

Empire and the Nuer: Sources on the Pacification of the Southern Sudan, 1898-1930 by Douglas H. Johnson. Oxford University Press, 2016, 350 pp. ISBN: 9780197265888, Hardback, \$115.00.

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In 2017 India, formally the jewel in Great Britain's imperial crown, will have known seventy years of independence. Similar milestones are also true for other colonial holdings in recent years. Kenya celebrated half a century of free rule in 2013, with Uganda having achieved the same distinction the year prior. Hence, we are forced to confront an undeniable truth, that within a short while all living memory of the colonial period will have passed. Yet, it could be argued that discussion of Britain's colonial heritage has never been more heated. The protests which surrounded a statue to Cecil Rhodes at University of Oxford's Oriel College, and the ongoing compensation claims from alleged former detainees during the Mau Mau Emergency in Kenya, demonstrate that the British Empire still holds a prominent role within political and social discourse in the modern world. Therefore, it is within this climate that a monograph such as that produced by Douglas H. Johnson is so timely and welcome.

Empire and the Nuer: Sources on the Pacification of the Southern Sudan, 1898-1930 is a deeply useful text for all those who work on the topic of North Eastern Africa. Rather than an analytical piece, the monograph is a collection of various primary sources which cover the major events of the British efforts against the Nuer people. This event is particularly significant for the contributions of E. E. Evans-Pritchard, a speech by whom is used as the monograph's epilogue.¹ An anthropologist, and later Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford, Evans-Pritchard was engaged by the Sudanese government in producing a study of the Nuer people, with his work being amongst the first ethnographic studies of its kind. While today it may be the newest country in the continent of Africa, the history of South Sudan is a long and troubled one, from this initial "pacification" by the British, and through two civil wars, before finally seceding in 2011. By Johnson's own admission, the tumultuous nature of South Sudanese history from the second half of the twentieth century onwards may mean that there are those who feel that events from the turn of the century hold little relevance to today. In actuality, there are works which do tackle these later events and specifically the experiences of the Nuer people, for example, Hutchinson's *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State*, and Falge's *The Global Nuer: Transnational Life-Worlds, Religious Movements and War*.²

Comprised of thirty items, including colonial reports and interviews with Gaawar and Dinka peoples, Johnson's piece helps to further develop existing dialogues in Condominium historiography.

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¹ While Evans-Pritchard would publish extensively on the Nuer people, his trilogy of monographs would present perhaps his most significant contribution, specifically: *The Nuer. A Description of the Modes of Livelihoods and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford, 1940), *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford, 1951), and *Nuer Religion* (Oxford, 1956); See Document 30.

² S. E. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Berkley, 1996); C. Falge, *The Global Nuer: Transnational Life-Worlds, Religious Movements and War* (Cologne, 2016).

Previously there had been an emphasis placed on how it was the personalities of the colonial administrators in such settings which dictated foreign policy, for example the work of Collins and Daly.³ Yet, Johnson seems to wish to highlight a differing factor, specifically the motivations of these individuals. He explains that such works do not fully appreciate how significant these value sets were, and the influence they had in potentially shaping actions. Of course, this shouldn't be construed as the monograph being presented as a definitive anthropology of imperial administration of Sudanese territory, something that Johnson never states it is. Instead, he explains, "...a textual critique of the official record can uncover both the values and sentiments of administrators and administration, just as a textual critique of ethnographic writing can reveal the theoretical biases of what was once presented as objective anthropology" (p. xxxiii). Therefore, the monograph can be better described as a progression of literature that surrounds colonial officials within an imperial Sudanese setting, and a further addition to Johnson's extensive writings on North Eastern Africa.

The sources that are contained within the monograph do help to give some impression of the various conflicting motivations that existed in the colonial community with regards to how the administration of Sudan should be undertaken. Johnson notes that there was seemingly an ongoing dichotomy of tactic in relation to governorship of the territory, shifting between the use of force and appeasement, or as the author puts it, "...aggressive and conciliatory approaches" (p. xxxii). The documents included by Johnson do help to articulate this conceptual discussion, with various items demonstrating the pursuance of one specific school. For example, Document 5, a report by Captain H. H. Wilson from the 10th March, 1905, shows a clear display of aggression, with Wilson sending a message to Deng Lanka in which he accuses the prophet of being a *bint*, Arabic for girl (p. 30). By contrast, in Document 7 we see an effort to improve relations with the same individual through more cordial means. This document, a report from the 1st March, 1907, and produced by Major G. E. Matthews, details the result of a meeting with the prophet Deng Lanka, during which various gifts were presented to him. As noted in the report, "[i]n setting out this present, Diu was induced to appreciate the fact that it was no mere deed of gift from man to man, requiring reciprocal favour from him, but was a symbol of Government's good will and protection, with the expectation from him in return of definite and loyal service" (p. 57).

Ultimately, this piece will be invaluable to any student of Southern Sudan or North Eastern African history. While it is true that this territory's past has been deeply eventful, this should in no way detract from the significance of the turn of the century period, or the usefulness of such a monograph, especially in the current socio-political climate that exists towards Britain's colonial memory. Curiously, no other place would a work like this be more appreciated than in Sudan, where there has been a specific attention attached to previous historical literature. Johnson himself amusingly explains, "[w]hen I was gathering evidence on South Sudan's borders in 2007 a civil servant in Bentiu produced an extract from one of Coriat's reports, which he said he had found in a 'very old book', unaware that I had edited it" (p. ix).

³ R. O. Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956* (London, 1983); M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile. The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934* (Cambridge, 1986).