

A third factor which encouraged others to evaluate the ethnography must be attributed to the fact that, as a rule, Evans-Pritchard took little public notice of the subsequent reanalysis of his work. The only exception to this were his brief rejoinders in "the birds are twins" dialogue, in which Evans-Pritchard took issue with Firth's (1966) and Littlejohn's (1970) interpretations of this now-famous Nuer axiom. Essentially Evans-Pritchard's response was that only someone who had been among the Nuer, knew their language, and had a command of all the relevant literature was in a position to interpret such a complex issue (Evans-Pritchard 1966: 398 and 1970a: 110). Thus, by his more characteristic reticence, Evans-Pritchard gave others *carte blanche* to hone their wits on the results of his field research.⁴

Finally, in this context, the seventeen-year civil war which raged in the Sudan from 1955 to 1972 effectively precluded further research in the Southern Region during the heyday of support for African studies. Since this unfortunate event made fieldwork impossible, both established figures and neophytes conducted their investigations from afar. Now that the southern Sudan is again open to research, a fresh impetus to Nilotic (see Burton 1981a) and Nuer studies can be expected.

These conditions provided the fortuitous opportunity for the initial spate of reanalyses which reproduced a second generation of the same, and then the inevitable erudite disputations and controversies as various anthropologists hurled chapter and verse at each other from the sacred texts in the search for Nuer verities (see Arens and Burton 1975; Beidelman 1976). In spite of these occasional bouts of academic sterility, the overall results have been fruitful. The combined end products have also taken an easily recognizable form.

First, there are those essays which reconsider anthropological chestnuts such as kinship and marriage from a different perspective (Gough 1971; Glickman 1971). Second, there are those publications which reanalyze the material as the result of newly defined problems, such as the relationship between the sexes (Singer 1973; Hutchinson 1980), or the significance of ethnicity, exemplified by numerous works (Glickman 1972 and 1974; Newcomer 1972 and 1973; MacDermot 1972; Riches 1973; Southall 1977; Burton 1981a).

A third, and by far the most significant, collection of reinterpretation encompasses an ongoing commentary on the Nuer political system, with particular reference to political leadership. Although Evans-Pritchard's (1940a) exposition of Nuer political relations was initially hailed as a "landmark in the scientific study of social organization" (Forde 1941: 374) and

⁴ In a personal communication, Professor T. O. Beidelman (1981) notes that Evans-Pritchard commented on his first two reanalyses (Beidelman 1966 and 1968), and although appreciative had some misgivings about certain features of the interpretation.