

The Discourse on the Origin of the terms "Naath" and "Nuer"

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Introduction

The two terms are used interchangeably by the Nuer in their social life but Nuer is commonly used term than the Naath by the foreigners and young people. The government of South Sudan uses the term Nuer to represent the tribe and it has been part of the records including the National Identification cards and the National Passports. Within the Nuer community, Naath is known to be the name that signifies the people who were later to be called Nuer. Both terms carry with them significant meaning (see discussion on the term Nuer and Naath below).

I wrote this essay to define the concept of the terms 'Naath' and the 'Nuer' and their sanction centuries of usage within the periods of migration many years from now, which is believed to be related to the journey from ancient to Koat Lich (currently Unity State in the republic of South Sudan). New documented and undocumented evidences have emerged that strongly linked both terms to creation and practices that could at this moment lead to usage of the term Nuer to either use it positively or negatively in which it has been referred to be a contamination or sin. Closely linking these two terms to the Naath ancestors will lead us to the understanding of the origin of humanity and the past life of our distance ancestors. We are told that Nuer is the latest invention from the elders of the Naath community. For the younger generation to keep the laws (Nguot) in their mind, the term replaced Naath slowly until many knows only Nuer instead of Naath. Contamination as it seems created the basis of the agreement when the term was generated by the group of elders at Kuer-Kuong. It seems the Naath are losing out their origin while forgetting who they were.

The discourse on Naath has been tied to the creation of the world and theologians argued that it was the same language that was

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used by the Adam, Noah, Nimrod and Cush until most Nilotic branched off from the main stem of language. There are indications that shows it was one of the oldest language that ever survived. As Naath and Nuer being part of the discourse, it's being categorized as part of the Nilotic language in which they share the same category with the Western Nilotic group which is spoken by the people who are inhabiting the Upper Nile basin and its tributaries. Thok-Naath has more similarities to the Dinka (Jieng), Shilluk (Chollo), Anyuak, Luo, Acholi, Buor, Belanda, Pari, Lango and Jur who are currently occupying Bhar el Ghazel, Equatoria and part of Upper Nile basin¹. Finally, there are conclusive statements coming out of the peopled researched on the status of the term Nuer and most of them seems not to be happy with the usage of the term. They instead preferred to revered back to the term Naath which should maintain its position as the name of the tribe.

Discourse on the term Naath

It is an ethnic sense that we must read the term Naath as it is referring to the Nuer of today who are found in South Sudan and Ethiopia. According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology government of South Sudan,

“the Nuer called themselves Naath, meaning human beings, and they are one of the biggest ethnic groups in South Sudan and western Ethiopia. In South Sudan, they live mostly in Unity State and the Upper Nile Province. They are located around the junction of the Nile River and the Bhar el Ghazel and Sobat River and along the Sobat across the border into Ethiopia”²

The concept of the term is believed to have an origin, which dates back to the beginning of creation. Most

of the Naath people who are in Sudan today know that the term has been in existence for millions of years and it has been in an association to Ran. It has an origin with creation of mankind believed to be linked to Adam and Eve that were placed in the Garden of Eden, given the term as it is applied to the entire mankind. The only missing link is that there were no documented records that are available at the moment for people to see. The oral traditions of most Nilotic people were undocumented and resulted into the loss of precious information.

Any discussion of mankind is linked to Adam who was the first person created by God and that is

The term Naath is a plural form for all mankind; its singular form is Ran (human)

according to the bible and Quran, the holy texts of Christians and Muslims. Adam is a Hebrew word meaning ‘to be red’ and this was associated to the human skin color. Actually, the color of the soil in Mesopotamia valley in which

Garden of Eden was believed to have been located, the soil type is black. Adam was created black and this is the reason Hebrew stating the meaning of Adam ‘to be red’, wanting it to change from Black to Red colour, which is the current skin color of the Asians. In Akkadian language Adammu means ‘to make’. This could be referring to the soil that was molded to make Adam. In the bible, Adam was the first human being created by God and placed in the Garden of Eden.

The term Naath is a plural form for all mankind; its singular form is Ran (human). The other terms include the ‘Ram mi ran’ which is loosely translated as ‘true human’, this lead us to the plural form of it, which is Nei tin Naath (true human beings). The UNESCO General History of Africa, a remarkable contribution on the term Nahas (Naath) was revealed on its ancient genesis. They stated that:

It is a remarkable circumstance that the ancient Egyptians should never have had

¹ Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Government of South Sudan (2014). A Concise History of South Sudan New and Revised Edition. Edited by Anders Breidlid, Avelino Androga Said & Astrid Kristine Breidlid

² Bid p. 77

the idea of applying these qualificative to the Nubians and other population of Africa to distinguish them from themselves. The Egyptians used the expression to distinguish the Nubians; and Nahas is the name of a people, with no colour connotation in Egypt. It is a deliberate mistranslation to render it as

“...In fact, their true name is not Nuer, but Naas or Nahas, which is the term by which the Egyptians designated the Nubians and other Blacks of Africa”.

Negro as is done in almost all present-day publication³.

Here, the writer was referring to the genesis of the term mankind, which is associated to all

racess, and this is what Nahas or Naath mean. In this case, Egyptians were referring it to the black populations including the Nubians.

Here is what Senegalese Egyptologist Cheikh Anto Diop says about Naath in his book, “...In fact, their true name is not Nuer, but Naas or Nahas, which is the term by which the Egyptians designated the Nubians and other Blacks of Africa”⁴.

It is safe to say that since the invasion of Egypt by the Arabs in the seventh century AD⁵, the term Naath was in existence and used intensively reflecting the colour of the people who were inhabiting the land of the Egypt. The category of the people we know who once lived in Egypt and some of the Blacks that lives at the borders and inside Sudan are still being known with the name Naath reflecting the first usage. Pronunciation could be different yet the meaning remains the same.

The book of Old Testament of the Hebrew Bible tells us about the origin of the universe, in a sense that God creation was done chronologically. He

took his creation in steps making sure that every day from the seven days, He created different things in different days. When he was making his creation, He had a purpose on the role of everything he created. The main focus on his creation was the Garden of Eden, where he created man - Adam and his life time partner Eve (created out of his rip). The Garden of Eden was an earthly paradise and a home to Adam and Eve with everything He created.

Adam and Eve being the first humans to have been created by God, they were not white, instead, they were dark brown (chocolate brown) and this coincided with the origin of humanity as stated in science. The science informed us that all human

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beings were created in Africa and there is nothing that authorize us to take the origin away from Africa⁶. They language Adam and Eve used has a connection with humanity and this language could be the language of mankind (Thok-Naath). Naath is not a term that is confined to the

Naath people of Sudan of today, but it is safely to assumed that there is a line of descendant that comes directly from Adam and Eve, Noah, Ham, Nimrod, Cush and Naath.

With the concept, Naath believed that within their environment, there are animals that exist, and were created into their environment and that leads to the term ‘Nei tin Naath or Ram mi Ran’ which

³ UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. II, Abridged Edition: Ancient Africa (v. 2) Abridged Edition. 1990

⁴ Cheikh Anto Diop (1981). Civilization or Barbarism. An Authentic Anthropology. Published by Lawrence Hill Books. New York. P. 181

⁵ Robert Bauval & Adrian Gilbert (1994). The Orion Mystery Unlocking the Secrets of the Pyramids.

⁶ Kim J. Liah (2017). Naath Cosmology. Published by the SSCSPS.

differentiated true humans from the half-humans or half-blood which Naath considered to be 'Leet or Let or half-blood animals. They believed that Leet could speak Thok-Naath and walk like Naath and could turn into some carnivores that can feed on Naath. An example of such flesh-feeding mammal in South Sudan was the story of Chieng-Bongbar) in which Gatluak Maguel was part of. Gatluak being a Let terrorized people in the lands of Dok, Gawar, Laak and Thieng. He ate people in those locations. He was arrested in Malakal in the 1920s when British Administrators came to Sudan and later was reported to have died in prison while attempting to break away. There are more stories on this carnivores' animals in South Sudan.

Most of the early writings indicated that the term Naath was widely used and when C.G Seligman wrote about the Nilotic people, he referred to the description of the people as 'the Nuer themselves speak of the tribe of the west of Bhar el Gabel as 'homeland Nuer' (Nath-cieng) and those east of the river as 'Nath-doar'⁷. This is an indication that the Naath is the old tradition name that carries not only personality of the people but also who these people were. It traces their origin and also help others to know them better. C.G Seligman also made his further argument that the country of the Nuer was Kwer-Kwong; the barren place of Kwong. Here, he was referring to the departure point where the Nilotic departed from as discussed below. The place was waterless and without grass and lack productivity⁸ and prompted people to move to swamps where they could cultivate and made their cattle graze well. C. G Seligman talked about the practices on the incest. He stated that the elders who were later became the ancestors killed the bull and split into two dividing the incest to avoid it from happening since it was the normal practice (see below further explanation on incest and Kuar muon).

From Nimrod to Cush

There are believes indicating that the term was in use from Nimrod tower to Cush country. Throughout generations, the term has been in existence from Nimrod's Tower of Babel to Egypt until Naath people came and settled in Upper Nile basin. People who still keep the name and used it in their holy book are the Muslims who have it in association to mankind. They slightly changed the pronunciations from Naath to 'Naas' and their meaning remain the same – Mankind. If you read Quran (the Islamic Holy book), the term is associated to Mankind and its origin. An-Nas is directly translated as 'mankind', where God is praised as the king of mankind or judge over mankind⁹.

We are told that Nimrod constructed the Tower of Babel around the land of Shinar (Sumer) and Nimrod was the leader of that civilization. They had a whole city and on top of that, they build the enormous building with its peak on the cloud. They introduced the brick making technology and build one of the tallest buildings ever created as stated below:

“All the earth had one language and the same words. When they traveled toward the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar [Sumer], and they settled there. They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and let us fire them.” The bricks were stones for them, and asphalt was mortar for them. And they said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and let us make a name for ourselves, so that we will not be dispersed over the surface of all the earth¹⁰.”

⁷ C.G Seligman & Brenda Seligman (1932). Pagan Tribe of the Nilotic Sudan.

⁸ C.G Seligman & Brenda Seligman (1932). Pagan Tribe of the Nilotic Sudan.

⁹ Modern English Translation of the Holy Quran. A. Yusuf Ali and revised & edited by Dr. Fouad Mimouni.

¹⁰ Theodore Hiebert (2007). Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Culture. Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 126. No 1. P. 29 – 58. The Society of Biblical Literature.

It is believed that the language they used has connection to humanity and this language was the Naath language or Thok-Naath. Archeologists dug up the evidences that show the spot of the Tower of Babel. Their findings indicated that Tower of Babel did exist. The building was meant to be a place where the astrology or things of heaven such as the moon, stars and the sun will be worshipped. In ancient Babylon, the spot for the ruined building believed to be the Tower of babel was found. It has 153 feet high with 400-foot base. The building materials included the dried bricks in seven stages to correspond with the outer planets.

The lower part was black, the color of Saturn, the next orange for Jupiter, the third, red for Mars and so on and so forth¹¹. On the peak of the Tower was the signs of Zodiac. According to Dr. Barnhouse, *“it was an open, definite turning to Satan and the beginning of devil worship. This is why the bible everywhere pronounces a curse on those who consult the sun, the moon and the stars of heaven”*¹². Whatever happened at the Tower of Babel is not of our interest here, the point is that the early civilization that established the Tower of Babel with dried bricks and built the tallest building by then was the work of the Black civilization, the direct great grandfather of the Kush – the Sudanese people that lives in Upper Nile basin today.

We are also told by the same book that when God’s anger was provoked due to their worship of the glory of heavens or the things that were created by God to beautify heaven, he made them fall and changed their language and instead distributed different languages among the people. And this one language that was used during the time of Tower of Babel has been translated by the Naath to be Thok-Naath (the language of Mankind). May be someone may ask, how do Naath arrived to this conclusion.

It’s simple. Adam was Black man and he was the

first man to be created and it was Thok-Naath that he used. Since Thok – Naath was the language of Mankind so it was easy to point it out. In addition, Nimrod was the father of Kush and Kush fathered the Sudanese people (in which are the Nilotic people), so the language that becomes the Sudanic group language, in which that thin threat from Adam, Nimrod, Kush until Naath is being maintained. There is a high belief that Naath were part of the first humans to be created and this is why Naath

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have the same term and maintain it for generations. Initially, there was only one language that they used to speak. Dr. Henry Morris was quoted stating that:

As each family and tribal unit migrated away from Babel, not only did they each develop a distinctive culture, but also, they each developed distinctive physical and biological characteristics. Since they would communicate only with the member of their own family unit, there was no further possibility of marrying outside the family...was necessary to establish new families composed of a very closed relative, for several generations at least. It is well established genetically that variation takes place very quickly in a small inbreeding population¹³.

After Naath came to Egypt, Sudan and then southern Sudan (Kuer-Kuong), they started consulting on the laws that will govern their system of management. One of the laws is the abolishment of incest which has been part of practice for generations. According to old people,

¹¹ H.L. Willmington (1981). Willmington’s Guide to the Bible. Tyndale House Publisher, INC. Wheaton Illinois. 35

¹² H.L. Willmington (1981). Willmington’s Guide to the Bible. Tyndale House Publisher, INC. Wheaton Illinois. P. 35

¹³ H.L. Willmington (1981). Willmington’s Guide to the Bible. Tyndale House Publisher, INC. Wheaton Illinois. P. 35

marrying a close relative has been part the practice. The agreement was that incest must be discouraged all together. If someone have committed an incest, there must be cleansing ceremony to him or her right away. This was also made possible by the reproduction and also assimilation of the other tribes into Naath community. After the flood, those who survived married their own blood relatives including sisters. This practice remained with the Arabs until now where their cousins can be their wives. Naath have completely abolished that practice and gave some sacrifices to seal the deal between them and their God.

The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary defined Babel as Babylon which is the Hebrew term. It was the site that recounts the origin of several languages when the people led by Nimrod settled in Shinar (or Sumer) built bricks and burn and later build the Tower with its top in heavens and made a name for themselves. This tower angered God and dispersed the builders before they could finish it. This further derived us to understand the meaning of Babylon (which is the gate of God). It is also the Akkadian name for Mesopotamian city. Babylon covers over

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two thousand acres making it one of the largest ancient sites which is located along the Euphrates river in area where it approaches the Tigris river in what is now modern Iraq¹⁴.

Some of the Naath elders knows that Tower of babel was “Dapany”, this place is known to be the dwelling place of the gods. As could be read above, there are indications of worshipping of the host of heavens just as the Naath named the tower. Kulang Ket, one of the Western Upper Nile prophet possessed by the fallen spirit of Maani in 19th Century, through his songs acknowledged that he was carried by the spirit to Dapany. This was later

followed by a Bul – Nuer spiritual leader named Tang Kuany who mobilized people for pilgrimage to Dapany, which ended up in Gezira Aba and Omdurman in Khartoum, where his followers ended up in Mahdi’s family. The distant to Dapany and the guidance to lead them to the place could not be located and most of them ended up in northern part of the country. It was learnt that Maani was a Mahdi’s god of war. The family of gods (which included Chieng Wan Bipal and others) came and possessed individuals Naath in their land, were believed to have come from Dapany, in other word, in the abandoned building of the Tower of Babel.

Dapany in Nuer are two words joined together ‘Dak and Pany’. Dak mean destroy and Pany mean incomplete building. When two words are joined together, it means building that was destroyed before it could be completed, and that was what is believed to be the Tower of Babel as narrated in the bible. There is entire whole family of divinity that is living among the Nuer for generations. Their presence was spotted by the British Administrators who came in 19th Century and wrote a lot about them. And many historians such as Douglas H. Johnson who wrote the Nuer Prophet, anthropologists such as Evans Pritchard and Sharon Hitchinson who wrote the Nuer and the Nuer Dilemma, and British invaders (administrators) who imposed their own rule had a testimony on the presence of the divinities and spirits in the land of the Naath.

The Tower of Babel was not a place where human beings were originated but a place where they established a copying mechanism against the flood that may engulfed the world and the worship of heavenly bodies. The word ‘Babel’ meaning ‘gate of God’ was named by Nimrod himself. The Tower of Babel was changed to mean Confusion as translated in Hebrew. It was after the confusion when the place was later named to be Babylon. The place of Tower of babel is in fact the Babylon. My own understanding is that it was built to keep away from floods that may occur since the Grandfather

¹⁴ Paul J. Achtemeir (1971). Bible Dictionary. Harper Collins. General Editor, with the society of Bible Literature. P. 97

of Nimrod (Noah) had a terrible experience with flood. Building a tower was to get away from the experienced they had. Worshipping of heavenly bodies as one of the chief activity of the tower, may be true given their drawings and their places seen all over the building. It has been recalled that even Nuer at this point in time still mapped the zones of heavens and known stars by their appearances (read the article 'Naath Cosmology'). Their gods such as Maani, Deng and Teny were associated with stars, moon and the sun.

Roland Werner, William Anderson and Andrew Wheeler quoted another confirmation on the location of Kush in Ezekiel while the Lord cursed Egypt when claiming that he owns the Nile. The Prophecy emphasized that the Lord will punish Egypt by making the land ruin and desolate waste from Migdol to Aswan and as far as borders of Kush. This is curse came about the claim by Egypt that The Nile is hers. The Lord who made the Nile also claim the ownership and therefore was against Egypt due to its authoritative attitude toward the Nile¹⁵. The exact locations of Migdol which lies toward the North of Egypt and Aswan in the south of Egypt which lies at the border of Kush. Further in Zephaniah, it was further elaborated that Lord focus attention on Kush. In the bible, the term Kush have been misinterpreted as Ethiopia. This was literarily a wrong translation from those who initially conducted the translation of the bible. When the Old Testament was first translated into Greek in the 300 BC in Alexandria, the term that was used by the ancient Greeks for the country South of Egypt was Ethiopia, which was only known to the world around them¹⁶.

A word Ethiopia comes from Greek word of aithops (which mean black face), could ideally refer to the entire Africa and also India. Some early Greek historians thought Africa and India

were joined and thus were one. When the group of 70 people sat together to write the Septuagint translation, they instead used Ethiopia as it was the general term referred to in Hebrew to mean Kush. As we have seen early, that Kush has been referred to the specific country immediately South of Egypt and situated along the Nile. This confusion was picked up by other translators who actually translated from the original bible translation of the Greek. Further, we are quite aware that Kush in the bible mean country south of Egypt, all of Sudan and neighboring countries. We know that even in the history that the ancient Ethiopia was called Abessinia or Abyssenia. There could be no confusion at all¹⁷.

The Bible mentioned that "Cush [Kush] was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on Earth", and the Sudanese King that ruled Egypt as one of the Pharaohs, led the mighty Egyptian army. The Bible further mentioned Sudanese Generals who also participated in invading Judah during the rule of King Asa of Judah. This general was named Zerah and he invaded the city with one million men. The Medianites from which Jethro, the father of Zipporah came from were Cushites. Again, the Ethiopian eunuch referred to in the Acts of the Apostles as "a man of great authority under the Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians who had charge of all her treasury".

This man was baptized by Philip in the Year 38 A.D. He was actually a Sudanese Nubian because the Candace was the Queen-ruler of the Kingdom of Merowe. Moreover, Cush have been mentioned in the Book of Isaiah describing disaster that will befall him which shows a clear description of the present-day Sudan. Anu M'Bantu and Gert Muller (2013), have examined lengthily the quotations in the bible that also mention black, or Cushite, persons. Ham in the Bible is taken to mean 'dark' and in addition

¹⁵ Roland Werner, William Anderson and Andrew Wheeler (2000). *The Day of Devastation Day of Contentment. The History of the Sudanese Church across 2000 Years.*

¹⁶ Roland Werner, William Anderson and Andrew Wheeler (2000). *The Day of Devastation Day of Contentment. The History of the Sudanese Church across 2000 Years.* P. 20

¹⁷ Roland Werner, William Anderson and Andrew Wheeler (2000). *The Day of Devastation Day of Contentment. The History of the Sudanese Church across 2000 Years.* P. 21

is associated with ravens, the darkest bird. In the Song of Solomon (1:6) the word Sha-char or shiny black was also used. Sha was reported to mean shiny and Char was also reported to mean black. In Naath language today, black is Char and is widely used for names of people, animals and black things. The term Naath has been in existence since the creation from the Garden of Eden until it has boiled down to the particular tribe called the Naath people of Nilotic South Sudan.

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Discourse on the term Nuer

Since 14 December 1898 when the Anglo-Egyptian made the first contact with the Nuer¹⁸, the use of the term Naath was limited and the term Nuer was in use. Moreover, the famous story that linked Nuer and Dinka to be blood brothers from the same father has also some shortcomings. Most people stated that the construction of the term “Nuer” can only be traced back to the tale of Naath and Jiang oral traditions which maintained that the two –were brothers whose Father’s name was Dengdit. At his old age and knew that he would die. He decided to distribute his wealth and property to his children. He had two cows, the mother and its calf. He blessed the two cows and allotted the old cow to Jiang and the calf to Nuer. He left the sheep and goats to his other children Domo (Jur Col), Collo (Baar) and Gilo (Annuak).

After this divine allocation, he instructed his two children to visit him individually to obtain blessings

and receive their cows. Jiang came to visit father first and identified himself as “Nuer asked for his calf. He was blessed and went away with the calf. Then Nuer came and identified himself as “Nuer” and asked for his calf. But his father Dengdit told him that you have come before. Nuer replied that he was not the one that came earlier. Dengdit cleared his throat and vociferated and said: “Nuer my son listen to me blessing is immutable, take the cow and however, I abjure from today onward follow Jiang and raid the children of your cow” (Jok, 2010). This was taken to be the origin of the raiding between the Nuer and the Dinka. Both communities are currently raiding each other because of that allocation given by their father.

This story is very common to the extent that both communities (Dinka and the Nuer) believed it and to certain extend, has been equated to the story in the Bible about Jacob and Essau and how they became enemies. There are shorting comings on this particular story. My research I conducted for the last 4 years informed me that it was Kuer-Kuong where the term Nuer was coined by the elders who sat to draft the laws that will govern the Nuer (see below discussion).

This term was not founded prior to the arrival at the Kuer-Kuong. In addition, there are no sensitive information that indicated that the story generated the name. I kept it here because it also part of the beliefs on where the genesis of the term came about. This story was first recorded by Mr. K.C.P Struve, British Anglo-Egyptian Inspector of Zeraf Valley in March 1907¹⁹ when he was talking to Deng Agweir, keeper of the shrine of Dengdit. The text has no mention of the term Naath. The whole text mentioned only Nuer and the Dinka. This story was used to understand the logic behind cattle raiding between the Nuer and the Dinka.

¹⁸ The British Academy (2016). Empire and the Nuer: Sources on the Pacification of the Southern Sudan, 1898 -1930. Edited by Douglas H. Johnson.

¹⁹ The British Academy (2016). Empire and the Nuer: Sources on the Pacification of the Southern Sudan, 1898 -1930. Edited by Douglas H. Johnson.

The Covenant between God and the Naath

Evans Pritchard pointed out that the archaeological excavation carried out along the Nile indicated that there was an activity that resemble of that of the Nuer existed since 3372 BCE²⁰, and that place was the Nile corridor of the current Western Upper Nile (Unity State). There is no proper archeological excavation conducted in Naath territory and evidences on when Naath arrived in the current Unity State is not proven yet. The migration of the Nilotic people from the northern part of Sudan may have happened prior to that time if the findings indicated by Evans Pritchard is correct. There are oral stories from the Nilotic people that may share the same understanding with that of the Evans Pritchard. In relation to the usage of the term Nuer, it could be at this particular period that the term was crafted and was in use. I must also confess here that the term Naath as discussed above was the sole name for the people who were later to be called the Nuer. it could be at this particular period that the

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term was crafted and was in use. I must also confess here that the term Naath as discussed above was the sole name for the people who were later to be called the Nuer.

The term Nuer is in association with the rituals and shrines in

which an agreement was reached when the term was first developed and agreed to be implemented has sanction of centuries of usage. Crafted when

Nilotic arrived in Kuer-Kuong (the high ground of Kuong) and most of the tribes (from other Nilotic groups) who came with the Naath migrated away to seek better places to live. The Naath decided not continue further because they admired their settlement. The soils of the land is heavy clays, broken by sun into deep cracks in the drought and seldom in the rains. It holds up water and allows green vegetation to grow very well during the dry season and provide grasses for the cattle. This is what Kuer Kuong is to the Naath. A place they loved with their heart²¹. Almost all the tribes migrated and Naath were left alone in Kuer-Kuong. The elders who led the migration called the Council of Elders' meeting to brainstorm on the laws to govern the Naath in their new environment. It is good to put in record that most of the early migrations were led by those with divine qualifications or had some divine powers. In case of women, there were witches (or teat) who advise the elders. Since the laws that governed them as the Nilotic (or meroetic laws) were no longer in possession since the tribes have dispersed to different locations. All of witches were invited to advise on what need to be considered when developing laws [Nguot].

At the shrine in Kuer-Kuong (in Koat Lich), a council of elders were invited and a new calabash was brought and placed in the middle of the Council of Elders, an ox was sacrificed and the blood was drifted into the calabash, the members of the Council of Elders also cut their bodies and dropped their blood in the calabash, saliva²² were also spitted in and they mixed it well. These activities were in fulfillment of the covenant in the making. A session of the bad things that were in practice and needed to be avoided and good practices that need to be introduced were all placed in the session.

²⁰ Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford University Press, 1969.

²¹ Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford University Press, 1969.

²² These practices which indicates that saliva is the source of blessing is very common in Naath community. An Oldman could spit saliva on your head. This indicates blessing. Handshake is not very common when you meet with an Oldman, you only bow your head in respect. To certain degrees, it is believed that the morning saliva that was not spitted out have more blessing than the saliva of the afternoon.

After exhaustive plenary sessions, they came to an agreement and the responsibility was given to elder with divine qualification to invite the higher power. After lamentation, God was invited to bless their agreement and add power into it. When they nearly finished, they all drank the contents of the calabash, and this sealed the agreement between themselves and God.

And any violation of this covenant may lead to curse/sins, particularly in the cases of homicide (nueer) will be contaminated and will fall into sin and will be a sinner, thus generated the term Nuar. Nuer comes from the term Nueer (literarily means contamination or sin).

After this, they agreed that whoever will go against these laws (Nguot/Ngut) which expresses the relationship between God and the people through the concept of Nguot or Ngut and denotes an inviolable bond both between the Creator and all creation and between all people. And any violation of this covenant may lead to curse/sins, particularly in the cases of homicide (nueer) will be contaminated and will fall into sin and will be a sinner, thus generated the term Nuar. Nuer comes from the term Nueer (literarily means contamination or sin). With the name in usage, a rightful authority (Kuar- Muon) was appointed and given powers to preside over the sinners to cleanse them from condemnation and death. For example, when someone kills, he will automatically be contaminated (Nueer), until a ritual is conducted and the cleansing process takes place, then declared free from his own sins. This term Nuer has a connection to contamination and sin. Someone may look at it as a term that sanction the entire tribe as sinners or contaminators because of the nature of its creation. Now, the origin of the term came the rituals associated with it and everything

that will solve any sin or contamination will be solved by the leopard skin chiefs through a ritual in which animal will be sacrificed. Evans Pritchard stated that “leopard skin chiefs and prophets are arbiters...in which cattle are the issue, or ritual agents in situations demanding sacrifice of ox or ram...another ritual specialist is the wut ghok (wut hok), the man of the cattle”²³ .

Most of these masters were created to solves the social problems of the Nuer and practice what they were created for. Another important aspect of the agreement on shifting to the term Nuer was the sacrifices being offered to the gods and most of these sacrifices went through rituals of offering of the cows and rams. As reflected in the Nuer tradition (which is technically the Naath tradition), “cows are dedicated to the spirits of the lineages of the owner and of his wife and to any personal spirit that has at some time possessed either of them”²⁴. And if any social problem that affect individual family comes, there are certain rules and steps to be followed on how to deal with it which were original agreed during the introduction of the term Nuer in Kuer-Kuong. As I recurrently recalled above, an old man whom I interviewed in November 2016 in the Juba PoC Phar Ruot ventured the following hypothesis:

When someone slept with his relative; either a woman or a man, both of them have committed Rual (incest). They will be taken to Kuar-Muon [earth master] to split them ceremoniously. The Kuar-Muon will revoke and denounced what happened and consider it as a mistake between the people who committed it and ask the spirit to pardon them. Rual will be revoked to leave the two who committed the sin and through the Kuar-Muon, the spirit that may come after them will leave immediately²⁵.

Most of the elders think that it was Nguot or laws that were agreed that causes the person to fall into

²³ E.E.Evans-Pritchard (1940). The Nuer: A description of the Modes of Livelihood and the Political Institutions of a Nilotic People. P. 16

²⁴ E.E.Evans-Pritchard (1940). The Nuer: A description of the Modes of Livelihood and the Political Institutions of a Nilotic People. P. 16

²⁵ Phar Ruot. Protection of Civilians (PoC) in Juba South Sudan. Interviewed on 14 November 2016.

sin when he tries to sleep with his relative. The incest may also be brought by the cows that were used during the marriage. When a woman is married, before she could be given to her husband, there are Nguot to be passed and announced during the occasion and it is believed that it was these Nguot that haunt them when they committed such crime.

Interestingly, the gods and the spirits are called into the marriages and even during cows' allocation, the spirits are also given their share in almost every girl given. All of these contribution falls back into the initial terms of reference that were agreed during the time when the term Nuer was agreed to be in use among the Nuer to refute any violation dishonesty that may goes against the agreed covenant between God and the Nuer. When this incident of incest occurs, Nuer believed that it kills people, and is known to be the God that was part of the agreement that is haunting them because of the violation. Kuar – Muon act as the intermediary between the God and the persons who violated the agreement.

Sharon Hutchinson spent many years in Naath land conducting research until she learnt Thok-Naath very well (including reading and writing) and she was nicknamed 'Nyariel'. She was an anthropologist who studied the language, social, political and economic way of life of the Naath people. In her book 'Nuer Dilemma: coping with money, war and the state', she discusses a lot on the Naath social life. One topic that is related to this paper is the discussion on the incest and she brought in one example that took place while she was conducting a research in one location within the Naath land. Two orphan siblings decided to form a family because they had no hope to get cattle for marriage. Their relationship raised suspicion to the community elders and the chiefs. Both of them were summoned to the council of elders to explain their status. They both agreed that they are forming

a family and they hoping to bring forth children.

They knew that it was abomination and something which is a taboo to cross. Due to the situation that befall them, the elders were defeated to prevent their relation given that whoever cross the agreement will purely be judged by the divinity or God whom the agreement was sealed with when the term Nuer was first introduced. Elders prayed and asked divinities to bless them and forgive them for the sin the committed²⁶. This is to avoid further consequences that may follow them. It is further argued that:

“...the council of elders was acknowledging that fact that the force of ‘incest prohibitions’ ultimately rested with divinity as the guardian of human morality. Although received notions of the transgenerational scope and relative intensity of various incest taboos provided an indispensable guide for human action...”²⁷

Its very important to note that both siblings that were in relationship realized that they have committed sin and that they even want to die if being together will be the cause of their death. They did not think that it will be through human intervention that will kill them but the actions of the gods that may come in form of plague and pestilence. Due to the intervention of the elders to bless their union, there may have some chances that they could be forgiven by the divinities. intervention of the elders to bless their union, there may have some chances that they could be forgiven by the divinities.

Another example related to the term Nuer is the homicide committed. The family member who have killed someone within the area, Kuar-Muon will be invited to settle the matter. He will get the cow, kill it and cut it into half. This symbolize that the problem between the family of the deceased and the person who have killed some has been

²⁶ Sharon Hutchinson (1996). *Nuer Dilemma: Coping with Money, War and the State*. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles California.

²⁷ Sharon Hutchinson (1996). *Nuer Dilemma: Coping with Money, War and the State*. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles California. P. 238

separated to avoid further confrontation.

The agreed amount of blood cattle will be given to the family of the deceased through the Kuar-Muon. He will go home with all the cattle and sacrifice a bull. From the sacrificed bull, small meat will be cut and roasted. Get the bile of the cow and litter it into the pieces of roasted meat and feed everyone that was present during the occasion. This seals the agreement that the problem that was between the two families has been witnessed by everyone that was available during the occasion and it is solved. Douglas Johnson discussed about Nuer justice in his article that was published by the Journal of African History and he mentioned that:

“Nuer concepts of justice were founded on principles of social obligation and a spiritually sanctioned moral order, where moral and social obligations often merged. The failure to honour a social obligation could become a duer, a ‘wrong’, which could result in nueer, a ‘sin’. The decision to take restitutive action was supposed to be based on cuong, moral right, to receive either spiritual or social sanction”²⁸.

He reflected ‘Nueer’ as sin which comes as a result of the violation of the agreement and when an action is conducted to right the wrong, that action will be ‘Cuong’ which is considered to be the correct action to be taken when someone has committed a sin. Wal Duany wrote his doctoral thesis on the Nuer political leadership and social organization among them. Talking about the equality and accountability when someone has committed crime, this is what he said:

Equality is related to the Nuer concept of accountability. As people decide to hold others responsible for their actions, as they allow the same principle to extend universally, they create a particular kind of moral environment

for each other. They expect each other to be held equally accountable. Their commitment to a system of reciprocal accountability gives them incentives to work out the fuller exegesis of their system of regulatory principle²⁹

Prior to the coming of the invaders into the territory of the Nuer and the imposition of the chieftaincy system, Nuer were ruled by the leopard skin or those who were possessed by the spirit. It was until 1870s onward that their system was corrupted with foreigners weighing war against them in order to control them and loot their properties. This happened during the Turko Egyptian until British administrations that have caused chaos in Naath land.

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The Making of the Earth Master (Ciel Kuär muon)

Kuar Muon is not a fallen spirit. The Nuer term the process as ‘Ciel or the making of the Kuar Muon’. Different clans will gather to give power to the person appointed. This process is normally conducted under a Gewintervention of the elders to bless their union, there may have some chances that they could be forgiven by the divinities.

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will be invited to settle the matter. He will get the cow, kill it and cut it into half. This symbolize that the problem between the family of the deceased and the person who have killed some has been separated to avoid further confrontation.

The agreed amount of blood cattle will be given to the family of the deceased through the Kuar-Muon. He will go home with all the cattle and sacrifice a bull. From the sacrificed bull, small meat will be cut and roasted. Get the bile of the cow and litter it into the pieces of roasted meat and feed everyone that was presence during the occasion. This seal the agreement that the problem that was between the two families has been witnessed by everyone that was available during the occasion and it is solved. Douglas Johnson discussed about Nuer justice in his article that was published by the Journal of African History and he mentioned that:

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The Making of the Earth Master (Ciel Kuär muon)

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The whole discussion will be put in place on what need to be his terms of responsibilities while he

is taking charge of the process. Saliva and other unsanitary thing will be spit on a calabash. The purpose of the saliva has the power to bless and power to curse anyone and to settle disputes. When confirming the ‘Kuar – Muon, cows will be sacrificed to the gods and this is to please the spirit to give power to the person to be confirmed. Milk from the cows will be made available and the broom will be brought and dip it inside the milk and throw the milk to the people who have gathered. He will be given a leopard skin. The leopard skin is a sign of aggressiveness that he will perform his rituals without fear. Can curse and bless. At the end, the one person who is leading the process will shout that, ‘our spirit is going to be given to you to empower you over us’.

The Earth Master or Kuar Muon will have the power to settle disputes on the killing, incest and other social statuses that were originally agreed in Kuer Kuong. When someone is killed and blood cattle have to be settled, he will be the one to conduct the process. His words are respected very much by the entire community. For instant, the killer will be given some water that the Kuar Muon have drunk on, this indicate that he has drunk on the same cup with Kuar Muon and this will prevent Nueer that may come upon him. In addition, the killer will be taken to the house of the earth master or Kuar Muon and the he will spill the blood of the killer out. This is to help the killer from Nueer which is loosely translated contamination.

The other responsibility is that if a married man is dead and he left behind his wife and children, a fruit known as ‘Kuol’ will be brought by Kuar Muon and cut into half. This will separate the dead husband and the rest of the family which are alive. They believe that the dead husband is always communicating to the family members through a dream and this disturbed them a lot. If children were sick due to that, they will be expected to recover from their sickness. When he wants to pass the power on to another family member, at family level which does not need further gathering, a father will call his children to empower one of them. His

children already have the power but there will be only one person who will be in charge of solving community issues. He can delegate the matters his brothers but he still has the highest power given to him by their father.

In *Darchieng Dok* or the Southern Unity, especially in Leer, there lived a man named ‘*Muoth Diem*’. Long time ago, he lived near a river (the current Adok Port) with his spear and leopard skin. In that part of the area, there were also other inhabitants but they were not aware of each other. They could meet briefly but could not talk to each other and don’t know each other. By that time, there was confrontation over the issues of territory control and who have come to their areas. The family of ‘*Kuoch Luoth*’ who inhabited that part of the area, sent his men to spy on him and catch him if they could. After some times, he was caught and taken to the cattle camp. *Kuoch Luoth* asked him why he stayed in that part of the river alone. He stated that he had power that keeps him comfortable alone there. He was asked to avail his power and he said he has the spear and leopard skin. *Muoth Diem* asked *Kuoch Luoth* about his power and *Kuoch* was having only black goat skin as the source of his power.

Both leaders tested their powers by putting them inside a shelter (gew). Actually, gew, long time ago, was being constructed using the cow dung. This made it more inflammable. Gew was set on fire while both men were inside wearing their spirits skins. When Gew burnt out, both men came out alive. After they were out, Mouth Diem told Kuoth Luoth that you are a leader and you have power which is not sufficient. Now take this leopard skin and this spear and your power will be completed. If you want to settle any dispute on murder, you call upon the sky and I will have my spear after you to give you more power. *Kuoch Luoth* also gave the black skin to *Muoth Diem* as an exchange for what they experienced. This is how the power was transferred upon *Kuoch Luoth*. When someone with Kuar Muon’s blood is killed, the descendants of the *Muoth Diem* whom was given black skin will be called to settle that dispute. The process is known

as Bier. No Kuar Muon to settle dispute on another Kuar Muon. After Kuoch Luoth had his power, he gave birth to the son and named him Ruei Kuoch Luoth. Ruei mean the saliva that he drunk when the process of transferring power to him was being conducted. This family is well known in Darchieng Dok as the Kuaar Muoni.

Wut hoök or Kuär hoök

Another important person in Nuer is the Kuär-hoök which is also known as wut-hoök. Every clan have their own Kuaar-hok and in Dok community, Jaak Wamach were given the power to be Kuaar Hok to guard over their cattle. That particular clan solves their own issues related to cattle. In Gawar clan, Matuot Peth was given the power of Kuar-hok by his fellow Gawar clan. He later had his son Chat Kuoth Matuot who used to be taken for raiding by Teny and Maani to the Dinka communities. This is the clan of Thep Yen War that had that power within the Gawar. It's normally being passed from one person to another as long as the person is aging. When Teny and Maani takes the raiding to the Dinka, Chat Kuoth will be instructed to make sure that all the cows don't escape in the cattle that they were intending to raid and they will be found around the cattle camp.

Kuar Muon will perform his ritual by swinging the rope around and drop it on ground, when the rope faces the Nuer, all the cows will be brought to Nuer. The other additional responsibilities after the pegging of the pegs during the camping of the cattle, girls whose age have passed and there was no one coming to marry, he will conduct the rituals that will makes the girl to get married sooner. The girl will be brought closer to Riek, smear her with ghee of the cows, and pour milk on her body. After this ritual, the girl will either be eloped or married openly. This practice is always permitted by those that are related to the girl. When cows get lost, he will take the hitch (dep) and swing it around and drop it on the peg. The next thing you expect are the cows to arrive.

Conclusion

This essay attempt to use the historical texts to prove that Naath is an ancient term which was later inherited by the ancient Egypt to associate it to the Black people who lived in that geographical part of the country. In contrary, Nuer is a contemporary word that you cannot trace in the historical texts. Only in the collection of books written by different authors and compiled by Dr. John Gai Nyuot entitled "The Nuer inheritance: A Comprehensive Bibliography" that you can find Nuer being widely used by the authors who wrote extensively on the subject, neglecting unknowingly the term Naath. This study chooses that there is urgent need to research further on the name.

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