledge” is based on “*videos which I have seen*”...! Such pornographic videos are indeed shown in big agglomerations like Yambio or in the Kakuma refugee-camp: they seem to animate at least the fantasy of the people!

Addressing the same subject of oral sex and asked if it was practised, a *Nuer* boy simply replied with “*Yes, it is there*”. The same informant admitted that even anal sex could happen: “*it happened to me only once*”, he explained, “*and this happened ‘by mistake’: I was so much heated up that I mistook the place... The girl was angry, asking me why I had done so, but when I excused myself and explained that it had been by mistake, she eventually accepted my excuses*”.

Though I have of course no ‘proofs’ and am left with my own interpretations of the sexual behaviour of the people, I would still believe that there is not much space for all those more particular sexual practises in any of the cultures found in the Southern Sudan.

Because masturbation is usually not involving a sexual partner, this sexual practice has been considered to be one of what I call the “sideways” of the main-road to sexual satisfaction and is, in consequence, briefly discussed there²².

Sex in the cattle-camp

The persons questioned on sexuality in cattle-camps seem to disagree on the issue. There are those who state that “*it is rare, it happens only when the girls are on visit*” (*Didinga*) and those who, like our *Murle* informant, tell us that “*sexual life in cattle-camps exists in highest rates!*”. The reason for such a striking difference may be that girls, in some places, do not stay in cattle-

²¹ Streck, Bernard, „SUDAN“, Köln (DuMont) 1982

²² See the chapter “Sideways and Stigmas”.

camps for a long time while in other places girls actually stay with the boys, even though they sleep at different quarters. Amongst the *Didinga*, for example, “*the men can stay in the cattle-camp for many years, to the extent that they almost forget social life and behaviour!*”.

This is obviously not the case with *Murle* men who are staying in the cattle-camp: “*sex is officially of course not allowed*”, we are told, “*but because the young people are there away from ‘the shield of law’ and older relatives, sexual activities are actually extremely common.*”

One of our *Nuer* friends has noticed that, in cattle-camps, “*the rape of girls is frequent*” and that boys could do “*whatever they have agreed upon*”. The *Toposa* stay in the cattle-camp for several months (from September to April), boys and girls staying in separate huts. “*The girls prepare milk, keep it for ten days...*”, our expert on *Toposa*-culture relates, “*...then, there will be dancing,*

sex, dancing, sex, dancing, sex, dancing... It is a new thing: there is almost free sex! There is no sense of morality, it is just like an epidemic...”. Note that the reason for such “new” behaviour seems to be the possession of guns which allows the boys, in case of any sexual “accident” to pay the fine without even asking the parents for help. Even though there might be the impression that cattle-camps are a kind of Sodom and Gomorra where everything is allowed, such is certainly not the case, for under normal circumstances the boys’ parents would have to pay the fine for the “damage” their sons have caused.



Obstacles to sexual relationship

All obstacles on the road to sexual satisfaction and marriage are related to the large field of *kinship*. There are, in all cultures, precise rules regarding the kind of persons with whom one is allowed to have a sexual relationship and the particular categories of people with whom sexual contacts are strictly forbidden. Such rules include laws on attitudes and behaviour, namely with people who are close to the person with whom one has a sexual relationship (in-laws or, before marriage, the relatives of one’s girlfriend). While the basic rules coincide (no sex with related persons and respect for in-laws), there are considerable differences when it comes to the identification of persons considered to be excluded from a person’s sexual life: Questions like ‘Can I marry the sister of my wife?’, ‘Can I sleep with the young wives of my father while he is still alive?’ or ‘Can I sleep with the young wives of my father after his death?’ may find different answers all according to one’s understanding of the world one is living in. Because of its deep significance for the understanding of culture, the whole sphere of *kinship* is indeed crucial; not surprisingly, a considerable number of scientific studies written by anthropologists focus on



parentship and behaviour.²³ Hopefully, nobody will expect, really, that this very general paper would dare to touch on this extremely complex topic. At this instance, we simply want to enumerate the major obstacles to sexual relationship and content ourselves to provide a few examples of different approaches.

There are at least three categories of people with whom one is not *supposed to* get in sexual contact:

- a) related persons (this may include people who do not have a blood-relationship)
- b) persons married to someone else
- c) persons co-related through marriage (in-laws)
- d) persons linked to other members of one's family (for example: father's wives)
- e) specific persons (under-aged girls, women older than oneself, sick people etc.)

While the categories a) and b) are to be respected everywhere, the other categories have in each culture

their proper definition.

Focusing here on one specific group of people (unmarried youth), only the first two categories (and possibly the last category)) are of significance for the discussion of the major obstacles on the way to sexual relationship.

Even though it is *not* a hinder for making love with girls (married or not) but mainly an obstacle on the way to *marriage*, it is necessary to keep in mind that a central problem in the life of a young man concerns the payment of the bride-wealth which is needed for his marriage: it is this much more than any other obstacles which hinder a boy to unite with his beloved girl without breaching laws or offending the girl's relatives.

Note that practically all sexual unions which occur before marriage are considered to be illicit: taking a girl who belongs to someone else (parents, husband) is like theft and cannot be tolerated neither by the offended person nor by society. If caught, a lover therefore has to expect to be punished twice: first when being caught and then when being condemned by the court to pay a heavy fine. Generally, there seems to be no difference if a boy has been surprised when sleeping with a girl or if he was sexually together with an already married girl (or woman): the fine for this or for the other is significantly the same²⁴.

The *only* fear a lover may have when sleeping with a girl is to be discovered and caught by the girls relatives. That is why a *Murle* explains that "*there are no obstacles except the fear for punishment which consists in being thoroughly whipped, perhaps even in getting killed, and/or in additionally paying a fine (seven to twenty heads of cattle in the case of the Murle)*". "*But though he risks are big and the punishment terrible, people still try to meet...*" our informant concludes. "*If a boy sleeps with a girl 'in the wrong way', that is without the parents consent*", a member of the *Ndogo-Sere* tells, "*there is a fine which is to be distributed amongst the members of the whole family.*"

²³ The best-known of these studies is of course *Evans-Pritchard's* book on Nuer kinship.

²⁴ With some exceptions: the *Azande* could even mutilate an adulterer. See the chapter "Sideways and Stigmas")

Officially, it looks as if the “mistake” was always and exclusively on the boy’s side. This holds only true for the more official reaction: at home, the girl will have to explain herself and could be punished for her behaviour, and a married woman may even get divorced by her husband.

Often, the parents know or at least suspect their daughter to have a lover. When asked to reveal the name of her boyfriend, the girl will refuse to tell and deny everything, especially if the love is strong and if the boyfriend is poor (not able to pay the bride-wealth). When beaten up and slashed, the girl may eventually confess and reveal the name of her lover... ..sometimes giving the name of a different person (but who could be pay the marriage-price)! If that person could then agree to marry her, the girl would probably still seek fulfilment of her love with her former boyfriend...



If the relationship between a boy and a girl is not just casual but should lead to marriage, obstacles of a different kind will appear: the girl’s family will have to accept the girl! The parents want to be sure of three things:

- a) there should be no relationship between the girl and the boy
- b) the family of the boy must have a good reputation
- c) the family of the boy must be rich enough to pay the marriage-price

Generally, the parents would not reject a boy if the girl really wants him as husband and if he is able to provide the marriage-price. Nowadays at least, the parents have lost much of their former power and have to take into account the girl’s wishes. If the girl got pregnant, her chances to marry the child’s father are actually good, even though it may take some time before the marriage is legally consumed. If the boy is poor, the parents may even wait longer than usual for the

payment of the marriage-price, especially if the daughter's lover is polite, nice and hard-working. But there is no way of avoiding the marriage-price²⁵.

The prohibition concerning incest

The prohibition of having sexual intercourse with a related person exists in all cultures because they are almost universally based on the principle of exogamy (marriage should occur between persons of different clans). It is a very fundamental and strong principle which, if not respected, is believed to bring great misfortune to the families concerned.

Whenever there is a rule, there is the question to whom this rule applies and who feels concerned: usually, the prohibition of incest applies to people who are considered to be 'one' because of an existing blood-relationship. But at what point in a person's genealogy does such a relationship become so diluted that one could say that it has ended? Different cultures answer the question in different ways. There may be other questions, perhaps even more difficult to answer: should the very notion of intimate relationship really be limited to blood-related persons only, or is there also a particular kind of relationship between a person and, say, the sister of one's wife, or, to give an other example, between a father's son and the father's (young) wives? Even such questions find different answers in different cultures, but in most cultures found in the Southern Sudan such "indirect" relationship is acknowledged and considered to be a hinder to marriage. The *Azande*, just to give one example, are not allowed to marry the older sister-in-law but may very well marry her younger sister... *Shilluk*²⁶, *Anyuak* like all the other ethnic groups check a relationship on both the father's and the mother's side, and whoever wants to start a sexual relationship must make sure that he and the girl are not of a same "*tung*" ('family, lineage') and do not share a same "*paè*" ('village, origin' of the mother).

Incest is said to be rare everywhere.

There is a *Dinka* story²⁷ about an incestuous relationship between a beautiful girl and her brother; we quote only the initial part of it:

"Diirawic and her incestuous Brother.

This is an ancient event.

A girl called Diirawic was extremely beautiful. All the girls of the tribe listened to her words. Old women all listened to her words. Small children all listened to her words. Even old men listened to her words. A man called Teen wanted to marry her, but her brother, who was also called Teeng, refused. Many people each offered a hundred cows for her bridewealth, but her brother refused. One day, Teeng spoke to his mother and said "I would like to marry my sister Diirawic."

His mother said: "I have never heard of such a thing. You should go and ask your father".

He went to his father and said "Father, I would like to marry my sister."

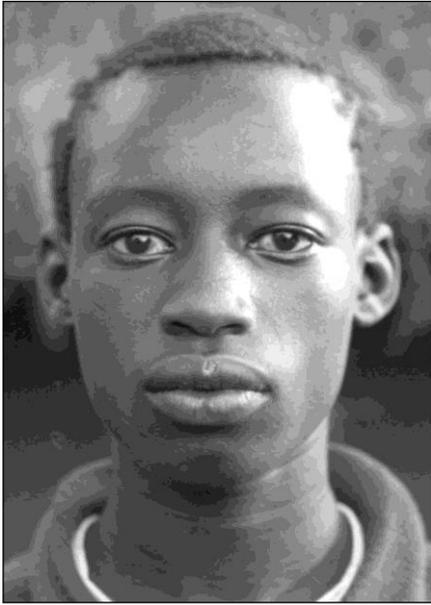
His father said: "My son, I have never heard of such a thing. A man marrying his sister is something I cannot even speak about. You had better go and ask your mother's brother."

He went to his mother's brother and said, "Uncle, I would like to marry my sister".

²⁵ This is also in the boy's interest: if a man has not fulfilled all formalities for marriage (mainly the payment of the marriage-price, he is obviously not married legally and his 'wife's' children would not belong to him.

²⁶ Hofmayr:293 states that the *Shilluk* do not marry a person from the mother's village: When it happens, the case will be taken to the father. If the relationship is near, a marriage between the two will be rejected. But if the girl insists (for example because she is already pregnant), the parents may either still refuse or they will give up. In this latter case, there is no ceremony to be made to formalise the breaking up of relationship.

²⁷ The story is found in Francis Mading Deng's book "Dinka Folktales", London 1994, on p.78ff.



His maternal uncle exclaimed: “My goodness! Has anybody ever married his sister? Is that why you have always opposed her marriage? Was it because you had in your heart to marry her yourself? I have never heard of such a thing! But what did your mother say about this?”

“My mother told me to ask my father. I agreed and went to my father. My father said he had never heard of such a thing and told me to come to you.”

“If you want my opinion”, said his uncle, “I think you should ask your father’s sister.”

He went around to all his relatives that way. Each one expressed surprise and suggested that he should ask another. Then he came to his mother’s sister and said “Aunt, I would like to marry my sister”.

She said “My child, if you prevented your sister from being married because you wanted her, what can I say! Marry her if that is your wish. She is your sister.”

Diirawic did not know about this. One day she called all the girls and said “Girls, let us go fishing”. Her words were always listened to by everyone, and when she asked for anything, everybody obeyed. So all the girls went, including little children. They went and fished.

In the meantime, her brother Teeng took out his favourite ox, Mijok, and slaughtered it for the feast. He was very happy that he was allowed to marry his sister. All the people came to the feast.

Although Diirawic did not know her brother’s plans, her little sister had overheard the conversation and knew what was happening. But she kept silent; she did not say anything.

A kite flew down and grabbed up the tail of Teeng’s ox, Mijok. Then it flew to the river where Diirawic was fishing and dropped it in her lap. She looked at the tail and recognised it.

“This looks like the tail of my brother’s ox, Mijok”, she said. “What has killed him? I left him tethered and alive!”

The girls tried to console her, saying, “Diirawic, tails are all the same. But if it is the tail of Mijok, then perhaps some important guests have arrived. It may be that they are people wanting to marry you. Teeng may have decided to honour them with his favourite ox. Nothing bad has happened.”

Diirawic was still troubled. She stopped the fishing and suggested that they return to find out what had happened to her brother’s ox.

They went back. As they arrived, the little sister of Diirawic came running to her and embraced her, saying, “My dear sister Diirawic, do you know what has happened?”

“I don’t know”, said Diirawic.

“Then I will tell you a secret”, continued her sister, “but please don’t mention it to anyone, not even to our mother.”

“Come on, Sister, tell me”, said Diirawic.

“Teeng has prevented you from being married because *he* wants to marry you,” her sister said. “He has slaughtered his ox, Mijok, to celebrate his engagement to you. Mijok is dead.”

Diirawic cried and said, “So that is why God made the kite fly with Mijok’s tail and drop it in my lap. So be it. There is nothing I can do.”

“Sister”, said her little sister, “let me continue with what I have to tell you. When your brother bedevils you and forgets that you are his sister, what do you do? I found a knife for you. He will want you to sleep with him in the hut. Hide the knife near the bed. And at night, when he is fast asleep, cut off his testicles. He will die. And he will not be able to do anything to you.”

“Sister”, said Diirawic, “you have given me a good advice.”

Diirawic kept the secret and did not tell the girls what had occurred. But she cried whenever she was alone.

She went and milked the cows. People drank the milk. But when Teeng was given the milk, he refused. And when he was given food, he refused. His heart was on his sister. That is where his heart was.

At bedtime, he said, “I would like to sleep in that hut. Diirawic, Sister, let us share the hut.”

Diirawic said, “Nothing is bad, my brother. We can share the hut.”

They did. Their little sister also insisted in sleeping with them in the hut. So she slept on the other side of the hut. In the middle of the night, Teeng got up and moved the way men do! At that

moment, a lizard spoke and said, “Come, Teeng, have you really become an imbecile? How can you behave like that towards your sister?”

He felt ashamed and lay down. He waited for a while and then got up again. And when he tried to do what men do, the grass on the thatching spoke and said, “What an imbecile! How can you forget that she is your sister?”

He felt ashamed and cooled down. This time, he waited much longer. Then his desire rose and he got up. The rafters spoke and said, “O, the man has really become an idiot! How can your eart be on your mother’s daughter’s body? Have you become a hopeless imbecile?”

He cooled down. This time he remained quiet for a long time, but then his mind returned to it again.

This went on until very close to dawn. The walls spoke and said, “You monkey of a human being, what are you doing?”. The utensils rebuked him. The rats in the hut laughed at him. Everything started shouting at him. “Teeng, imbecile, what are you doing to your sister?”

At that moment, he fell back ashamed and exhausted and fell into a deep sleep.

The little girl got up and woke her older sister, saying, “You fool, don’t you see he is now sleeping? This is the time to cut off his testicles.”

Diirawic got up and cut them off²⁸. Teeng died....”²⁹



If the principle to avoid incest is generally a strong and very fundamental one, there are differences in the importance of the rule, - even of the correctness! Even though the *Azande*, for example, believe that “*someone committing incest will get leprosy*”, they nevertheless appear to be less strict than others. Our interlocutor says that “*Incest is rare but it happens: a brother may sleep with his sister, a father with his daughter (it is called ‘kurongo’) or a mother sleeps with her husband’s sons...*”. The chiefs of one important *Zande*-clan, the *Abungara* even commit

²⁸ A Dinka song relating a similar act of a lover’s castration by girls will be found in the chapter on “Sex and Violence”.

²⁹ For the rest of the story, see op.cit. p.81-90

(committed?) intentionally incest: “*They sleep with their sister*”, we are told, *because they think that they should marry amongst themselves in order to create ‘real chiefs’... But it was secret. Because of the songs abusing them, they are about to give up this habit*”. The Balanda chief could apparently behave in the same manner, or at least “*it could happen*”...

The Didinga check relationship for “*about three generations*”, the Avukaya for three to four, the Ndogo-Sere up to four and the Nuer like other Nilotes for six generations back. Incest does not happen often but, as one of our Murle interlocutors explains, if it does it happens “*always for reasons of ignorance, lack of self-control and laziness*”. In contrast, the Didinga find witchcraft to be the deeper reason for such a mistake.

Finally, one should notice that people neighbouring with people of an Arab background tend to be less strict on the application of the rule not to marry blood-related persons.³⁰

Breaking blood-relationship

There is no exception to the rule forbidding an incestuous relationship: a marriage between related persons is simply not possible! Because the rule has to be respected under all circumstances, lovers who are related have to separate. This may lead, as a Pāri informant tells, to suicide: “*if you are young³¹, you will be beaten up, but if you are older one of them, the boy or the girl, will go and kill him/herself... These suicides happen when the lovers are abused in public or when they feel guilty of a crime*”. If the lovers insist, however, and if the relationship is distant, the prohibition of incest can get respected by simply *breaking the relationship*! Such breaking of a relationship is a *magical*, a spiritual act to be performed by the families of the boy and the girl³².

The following few examples shall illustrate the different ways of “treating” cases of incest:

- Lorilanya (Murle)* In case of incestuous relationship (that is to have intercourse with relatives of one’s paternal and maternal ancestors): “*the relationship can be forgiven by slaughtering a black or red³³ dog or bull but which are not to be eaten: in this way, all the bad luck which may stem from such a relationship will be washed off and it will definitively cut the relationship. In some cases, however, the relationship is categorically rejected.*”
- Ngalam: (Murle)* “*A white bull will be killed and there will be some celebrations, with people stating again and again ‘such a thing will not be repeated’*. The relationship gets eventually broken by killing a red dog”.
- Didinga:* Because incest is a threat to the health and the welfare of the people concerned, a cow of a particular colour is to be kept in the compound as a means of protection against the curse which is with the people who had such an illicit relationship.
- Suri:* “*A black dog is killed for breaking the relationship.*”

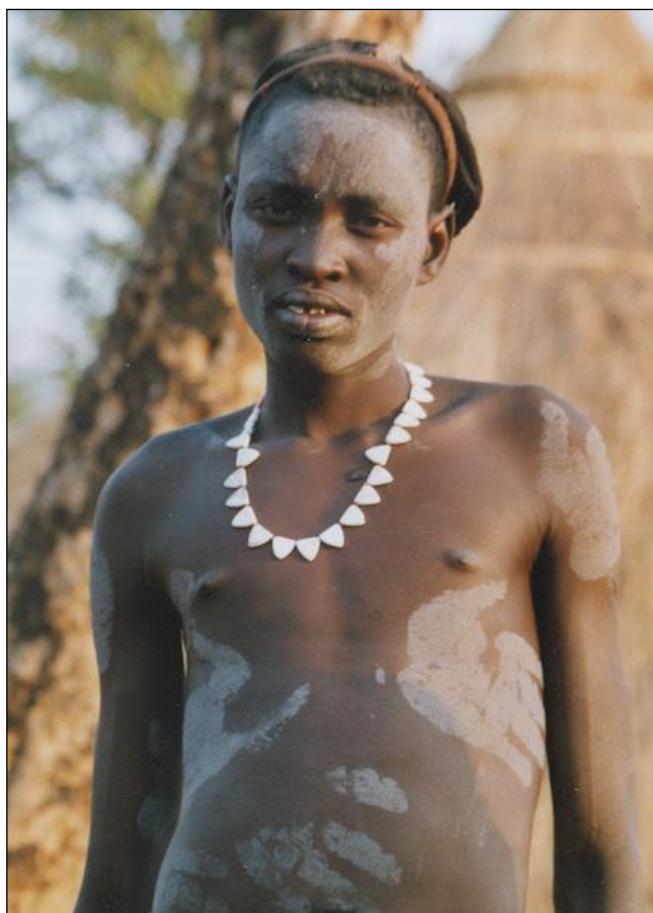
³⁰ See Adwok Nyaba, “The Chollo Predicament”, p.18

³¹ Amongst the Pāri, cases of incest are apparently found mainly amongst children.

³² The procedure of *breaking* a relationship has its logical correspondance when a relationship – because of the killing of a person – has to be *restored*. In both cases, food and other symbols for relationship play a substantial role.

³³ Colours (red, black, white) are everywhere of an extreme importance when it comes to sacrifices, medicines etc.

Lokoya: “The couple is called to the girl’s house. The boy brings along with him a sheep. The boy sits on the head of the sheep and holds the mouth and nose tight so as to prevent it from breathing. The girl sits on the stomach of the sheep and holds the anus tight. The holding of the mouth, nose and the anus is to ensure that the sheep does not bleed or breathe. It eventually suffocates and dies. If it dies then that will mark the severance of the relationship. If it bleats and air is allowed through the anus, It will not die and the relationship will stand, but the beast will be killed. The parents of the two sides sit silently opposite each other between their children and the animal to witness the death of the sheep. When it is certified dead, it is cut lengthwise into halves. The girl’s side take their half and cook it outside the fence of the house in another home and the boy’s side cook theirs inside the fence of the house. Both parents eat it without an accompaniment of any other food. The union is now healthy for the production of healthy children who will not die prematurely.”³⁴



Moruba: The relationship is broken only at a later stage: “the lovers will be cursed so that they do not get children”...

Dinka: “If the relationship is distant, it can be broken through a ceremony. If it is from the side of your mother, a sheep will be cut lengthwise.”

Nuer: “‘Rual’-ceremony is to be performed by the ‘Kwuor muon’ (the person who is responsible for the soil, the “Father of the land”) who will slaughter a sheep. If the girl is pregnant, the child will stay with her (maternal) uncle and the girl will go and marry someone else. (Reason: the bride-wealth cannot come from within one same family).”

Anyuak: “A cow or a sheep will be slaughtered length-wise and a sieve is to be divided into two in the same way”.

Päri: “A small animal is killed by the man who is responsible for the incest”

Ndogo-Sere: “People can marry after a blessing-ceremony in which all relatives participate.”

Avukaya: “If such a relationship is discovered, one slaughters one white chicken and puts the chicken’s blood on the chest (of the lovers), this in order that everything becomes normal. After that, nothing bad will happen.”

³⁴ Lomodong Lako, „The Lokoya in Sudan“, p.109f.