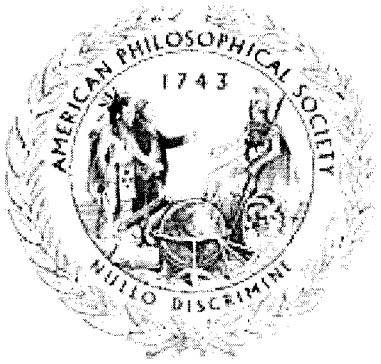

The Ghost of Malinowski in the Southern Sudan: Evans-Pritchard and Ethnographic Fieldwork*

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Though I never had the opportunity to meet Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, many who did know him well smile when they suggest that he was a trickster *par excellence.* He was also a man of paradoxes, claiming, for example, that he wanted to live among the Azande of the Nile-Congo divide because he had read a great deal about them and that he was something of a romantic. He twice refused to interrupt his Azande studies to carry out fieldwork among the Nuer, and finally did so only at the behest of his government. While he lived a modest life in his later years, he arrived at Buckhingham Palace to be knighted in a rented Rolls-Royce (Eggan 1976: 267).

He also stated publicly, and possibly more often in private, that he considered Bronislaw Malinowski to be vulgar and polemical. Conversely, Evans-Pritchard confessed that his passion for ethnography and textual analysis "was inflamed by Malinowski" (Evans-Pritchard 1973b: 10). Throughout his intellectual career as a social anthropologist this dialectical sentiment regarding Malinowski appeared between the lines of Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic contributions. It was less cryptic to others. As Gellner (1981: xxxvi; see also Leach 1980: 24) writes, "suffice it to say that according to rumor, when Malinowski died, Evans-Pritchard confessed himself to be heartbroken and observed that to be deprived of the object of so passionate a hatred was to face an empty life." As Firth (1981: 121) writes, "It is no secret . . . that Evans-Pritchard and Malinowski were at daggers drawn for personal as well as professional reasons, and that Evans-Pritchard did his best to destroy Malinowski's reputation long after his death." Evans-Pritchard was, according to Firth (ibid: 121) and perhaps others who suffered the consequences, "an expert at the glancing blow."

Malinowski is regarded for his valuable contribution to the method and reproduction of ethnographic data, but his theoretical forays have never gained the acceptance he hoped for. Evans-Pritchard too has been called "the greatest ethnographer of all time" (Beidelman 1974: 559). He was, like Malinowski, more concerned with social anthropology as a humane contribution toward understanding the human condition. Exceptions can be made, but in the main Evans-Pritchard's contributions appear in many ways to be meta-theoretical. The primary aim of this essay is to assess Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic contributions and to underscore the influence of Malinowski's work upon them. This was certainly not a consistent element in his work, which instead dwelt for a time on structural functional analysis. Yet later in life, Evans-Prit-

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chard publicly decried the pseudo-scientific status of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's impress on anthropological thought, and returned once more to a genre more typical of Malinowski. As such, my argument is quite uncomplicated. Even while he claimed to have loathed the man in public settings, it is evident that the quality and breadth of his ethnographic contributions were in a significant way the direct manifestation of Malinowski's inspiration upon his thought. This conclusion would receive substantial vindication if, at some point in the future, historians recover fragments of Malinowski's assessment of his informal pupil.[1]

I.

The barest biographical data pertaining to Evans-Pritchard's training, first as a student of history, and later as a social anthropologist, are presented in two of Beidelman's essays (1974a, 1974b; much of the same material is reproduced in Beidelman, 1980; see also Lienhardt 1974; Douglas 1980). A concise summary of his fieldwork is presented in Cunnison and James (1972), He arrived in the Southern Sudan in 1926 having been assured by the colonial government that full cooperation was possible while he pursued his researches among the Azande. At the time, this region of Africa was administered as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan—a name perhaps inspired by Sir Samuel Baker's earlier, immodest claims about sovereignty over the region—though in practical terms, the Southern Sudan was governed under British directives (see Collins 1971). The district commissioner of Zande country gave Evans-Pritchard absolute freedom to work in the district, at his leisure, and with license to investigate whatever he chose (see Cunnison and James 1972: ix), a circumstance the contemporary ethnographer working in the same region might envy.

The results of his first expedition to Zande country provided him with the substantive data for his doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Social Organization of the Azande of the Bhar-el-Ghazal Province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan." There followed another visit to Zanda country in addition to brief surveys of neighboring peoples. In 1930, he "entered" Nuerland for the first time.

In the preceding two decades, Nuer had been the objects of numerous punitive raids led by British commissioners, which resulted in the loss of many native lives as well as livestock. They had learned to be distrustful of many others who arrived in their country from the north, and their experience with Turkish, Persian and Arab slavers had left them understandably hostile to the next cadre of foreigners who would claim to govern them. In the defense of their own interests, the Nuer had been responsible for the death of a number of British officials. In such circumstances, Evans-Pritchard agreed to carry out an ethnographic study of the Nuer, one that had been abandoned earlier by C. G. Seligman and B. Z. Seligman because of ill health. Evans-Pritchard "experienced so many difficulties, however, in particular political suspicion because of recent punitive patrols against the Nuer, that after three and one-half months, he decided to return to the Azande" (Cunnison and James 1972: x). This observation is significant in assessing his Nuer fieldwork, for it contradicts Douglas's recent claim that each fieldwork expedition among Southern Sudanese peoples "was organized so systematically that one aspect of life analyzed in detail contributed to understanding another and another until a consistent picture emerged in the round." Douglas's assertion is doubly suspect as a factual record because the Nuer accorded Evans-Pritchard and his presence extreme disinterest, bordering on open hostility. Since he ultimately agreed to carry out the Nuer research, focusing particularly on their mode

of economic livelihood and political system, he probably shared in his compatriot's desires to raise the flag in the sudd swamps of the Southern Sudan. Elsewhere Evans-Pritchard (1969: x) observed, ". . . certainly the development of social anthropology in England is linked to the spread of our colonial empire and its administrative, missionary and commercial *needs.*" (emphasis added). Later, he informed Godfrey Lienhardt, one of few students who followed his lead in the Southern Sudan, that he was pleased the colonial government which had claimed to establish its presence among the Nuer failed to outlive their resistance toward it (Lienhardt 1974). This is among the many paradoxes which shadow Evans-Pritchard's intellectual and academic history. He hardly mentioned the effects of colonial government upon the Nuer, a stance which parallels Malinowski's tendency to romanticize the character of native life.

A final visit to Azande country accounted for about twenty-two months of field research, and in 1931 he returned again to the Nuer, living in cattle camps along the Nyanding river and later in a camp called Yakwac, also in eastern Nuer country (see Evans-Pritchard 1945). A bout of malaria sent him back to England after five and one-half months in Nuerland, his longest continual visit with these peoples. After two and one-half months travel in Anuak country in 1935 he spent a further seven weeks among the eastern Nuer. Returning from a six week long stay among the Kenya Luo in 1936, Evans-Pritchard came one final time to Nuerland, this time spending seven weeks in the Adok country, west of the Nile. Poor health once again prematurely ended this phase of his Nuer research. On the basis of the published record of his field sites in Nuer country, his travels were largely determined by river courses, and he seems not have lived in a wet season settlement. I have suggested elsewhere that this factor may have significantly influenced his perception of Nuer religious behavior, among other things (Burton 1980). He spent a total of 22 months of intensive research among the Azande and an intermittent period of 10½ months in Nuerland. His Azande and Nuer researches, rather than his shorter forays among the Luo, Ingessana, Meban, Berun and Bongo, account for his renown as an ethnographer, so that these two phases of his research claim special attention in the present context. Chronologically, the Azande work invites the initial assessment.

In addition to the considerable literature that had been published in a variety of languages on the Azande, Evans-Pritchard also had access to a missionary-composed grammar and vocabulary of the language. A careful reading of *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic* reveals that his Azande fieldwork was accomplished in the manner encouraged by Malinowski. By comparative standards he was far more isolated from the outside world in Azande country than was the case among the Nuer. In the former situation, he kept his contacts with representatives of the colonial administration to a minimum. Since he dedicated *The Nuer* to the American-founded mission at Nassir, his dependence on outsiders was rather greater in Nuerland. His attempts at growing Azande tobacco, maize, beans, and other local crops, in addition to his active participation in the techniques of the oracles, indicate that he seriously participated and observed. Mr. P. M. Larkin (1955: 65), then District Commissioner of the district in which Evans-Pritchard resided, recalls that the ethnographer

> was remarkably quick in learning enough Zande to start his interrogations, which he pursued with intense and most conscientious care. . . . His sympathetic approach and friendliness endeared him to all, and his manner was an ideal one for persuading them to tell him anything he wished to know."

The two Britons met socially for the evening at each new moon (Evans-Pritchard 1973a).

In one of his reflective essays on fieldwork Evans-Pritchard (1973b) declared that he had no interest in magic when he arrived in Zande land: since it was a notion that was ever on their minds, however, his ethnographic focus followed suit.[2] Indeed, his second publication on the Azande (1928) was concerned with oracles and magic, and six papers on witchcraft, oracles and magic were put into print prior to the publication of his now long classic monograph on Azande thought (1937). Current anthropological interests in Britain were focused primarily on two phenomena, the nature and classification of "primitive kinship systems" and the nature of religious thought in non-western societies. Malinowski's *Argonauts* was replete with rhetorical statements regarding the latter phenomenon, and the second two parts of his Trobriand trilogy were similarly concerned with magic and supra-human phenomena. Since Evans-Pritchard apparently shared with Malinowski a pronounced disdain of "kinship algebra" one has seriously to question whether or not he seriously considered what Malinowski had to say about non-western systems of thought. In the monograph on Azande magic and witchcraft, Evans-Pritchard acknowledges nothing more than his debt to Malinowski for "the stimulus of his teaching" (Evans Pritchard 1937: vii). This debt had more to do with analysis in general rather than the recognition of the significance of detailed ethnography.

At the University of London, part of Malinowski's responsibilities included teaching a course entitled, "The Mental Outlook of Primitive Man." Leach (1980: 25) reproduced the syllabus for the course:

> Primitive experience and reasoning powers: the nature of primitive knowledge; the roots of early mysticism; Primitive Credulity and the pre-logical savage; anthropological legends to be exploded; the roots of primitive rationalism; the sources of the mystical views and activities of primitive man; the main elements of magico-religious activities and ideas; ceremonial dogma; sacred organization and ethical influence; sociological analysis of mythology; a brief survey of the various theories of primitive religion and magic; the functionalist theory of primitive magic and religion and their relation to primitive knowledge.

The functionalism of the last phase is imperceptibly, if at all, different from the functionalism of the by now patent dogma, "witchcraft beliefs account for individual misfortune." Evans-Pritchard's monograph on Azande witchcraft is as much about the sociology of accountability, or what Malinowski here termed "ethical influence," as it is about the nature and organization of "magico-religious activities and ideas." Though it may have been simply the genre of the times (and Malinowski apparently delighted in the romance of the "savage" [see Payne 1981] as evidenced by the titles of his monographs) *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic* might just as well have been entitled *Azande Rationality,* especially, if as Douglas (1980) would have us believe, Evans-Pritchard was so far ahead of his times. The Cambridge psychologist Bartlett, whom Douglas notes as a dominant inspiration for Evans-Pritchard's analyses, never even takes a cameo role in the account of Azande thought. Like Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard too wanted his own "savages" for theoretical purposes. The remarkable coherence of Azande thought is oddly like the tight functioning of Trobriand trade and politics.

With the aid of Beidelman's (1974) extremely valuable bibliography of his writings, it is plainly evident that Evans-Pritchard's Azande fieldwork resulted in a far greater volume of ethnographic data than was the case with Nuer. To read a statement made late in his life, "I have still published only a portion of my Azande notes taken down during a study begun in 1927" (Evans-Pritchard, cited in Beidelman 1974a). I am inclined to argue that the gross amount of time spent with each people is not itself a

sufficient index to account for the disparity. On this score Johnson (1981: 522) has also observed that Evans-Pritchard's "published Nuer texts amount to only a few hymns and scattered conversations." By his own recollection Evans-Pritchard spent a good deal of time and money publishing Zande texts either through journals or privately. It is remarkable how close some of these studies resemble those Malinowski worked with for Trobrianders. One can also make the argument that Evans-Pritchard was in a very real sense more in control of the situation for fieldwork in Azandeland than he was during his brief visits among the Nuer. On this point, the personal element in his fieldwork is significant. According to Lienhardt (1974: 303).

> His works are I think consistent with [his] character, though of course with much more . . . Yet there are naturally correspondences between him and what he saw in them. In the Azande, he found lively humor, the quick mental reactions, the suspicion and even superstition which he would have admitted to be part of himself. The Azande appealed to his sense of aristocracy, and in a society where it might be death not to have one's wits about one. I think he got more pleasure out of writing his article on *sanza*, Zande double talk, than out of most, delighting as he did in the subtleties, sometimes dangerous subtleties, of human relationships.

The situation described sounds oddly like an Oxford pub, so that either Azande princes and peasants recalled to Evans-Pritchard Oxford dons, or they felt he too fit into their own scheme of things, or, as Malinowski taught, words *are* actions.

II.

The Nuer monographs (1940, 1945, 1951, 1956) have an entirely different quality about them than those he wrote on the Azande, and the differences are readily apparent even to a student of anthropology. In these, he crept away from the Malinowski minutia. The Nuer were seen through a vision of structure and order, whether these entailed segments within a political system or deities within a hierarchical pantheon. As indicated, he published far more texts, whether these were on magical, domestic or historical themes, for the Azande than he did on the basis of his Nuer research. One might suggest rhetorically that the Azande had more things to talk about . . . the Nuer were interested in cattle. Clearly this is an insufficient explanation. Indeed, he argued that as they lacked plastic and visual arts, creativity for the Nuer was expressed in verbal form. A more parsimonious explanation is that Evans-Pritchard's thought had shifted with current fashion. The qualitative and quantitative difference in the published ethnographic record seems to me to lie in a dramatic shift in emphasis from Malinowskian functionalism to the structural analysis inspired by Radcliffe-Brown. The shift in focus reflects another paradox in his professional work. The latter author he praised (see Evans-Pritchard 1952) then later disavowed (Evans-Pritchard 1970); the former was given implicit praise in one of Evans-Pritchard's final publications: "I find the usual account of field-research so boring as so often to be unreadable—kinship systems, political systems, ritual systems, every sort of system, structure and function, but little flesh and blood" (Evans-Pritchard 1973b: 12). This is a striking confession for one who had concluded his study of the Nuer with the following observation:

> The science [of anthropology] will make little progress on this low level of abstraction, if it be considered abstraction at all, and it is necessary for further advance to use the concepts to denote relations, defined in terms of social situations, and relations between these relations (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 266).

It is worthwhile to cite a recent observation of Fortes in some detail.

> Evans-Pritchard states in his review of my *Dynamics of Clanship* in the Bulletin of the School of African Studies, that the suggestion of how to handle the data of Nuer descent groups came from a conversation with Radcliffe-Brown in 1931. As I have recorded elsewhere I was present on this occasion. Evans-Pritchard was describing his Nuer observations, whereupon Radcliffe-Brown said, as he stood in front of the fireplace: "My dear Evans-Pritchard, its perfectly simple, that's a segmentary lineage system, and you'll find a very good account of it by a man called Gifford." Thereupon Radcliffe-Brown gave us a lecture on Gifford's analysis of the Tonga system. So . . . the initial inspiration for what later turned out to be the Nuer model came from Radcliffe-Brown (Fortes 1979: viii).

I have already drawn attention to the descriptive/analytic contrast which is evident in the Azande and Nuer monographs, respectively, and have suggested that this shift in emphasis closely parallels a change in focus from function to structure. Something further should be indicated about the context of the Nuer fieldwork: the shift in emphasis indicates the significance of context in the collection of ethnographic data (see also Cunnison 1966: vi for a comparable circumstance).

Evans-Pritchard's field research among the Nuer was limited to a total of ten and one-half months, stretched out over a period of around six years. He wrote (1940: 12), "I have obtained in Zandeland more information in a few days than I obtained in Nuerland in so many weeks." Whereas the Azande apparently treated him with courtesy and respect, the Nuer (for good reason?) were distrustful of his presence and proved to be far less cooperative or dependable "informants." They lied to him and chided him for believing what they had told him. He felt he had to flirt with Nuer in order to collect information, and was not infrequently uncertain of the veracity of what he had been told. This is not to imply that his masterly achievements as an ethnographer of the Nuer are to be questioned or compromised: one simply has the impression that he led a more comfortable and productive (in anthropological terms) life among the Azande than in Nuerland. Still, he wrote,

> Because I had to live in such close contact with the Nuer I knew them more imtimately than the Azande, about whom I am able to write a much more detailed account. Azande would not allow me to live as one of themselves; Nuer would not allow me to live otherwise . . . Azande treated me as superior; Nuer as an equal (1940: 15).

Once again, the paradoxical, if not contradictory manner of his thought is seen. If one is an equal, then it can be presumed that the ethnographer will be treated as such. As a result, the latter citation requires emendation. Earlier in the same book (p. 11) he notes, "When I entered a cattle camp it was not only as a stranger but as an enemy, and they seldom tried to conceal their disgust at my presence, refusing to answer my greetings and even turning away when I addressed them." This could be cited as an instance of his own projection, but it is more important to note that this is a most peculiar form of equality.[3] Under conditions of such profound duress it is remarkable that he was able to gain the information he actually did. Surely his trilogy of Nuer politics, kinship and religion bears testimony to his perseverance. The future biographer will have to reconcile the fact of his ethnographic achievement, the most difficult of field situations, with his observation "I would say that I learnt more about the nature of God and our human predicament from the Nuer than I ever learnt at home" (Evans-Pritchard 1973b: 5).

Some have argued that his entry into the Catholic Church in 1947 was reflected in his perception and description of Nuer religious thought and behavior, and that he translated Nuer thought in Old Testament terms (see Beidelman 1974a; Douglas 1980: 89). Since *Nuer Religion* was his final significant

publication on these peoples, and was published twenty years after he had last visited them, it can be suggested that this was his most scholastically mature work on the Nuer, and that his own personality was closest to the surface of the printed word. To support this interpretation, his belief that one's own sentiments about religion would inevitably color one's observations on another people's must be examined:

> The non-believer seeks some theory—biological, psychological, or sociological—which will explain the illusion; the believer seeks rather to understand the manner in which a people conceives of a reality and their relations to it . . . On this point I find myself in agreement with Schmidt in his confutation of Renan: If religion is essentially of the inner life, it follows that it can only be truly grasped only from within. But beyond a doubt, this can be done better by one in whose inward consciousness an experience of religion plays a part. There is but too much danger that the other [i.e. the non-believer] will talk of religion as a blind man might of colors, or one totally devoid of ear, of a beautiful musical composition (Evans-Pritchard 1965: 121).

It is thus of considerable significance that only a single chapter of *Nuer Religion* is devoted to a consideration of the relations between cosmology and social organization, and that his emphasis on the *individual*—in sacrifice, sin and expiation—leads to the conclusion that Nuer religion is ultimately an interior state, one that can be assessed by a theologian rather than a social anthropologist. With this conclusion, Radcliffe-Brown's previous influence fades forever into the background of Evans-Pritchard's anthropological contributions. In open contradiction to the structural-functional dogma that religion provides the social glue of human groups, Evans-Pritchard asserted that it was western sociological thought, rather than the"primitive," that transformed society into God.

* * *

If Evans-Pritchard felt "at home" among the Azande, because of their accessibility to him and their familiar, playful use of language, then among the Nuer he must have experienced an ephemeral participation in the truly exotic, being very close to them in physical space but distantly removed from them in personal terms. He was like Malinowski, standing on the shore of an island, though at the same time very much unlike the mentor. Evans-Pritchard was able to live among the Nuer for only short intervals. It is true that he owned a small herd of cattle, but only as if to say, "I'll do this, if you will let me be one of you." In Azande country he was an ever-present respected resident. In Nuerland he was a temporary sojourner, seeing a world he was almost denied the opportunity to participate in. During his military service and research in Libya, he apparently experienced a similar distance from that which lay in front of him, only in this case, he reveled in the opportunity to live through a split identity. "My happiest days have been in deserts with a couple of Arabs, our camels, and no footsteps but our own" (Evans-Pritchard 1973a: 237). In Payne's (1981: 438) terms, much the same can be said for Malinowski, who escaped "not to a fantasy but to a reality which could serve as fantasy." Evans-Pritchard's brother Thomas found solitude in insanity—he was a schizophrenic. Evans-Pritchard found solitude in the exotic, in a profession that demands a schizophrenic-like denial of self.

Recent commentators on Evans-Pritchard's work agree that his methodological and ethnographic contributions were of great magnitude, and that "all anthropologists owe at least an indirect debt" to him (Gluckman 1972: x). Gellner similarly writes he was a "superb practicioner" of the kind of fieldwork needed to advance social theory, and that he achieved an "impressive quality of fieldwork" (1981: xiii). According to Singer and Street (1972: ix) Evans-Pritchard was also responsible for refining and developing the methodology of participant observation. Few could contest Cunnison and James's (1972: ix): "Evans-Pritchard's

fieldwork record is in itself an outstanding achievement." Could any deny that these observations pertain equally well to Malinowski?

III.

He was by common accord a perceptive ethnographer. However, time has a way of increasing legendary proportions (see also e.g. Kenny n.d.). The cult of Evans-Pritchard has increasingly been called into question by essays which reconsider substantive issues reported in his ethnographies. Extremely valuable essays, such as those by Gough (1971), Southall (1976) and Johnson (1981) duly recognize the wealth of data Evans-Pritchard collected, yet pose basic questions about the interpretation of this record. The situation is reminiscent of Firth's (1958) edited volume of Malinowski's work. If he was such a fine ethnographer, why do so many in the "re-interpretation of Nuer ethnography industry" argue he got it wrong? A process of reassessment is essential in the development of any academic discipline. Recent essays such as Beidelman's (1981) do more than this however. A few brief illustrations may be cited. Beidelman (ibid) questions the validity of Evans-Pritchard's translation of the Nuer concept of "sin" (upon which the better part of *Nuer Religion* rests) and argues that his understanding carried a strong western bias, thereby misrepresenting African social experience. Johnson is likewise critical of Evans-Pritchard for the perpetuation of an ill-conceived and misinformed stereotype of "the fighting Nuer." More candidly, another author levels a severe criticism against Evans-Pritchard's analysis of the sacred character of the *reth* or "divine king" of the Shilluk:

> This review of the historical and contemporary ethnographic data on Shilluk divine kingship suggests that we are confronted with a complex political institution. The confusion surrounding our knowledge of this office stems from interpretations derived from simplistic *theoretical propositions* (emphasis added; similar criticisms were of course typical of Malinowski's notion of 'function'). Crude dichotomies, lingering evolutionary and diffusionary notions which artificially divorce cultural phenomena, which in practice are inextricably entwined and constantly readjusting to other social conditions, are of little assistance. The argument proposed here may not be as parsimonious as others, but it adheres more closely to the historical and cultural factors (Arens 1979: 179).[4]

A reference to history raises another dilemma in this review of Evans-Pritchard's fieldwork and its substantive results. In *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* Evans-Pritchard fully realized that "epistemological problems posed by historical studies closely resemble those confronting a comparative sociologist or anthropologist" (Beidelman 1974a: 563). Indeed, Evans-Pritchard spoke of history and social anthropology as disciplines that were *indissociables.* In Beidelman's (ibid) terms the Sanusi monograph is

> . . . a classic monograph on a North African Islamic brotherhood which combines the social perceptions of an anthropologist trained in the analysis of the religion and politics of pastoralists with the study of events in temporal depth generally utilized only by historians.

Of the Azande Evans-Pritchard (1937: 19) wrote, "If I have paid no particular attention to [their] history this is not because I consider it unimportant but because I consider it so important that I desire to record it in detail elsewhere." This took a bit of time, but the result, published in 1971, was a 444 page monograph titled *The Azande: History and Political Institutions.* Oddly, the Nuer, whom he once characterized as living in a manner that recalled "a classic picture of savagery" (1940: 40) were said to have no history. Sacks (1979) offers a most convincing rebuttal. She writes (ibid: 437), "Examining Nuer and Dinka history suggests that received wisdom about the organiza-

tional and military superiority of the Nuer is misleading." Basing her argument on a materialist interpretation of social process she continues, "Western Dinka were decimated by ivory and slave traders while Nuer took refuge or were pushed into a mosquito-laden swamp. Both groups underwent organizational changes under pressures of capitalist penetration" (ibid). One must assume Evans-Pritchard had access to the sources Sacks draws upon. His failure to place the Nuer of 1930 into a broader ethnological context is consistent with his tendency to romanticize Nuer social and religious life. Like Malinowski (see Payne 1981) and many others of his generation, Evans-Pritchard also paid scant attention to women's roles in social reproduction.[5] One must remember that *The Nuer* was his Radcliffe-Brown book, and the greater part of his writing paid scant attention to history. Paradox once more: Evans-Pritchard (1971b) published a scathing critique on the misuse of historical materials in anthropological analysis, leveling especially strong criticisms against his "teacher," Seligman.

IV

A number of observations on aspects of Evans-Pritchard's fieldwork among the Azande and Nuer merit re-emphasis. Most striking to this reader of his voluminous work is the explicit, dialectical shift in his anthropological *qua* theoretical focus, namely, the initial inspiration by Malinowski, to a virtual disavowal of ethnographic specificity in *The Nuer*[6] and a final shift back toward the significance of the individual in social analysis. In his preface to Evans-Pritchard's posthumous history of anthropological thought, Gellner indicates that he was deeply ambivalent, indeed worried, about the state of the anthropological paradigm. His strongest praise was saved for Durkheim, Mauss, and Hertz, whose own theories are difficult to assess because of their metaphysical nature. A similar ambivalence is evident in his most Catholic confessions late in his life about theory, especially the Radcliffe-Brownian sort (see especially Evans-Pritchard 1981; 1970: 704; cf. also Leach 1976). Kuper (1980: 118) likewise writes, ". . . while in the thirties and forties Evans-Pritchard was the leading British advocate of Radcliffe-Brown and his 'scientific', comparative sociology, he later turned bitterly against him".

Seen within a common matrix, these observations have some relevance to his virtual abandonment of Nuer studies after 1956 and his resumption of the analysis and publication of Azande ethnography which was, by his own admission, inspired in the first place by Malinowski. After 1956, he published *seventy articles* and *three monographs* on the Azande. Among the articles were a series of eleven small monographs of Azande texts published privately by the Oxonian Press. His single publication on the Nuer in the post-1956 period was a short piece on them for the Encyclopedia Britannica. To this reader, it seems his affinity for the Azande had some deep, if difficult to define, association with what he had gained from Malinowski. In his preface to *Man and Woman among the Azande* (1973c: 11) he wrote, "Before saying anything more I must pay my respects to B. Malinowski, who was the first to impress on me the importance of recording texts in the vernacular among primitive and illiterate peoples." Perhaps at this point in his life Evans-Pritchard realized that his initial assessment of Malinowski had stood the test of time. Similar mention of Radcliffe-Brown in his later work is notable only in its absence. Rather, the book of Azande texts on women and men calls to mind Malinowski's opus, *Coral Gardens and their Magic.*

As might be expected in the case of such a strong love-hate relationship, Evans-Pritchard had remarkably little to say in print about the nature of his early association

with Malinowski, and it is worthwhile recalling that Evans-Pritchard did not contribute an essay in the critical volume edited by Firth (1958). This omission underscores his ambivalent feelings toward Malinowski. Evans-Pritchard was equally adverse to having his name associated with his mentor in the *festchrift* for Seligman (see Firth 1981). Together with Eggan, however, he collected, edited, and wrote a preface for Radcliffe-Brown's *Structure and Function in Primitive Society.* Ironies and paradoxes, indeed. His disenchantment late in life with social theory, reflected in his insistence that anthropology, like history, is an art, underscored his religious conviction that humans act with free will as moral persons rather than as empty boxes occupying slots in a social structure. In this light, it is no surprise that his final ethnographic monograph, *Man and Woman among the Azande,* offers a forum for individuals to take center stage, preventing a clear view of the back-drop of social structure into which they "fit." How contrary to Radcliffe-Brown's (1952: 192) insistence that "The actual relations of Tom, Dick and Harry or the behavior of Jack and Jill may go down in our field notebooks and may provide illustrations for a general description. But what we need for scientific purposes is an account of the form of the structure."

One senses images of *sanza* in his preface to his last Azande monograph in the form of a dialogue with the ghost of Malinowski. Here he wrote (1973c: 14),

> I have translated the word [*sanza*] as 'double talk'; but there is much more to it than that. We all hide our thoughts behind words but it seemed to me . . . that a Zande very often is deliberately evasive and obscure in his talk in order to say what he wants to say without actually saying it, even to the point of saying the opposite of what he means. This has sometimes made translation of the texts difficult.

That is, with minor alterations in personal nouns, the passage might be cited as an indication of his recognition of Malinowski's pervasive influence upon his ethnography. Emphasizing the power of words and the essential relevance of semantics for modern anthropology, Malinowski aroused a stir within the small circle of his anthropological contemporaries. He envisioned himself as a prophet. Evans-Pritchard responded to the call, but without the fan-fare and the expected curtain calls. In contrast to that brought on by Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard's revolution in anthropology was a silent one. In Pocock's (1961: 72) words, Evans-Pritchard's refusal to make explicit the shift in emphasis "had certain tactical advantages. No storm blew up which might have obscured the presentation under a cloud of dust, a sense of continuity was preserved and many younger anthropologists were able to see the deeper relevance of language to their studies" (see also Henson 1974: 107–114 for a related discussion).

The foregoing comments provide an outline to be fleshed out and emended, if need be, by someone who knew Evans-Pritchard personally. I trust enough has been said to indicate his debt to Malinowski, especially with regard to his early and later work on the Azande. It is equally clear that a Radcliffe-Brownian seal of approval is evident in the pages of his studies on Nuer politics, kinship and marriage. I am inclined to argue that when he abandoned his Nuer studies in 1956, he also erased this mediating phase of his academic career: The Nuer and Radcliffe-Brown were gone. It is thus easier to understand why he had so little to say about the very many essays written second hand by other anthropologists on the general theme of the reinterpretation of Nuer ethnography. With the resumption of his work on the Azande, much of it dealing with the translation and publication of texts, he may have been haunted by the inspiration of Malinowski. He is reported to have said that "consistency is surely the worst of all vices in science" (Kuper 1980: 118), though a suf-

ficient reason for his near schizophrenic vacillation requires a more deeply psychological assessment. The biography of this most interesting man, in the meanwhile, ought to be reclaimed from hagiography.

Beidelman (1974a) notes that to Evans-Pritchard, ethnography was the true measure of one's worth as an anthropologist. By this standard, he must have thought a great deal of his own professional achievements, and of those of the ghost that followed him in the Southern Sudan: Malinowski.

NOTES

1. It is true that Evans-Pritchard referred to Seligman on occasion as "my teacher." Malinowski was on the faculty of the London School of Economics, under Seligman (with whom he shared an office), when Evans-Pritchard first pursued anthropological training at the same institution. While he later taught at both Cambridge and Oxford, his graduate training was at the L.S.E. What I wish to emphasize is Evans-Pritchard's own acknowledgment that he *learned* more about anthropology from Malinowski. For example, Evans-Pritchard wrote (1973b: 242), ". . . I have to confess—I think that is the right word—to having on my first visits to the Sudan taken around with me callipers and a height-measuring rod. I did this to please my teacher Professor Seligman. I have always regarded, and still regard, such measurements as lacking scientific value, even being almost meaningless" (see also Evans-Pritchard 1971b: 152–174). How different, indeed, from his emphasis on the importance of collecting "native texts." It is also worth noting that Evans-Pritchard did not consider Seligman in his posthumous history of anthropological thought, whereas both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown were given at least modest attention.
2. Professor David Hicks, a former student of Evans-Pritchard, informs me "He [Evans-Pritchard] told me Seligman had informed him that the Azande practiced magical techniques which would be interesting to study, especially for Evans-Pritchard, who was very much involved with Levy-Bruhl's work on primitive mentality." Hicks also informs me that he understood Evans-Pritchard to have thought that "the Azande magical system would be an ideal test case for assessing Levy-Bruhl's as well as Frazer's writing." Malinowski also stressed that his interest in anthropology had been ignited by *The Golden Bough*. On this basis, Evans-Pritchard's assertion that he had "no interest in magic" might be cited as a vestige of romantic retrospection.
3. No doubt *any* ethnographer in this region of Africa at this time would have been treated with the same disdain. The Nuer, like any other people who lived through similar circumstances, had good reason to show contempt toward outsiders, especially those of British heredity.
4. It is a matter of some consideration that the author of this essay, at the time of publication, had achieved no fluency in the Shilluk language, a competence Evans-Pritchard insisted was an essential prerequisite to making informed ethnographic observations. Conversely, since Evans-Pritchard insisted that a basic method of social anthropology is comparison, it can be argued that this goal is unattainable, since no individual could ever master all human languages.
5. It is unfortunate to note that Evans-Pritchard (1973b: 7) went so far as to assert, "I doubt whether it is an advantage for an anthropologist to be accompanied by his wife in the field . . . However, I imagine that the man with a wife in the field gets at least better food."
6. See also Kaberry (1958: 88), ". . . in the work of Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard documentation is reduced to a minimum and rarely placed in a ramifying context." On a closely related matter Fortes (1979: vii) writes, "Of course Evans-Pritchard has not escaped criticism, in the past, for inconsistencies in his Nuer ethnography and for bold extrapolations on the theoretical side. Nor was he unaware of these limitations. His attitude toward them was perhaps well indicated by his reaction to my first book on the Tallensi. In his kindly way, he once chided me for its painstaking detail, pointing out that the essence of structure was thus apt to be swamped in the minutiae."

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