Africans of Two Worlds:
The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan.
FRANCIS MADING DENG.
FORWARDED BY: ANDREW YOUNG.
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Africans of two worlds is a unique anthropological work in which the author introduces the current political problems of South-North relations in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan. The book conceives these relations in the light of the Addis Ababa accord of 1972 which had granted autonomy to the Southern Region within the united Sudan after seventeen years of civil war. The two worlds referred to are the African culture and the Arabic culture represented by the Nilotes of the South and the Arab tribes of the North respectively. The author's premise is that in spite of their cultural, linguistic and religious differences these two worlds have much in common and need not be at odds. Thus, we can refer to the whole Sudan as Afro-Arab.

To provide a wide range of chiefly opinion among the Dinka, Deng presents the results of interviews conducted with 16 Southern chiefs in addition to material from his other publications about the Dinka. In terms of traditionalism the Dinka chiefs are related to God and identified with the spiritual world. The Dinka chiefs have to regulate the forces of nature supported by the colonial rule or the national governments to fulfill certain duties which lie outside the familial relations, such as the collection of taxes, the implementation of the indirect rule, the report of the revolts, etc... Deng alleges the chiefs to be spiritual configurational personalities, whereas some chiefs have held their offices against the will of their tribesmen during the civil war. Secondly, the author sees the structural paralllis between Northern and Southern societies (mosotheism and creation mythology, the lineage system and social organization) while they are culturally different. Thus, he contradicts himself by criticizing the high value of bridewealth among the Dinka which he maintains is associated with ethnocentric attitudes towards outsiders and secondly, by criticizing the age-set system as a vital military economic, social and psychological institution which creates locally oriented loyalties which simultaneously lead to disintegration with other Sudanese tribes. Thirdly, Dr. Deng collected unqualified material to support his arguments about the Dinka origin. The oral history told by the 16 Dinka-chiefest represents their life history or the life history of their grandfathers and not the history of the whole tribe or the Southerners. Through their participation in that history they charge it with their interests which sometimes contradicts the wider Dinka and even the author's point view above the South-North relations. Fourthly, it would have been better if the author had interviewed some Arab chiefs to provide a comprehensive cross-cultural study instead of his one-sided evaluation through their divine powers so that the total cosmology would be controlled by them. Additionally they are the first to confront the strangers who threaten the traditional order. Hence it is the chief who represents arguments for unity and separation while he is that who is likely to enrich himself with the merit of adventurous ideas to promote his supremacy over his subjects.

The Dinka interaction with outsiders is divided into three phases: Pre-Condondinium which the author divides into Turks-Egyptian rule (1521-1851) and the Mahdist state (1885-1898). The second phase is the coxodominium (Anglo-Egyptian rule—1898-1956). The third phase is independence during which the country witnessed the civil war. These three phases are characterized by the North's domination over the South.
Deby expects the proposed plans for developing the south will prevent future return to the hostilities of the past and it will not lead to separation from the North as some Southerns may expect. However, he thinks integration should be based upon mutual equality, cultural consideration, political autonomy and economic development for the South as well as the North. Deng concludes that the acceptance of unity in cultural and ethnic diversity is the cornerstone of the present South-North relations.

Although I appreciate his positive approach towards unity and integration, I have these objections to some of Deng’s oversimplifications. Not only in this volume, but in all of his publications Deng has introduced the Dinka chiefly opinion and knowledge as a distillation of all the knowledge and aspirations of their people as a whole. He neglects the conflict of the interests of the chiefs.

By analysing the existing relations in the light of the past and the present, from a cross cultural point of view, while extracting the basis of inequality between the South and the North, by relating the regional to the national, we can give better grounds to build a nation.

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