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The Divine Kingship of the Tagoi of the Nuba Mountains—Sudan

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Abstract:

This article traces history of the formation of a divine kingship among the Tagoi people of the north-eastern Nuba Mountains. This historical backdrop provides a context for investigating change and continuity in the Tagoi political system. Concentrating on actual processes, the article gives some accounts on how the divinization of Tagoi kingship could be a political move to bolster the legitimacy of personalized powers. Relevance of the comparatively old evolutionist, diffusionist, structuralist and neo-evolutionist theories of divine kingship to the Tagoi case is discussed. Here, the main conclusion was that the Tagoi's concept of "divine king" does not exactly apply to any of the definitions that are embedded in these theories, as it portrays—in a measure—a distinct and genuine type of divine kingship. The analyses and interpretations are also supported by the relatively modern concepts of galactic polity, mimesis, perspectivism, and mutlinaturalism.

Keywords: Political Authority; Spiritual Authority; Power; Kingdom; Kingship; King; Divine.

الملوكية الإلهية لدى تقوي بجمال النوبة — السودان

عثمان محمد عثمان علي

الملخص:

يتتبع هذا المقال تاريخ تشكُّل ما يعرف بالملوكية الإلهية (divine kingship) لدى مجموعة تقوي بجمال النوبة الشمالية الشرقية. وتوفّر هذه الخلفية التاريخية سياقاً لاستقصاء عمليات التغيير والاستمرارية، التي حدثت في النظام السياسي لهذه المجموعة السكانية. وبالتركيز على العمليات الفعلية، يسرد المقال بعض الروايات حول كيف يمكن أن يكون تأليه ملوك تقوي خطوة سياسية نحو تعزيز شرعية سلطاتهم. ونوقشت ملائمة حالة تقوي مع الاتجاهات التطورية، والانتشارية، والبنوية، والتطورية الحديثة، والتي هي من النظريات القديمة نسبياً وتدور حول موضوع الملوكية الإلهية. ولقد كان الاستنتاج الرئيسي هنا هو أن مفهوم تقوي "للملك المؤله" لا ينطبق بالضبط على أي من التعاريف المضمنة في هذه النظريات؛ لأنه يصوّر—إلى حد ما—نوعاً متميزاً وحقيقياً من الملوكية الإلهية. وتم دعم التحليلات والتفسيرات أيضاً بمفاهيم حديثة نسبياً، مثل: نظام الحكم المجري، ومحاكاة الطبيعة، والمنظور الذاتي تجاه الأشياء، وتعددية أوجه الطبيعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السلطة السياسية، السلطة الروحية، القوة، مملكة، ملوكية، ملك، مؤله.

Introduction

This article is about the political system of the Tagoi tribe in the Nuba Mountains. It throws light on the type of authority the Tagoi kings hold and the criteria for their selection. It investigates some ethnographic and historical data concerning power struggle and succession to the royal office. Following the trend studies approach, it starts with a discussion of the pre-colonial Tagoi kingdom, but, in keeping with the Tagoi's perspectives on the meaning of history, it moves back and forth between the present and the past, i.e. the British pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. The importance of the article shows up in its intrinsic interest to the anthropological theories and the continued debate on African divine kingships.

The article is based on a material collected during fieldwork carried out from November 2012 to September 2017, among Tagoi migrants in Khartoum State and other Tagoi living in their original area in the Nuba Mountains. The security threats in the Tagoi area and the presence of the largest group of Tagoi migrants in Khartoum necessitated the concentration of the fieldwork in Khartoum State. However, two short field trips to the Tagoi area were organized in March 2015 and in September 2017, focusing on corrective and additive data. The fieldwork included group interviews with males and females of different ages. During the fieldwork, plentiful primary data were also collected through telephoning Tagoi people with profound knowledge of the history and culture of their tribe. Data were also collected through face-to-face individual interviews. Unscheduled brief conversations with males and females of different ages were conducted during occasions for celebration and mourning in Khartoum and Alfaydh as well. The fieldwork dealt with everything about the Tagoi in the classical anthropological sense.

Some relevant historical and theoretical sources were reviewed. Regarding the Tagoi history, the article follows the main turning points in the Tagoi's life through successive historical periods since the beginning of the Tagoi kingdom. Here, the Tagoi's oral history is checked with comparative (published) historical data collected from other parts of Sudan. About a dozen of articles published in the time span from 1935 to 2011 on divine kingships, in Africa in particular, were reviewed and used in guiding the interpretation of data throughout the article.

1. Theories of divine kingships:

The Tagoi king, who combines political and spiritual

powers, provides a perfect example of those "who in Africa were sovereign rulers, divine kings, both traditional and charismatic, in Weber's terms" (Parrinder 1956: 111). An excursus into theories of divine kingship would, therefore, be useful in explaining the case.

The writing style in the study of divine kingship has been transformed over the years. There were a number of early evolutionist and then diffusionist studies devoted to investigating the origins of divine kingship through the distribution of certain traits. Structuralist interpretations then came to the fore, arguing that the myths of old-fashioned kingship are discourses on power and the origins of violence. In some neo-evolutionary accounts, the origin of the state as a system of control is real whatever doubts might be expressed in imposing universal schemes (Rowlands 1993:291).

The interpretations of divine kingship frequently return to Sir James Frazer who, from an evolutionary point of view, posited the existence, on a global scale, of a developmental magico-religious stage. He thought that all religions were to some degree derived from fertility cults centred on the figure of a dying god, and that the first kings, who embodied that god, were ritually sacrificed (Graeber 2011:2). A divine king, for Frazer, is a ruler believed to be descended from, and the incarnation of, the god, as evidenced by his power over nature; thus the order of the cosmos depends upon his life and actions. Consequently, natural calamities imply that the king is debilitated, or, if the latter is apparent first, then national misfortune will follow unless drastic action is taken. This leads to the issue of regicide, undertaken in order to 'capture' the spirit of the deceased for the sake of restoring the vitality of the universe by installing a more vigorous monarch (Arens 1984:357). In its fundamental form, Frazer's theory involved three elements: (1) the king not only symbolized the totality of the kingdom, but also contributed—in a mystical way—to the reproduction and growth of all forms of life within it (i.e. the duality of kingship, as seen in the opposition between the king and the kingdom); (2) The king's life was 'mystically' bound up with life in the kingdom, and when his vitality began to wane, he was put to death so that a more vigorous successor might be installed, thus sustaining life within the kingdom (i.e. regicide); (3) The king served as an intermediary between the transcendent domain of spirits and the domain of living human beings (i.e. the king's role as a symbolic mediator) (Carlson 1993:312).

The first to use Frazer’s theory in African ethnography was Seligman, who approached the question from a diffusion perspective, referring to the Egyptian influence in Negro Africa and discussing the route by which this might have been spread (Meek 1935:126). The term, for him, was to be restricted to: such rulers, as being held responsible for the right ordering and the fertility of earth and domestic animals, and end their lives (when their powers fade) by being killed, killing themselves, ceremonially expose themselves to death, or feigned to die (so as to secure that the world would not fall into decay with their decay). This definition incorporates Frazer’s notion that the divine king should not die a natural death, but it refers to the connection between king and nature without requiring Frazer’s postulate of an incarnated nature god who, being mortal, must be transferred to a vigorous successor (Young 1966:135-136; Richards 1968:23).

Applying structural interpretation to the Shilluk case of the Sudan, Evans-Pritchard stated that he was unable to substantiate the practice of regicide. He offered a solution, which is the separation of the temporal person of the king from the atemporal office of the kingship: a king symbolizes a whole society and must not be identified with any part of it. He must be in the society and yet stand outside it and this is only possible if his office is raised to a mystical plane. It is the kingship and not the king who is divine. According to Evans-Pritchard, we can only understand the place of kingship in the Shilluk society when we realize that it is not the individual at any time reigning who is king, but Nyikang, the first king and cultural hero

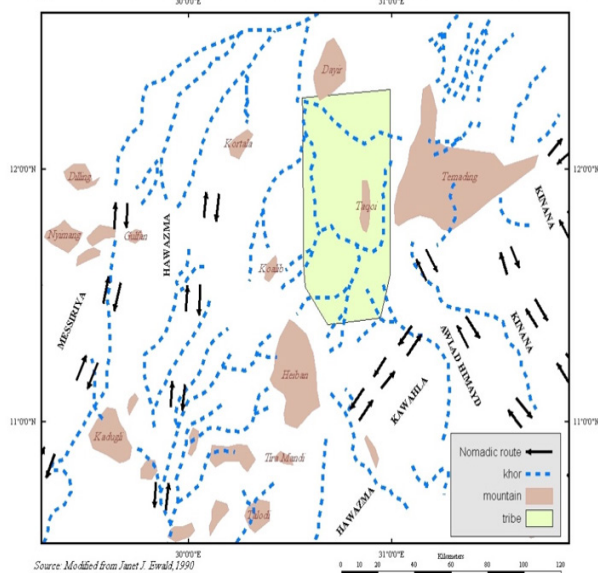
of the Shilluk, who is the medium between man and god (Juok) and is believed to participate in god and in the king. In a sense, this interpretation bypassed the king’s role as a symbolic mediator, because it shifted the problem of mediation to another context (Carlson 1993: 313-314; Schnepel 1990: 105; Evans-Pritchard 2011:414, 420).

Some late African ethnography refuses to yield to the structural approach, particularly in the regicide matter. As it maintains, not all traditions of king-killing can be explained away as political ideologies. There is a core of ‘Frazerian’ ritual motives behind the fate of some divine kings, which seem to fit no structural pattern (Young 1966: 135). Instead of investigating indigenous philosophies about power, wealth, and bureaucracy, scholars started to interpret these processes in neo-evolutionary terms, in which monarchy was a transitional form between cephalous polities (i.e. polities having heads) and nation-states, and to force the final arbiter, the fountainhead of power. The works of Fortes, Kantorowicz, Richards and Beidelman on ritual and office mark the beginning of the reintegration of beliefs and social relations in the context of a broader comparative perspective. Where some of them focused on the role of ritual in transforming persons into offices, others analyze the transformation of a person into a “stranger” (Feeley-Harnik 1985:276-277). Carlson (1993:330) tried to reformulate Frazer’s theory by arguing that the starting point for analysis must be the hierarchical structure of cosmology, in which the king is the preeminent axis through which the problem of separation and interrelation between the transcendent and normative orders is constituted.

How relevant are these comparatively old theories to the Tagoi case will be discussed at the last section of this article. As will be argued then, the Tagoi’s concept of “divine king” does not exactly apply to any of the above definitions. It is (un)able to substantiate basic elements of these definitions. It portrays—in a measure—a distinct and genuine type of divine kingship, giving continuity to the debate that is embedded in these theories. It requires the support of the relatively modern concepts of galactic polity, mimesis, and perspectivism.

II. Arrival at and building on the mount of Tagoi:
The oral Tagoi history tells about a small Arabic-speaking group of Muslim Funj who were deported from Sinnar, the capital of Funj Kingdom, to the north-eastern Nuba Mountains, following a dispute

Map No. 1: The Area of Tagoi in the North-eastern Nuba Mountains



over political authority. This movement took place during the reign of the first Tagoi king “mek Kundan” (1726-1751). When the group had arrived in that region, which used to be called “Kajagjah,” they found what they later named “the Mount of Tagoi” and the surrounding plains suitable for both cultivation and grazing. They chose to settle in it. One section from the group (later called “Sakarnga”) decided to proceed and settle in the area of Gadyr.

Intermarriages between the migrant and host groups in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains resulted in a socio-cultural hybridisation, giving birth to the Tagoi with their distinctive culture and an acquired language with a local class-prefix and concord system and considerable Arabic influences (Stevenson 1962:122-125). The migrants founded a kingdom and became holders of political authority.

When mek Kundan had settled at the Mount of Tagoi, he started to organize the Tagoi into big villages, which were then divided into two parts, an eastern and northern (sabah) part and a western and southern (sa’iid) part. The Tagoi were thus divided into the people of sabah (yirye yasbah) and the people of sa’iid (yirye yasa’iid). Each of these two parts had a king from the kin-group of leopard: the king of sabah (wattar wusbah) and the king of sa’iid (wattar wu sa’iid), besides an advisory board composed of representatives of the existing kin-groups and headed by its king to monitor the security situation and deal with the local problems. Prior to the descent from the Mount of Tagoi and the demarcation of the kingdom’s borders, the villages of sabah (tasbah) were located in the eastern and northern areas of the Mount of Tagoi. The villages of sa’iid (tasa’iid) were located in the southern and western areas of the mountain. The village of Hoash was located in the middle between tasbah and tasa’iid, forming a neutral politico-administrative bond between the two parts of the kingdom. After the descent from the mountain and the demarcation of borders, the two parts of the kingdom have remained under the same old politico-administrative structure, with their two kings who are still subject to the Tagoi king in Alfaydh, the new capital of Tagoi kingdom. Map No.1 shows the area of Tagoi in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains.

During the reigns from mek Kundan (1726-1751) to mek Gedayl Jabouri (1897-1910) the Tagoi had an independent political administration, which was supported by a board of “king’s advisors” (“jindi” in the Tagoi language). This advisory board was composed of the Tagoi king, the Tagoi deputy king, the ambaranj,

the two kings of sabah and sa’iid, the promulgator, and the key person in charge of hunting. Beside these high-ranking leaders, who were all from the kin-group of leopard, were: the commander of the tomanj and the key persons in charge of the barn, honey, iron, weapons and gunpowder, and hospitality. This board was dealing in all big and small affairs concerning the Tagoi tribe. Its main functions, in addition to planning, were to examine the current situation in the region and the problems submitted by the advisory boards of sabah and sa’iid parts of the kingdom.

The king and his advisors represented the “political authority” (“ngaktar” in the Tagoi language). The place where they used to meet (i.e. the royal palace: “taborat”) was designed with seats of stacked stones, which were being arranged in a certain order. The name of every advisor was written on the stone that had been designated to him. No advisor used to sit on the seat of another one, even in his absence. Prohibited from sitting on stones amongst his advisors, the king had to sit on the “royal stool” (kakar) in a place above the one assigned for them.

The number of the Tagoi kings reached seventeen in about 290 years “figure (1)”. The royal genealogy in the figure shows that most of the kings had long reigns, exceeding ten years. Some kings reigned for short periods.

The mek-jindi structure has recently been replaced with the amir-omdas-sheikhs structure that is used in other Sudanese communities. In the new structure, the label “mek” (king) has been replaced with “amir” (prince); the label “jindi” (king’s advisors) with “omdas” and “sheikhs;” and the label “mukokiyya” (kingship) with “amara” (principality). This change was part of an overhaul imposed by the state government of South Kordofan in 1995, mainly to create some sort of equality between the various existing kingdoms and principalities in the region regarding the property rights in land and the socio-political significance and value.

The Tagoi amir nowadays does not sit on the kakar with the omdas and the sheikhs in one place; even the use of such kakar has become more symbolic, limited to seating the new king during his coronation. In addition, the omdas and the sheikhs no longer sit on stone seats. The amir at present does not deal directly with the sheikhs or the ordinary people. The amir communicates with the omdas at Alfaydh (or any of the other Tagoi’s villages), the omdas communicate with the sheikhs in the different Tagoi areas, and the sheikhs communicate with the ordinary people. At

present, there are 7 omdas and more than 90 sheikhs in the Tagoi area, i.e. about 13 sheikhs under the command of every omda. Each sheikh controls around 200-300 persons forming a village or kin-group.

III. One Legend, Two Disputed Authorities:

One legend recounted by Tagoi informants tells that in ancient times a man and his wife gave birth to single pairs of leopards, serpents, lions, human beings, bees,

and finally small red locusts. All those pairs lived as one family. Over time, the pairs of leopards, serpents, lions, and bees were expelled, for misconduct, into the wilderness; the human and locust pairs remained with their parents. The father then was attuned to advise his wife, whenever he wanted to leave the house, that she should not give the pair of locusts a chance to know where the grains were stored. One day, keeping an eye by stealth on their mother, the

Figure (1): A Complete List of the Line of Succession to the Tagoi Throne



locusts had discovered the place of storage and later on came and ate all the existing grains without the permission of their parents or their knowledge. The expulsion into the wilderness was their punishment. A house was built for them on a mountain (lately named the “Mount of Jarad”; literally “the mountain of locusts”; “Toroy” in the Tagoi language), where they later fathered many locusts. Through time, the pairs in the wilderness developed into spiritual beings, which the informants distinguish from the similar natural beings and associate with their traditional rituals that they call “asbar.”

To all informants, these spiritual beings sometimes appear in tangible material bodies and in other times become invisible. As believed, there are spiritual and blood bonds between these spiritual beings and the various Tagoi kin-groups, as they all came from one couple. Members from the related kin-groups could see them or use them for their own benefit. When these spiritual beings feel, through these bonds, that the related kin-groups or families are set in misfortune, they come swiftly and on time for help. The families even provide friendly and generous receptions for the related spiritual beings that pay them visits on joy or sad occasions.

The importance of each spiritual being, for the Tagoi informants, illustrates the social status of the related kin-group. Top in importance is the leopard, for its courage, strength, fierceness, cavalry, cleverness, endurance, patience, fearlessness, boldness, grandeur and wisdom. It is the “king of animals” for the Tagoi. As such, the kin-group that is linked to the leopard (i.e. the royal families) has been the holder of political authority; hence, it enjoys the highest social status in the Tagoi communities. Next are the serpent and the lion, which are seen as strong, brave and fierce, but to a lesser degree than the leopard. Next are the bees, which symbolize goodness, while also being fierce and dangerous. The serpent, lion and bees are seen as assistants of the leopard. The king’s advisors, accordingly, come from the kin-groups of leopard, serpent, lion and bees. In the lower position come the locusts, which are always harmful. Consequently, the locusts-associated kin-group has the lowest social status; however, it used to single-handedly control the spiritual authority (“ngaktar nahbar” in the Tagoi language).

As stated above, the Muslim Funj group, which was deported from Sinnar, took away the right of the host groups in the Kajagjah region to political authority. The system of succession along the line of males,

which was introduced shortly thereafter in the Tagoi kingdom, does not allow the transfer of political authority to any other group from which a Tagoi king marries, because no political authority is granted to a woman or any member of her family. Surely, therefore, the succession along the male-line was used to retain the political authority for the migrant Funj group, who later became the kin-group of leopard. The residents of the Mount of Jarad, who represented the kin-group of locusts, held over the spiritual authority. From among them come all the kujurs in the Tagoi area, who have historically controlled—through the asbar—the locusts in particular and all other spiritual beings, except the leopard, and used them as weapons. Only for this, the informants use the label “Tajmaymej,” which literally means “the residence of asbar practitioners,” for the Mount of Jarad. As believed, the kings and the kujurs of the Mount of Jarad used to have strong relations with these spiritual beings, which in turn have spiritual and blood relations with families that used to live on the Mount of Tagoi. As such, their ritual control over the destinies and behaviour of the people on the Mount of Tagoi was great. It was greater than the political control of the Tagoi kings over their subjects. This is what initiated a prolonged dispute over the spiritual authority between the kings of the Mount of Tagoi and the Mount of Jarad.

All Tagoi kin-groups, except that of locusts, were residing on the Mount of Tagoi. The kin-group of locusts was the only one, which lived in the Mount of Jarad. It is thought that the people of the Mount of Jarad are malicious like locusts, which constitute a major scourge in the area. It is their practice of harmful asbar, which has resulted in describing them as locusts. For some informants, many people on the Mount of Jarad were deported from the Mount of Tagoi, for unaccepted deeds, committing crimes, or causing conflicts or dissensions. Expulsion to the Mount of Jarad was a punishment for criminals and offenders to norms in the kingdom. This is reminiscent of the case of locusts in the aforementioned legend. For a period, the residents of the Mount of Jarad were completely subject to the policies of the paramount king of Tagoi. They then had a subordinate king with spiritual authority based on the performance of asbar and inherited by descent through the female line. The last of such subordinate kings was mek Isma’il Ulayh. Since his death in the 1990s the Tagoi kings have possessed the entire spiritual authority and—as a consequence—have become political leaders

and men of religion jointly, assuming more and more religious duties and ritual functions. A related oral tradition tells that one of the daughters of mek Jeelyh I told him on his visit to the Mount of Gadyr, where she was living with her husband, that her brother Rufa'a (his eldest son and the grandfather of mek Isma'il Ulayh) had agreed with her to kill him with poison. On his return to the Mount of Tagoi, mek Jeelyh I died of a severe pain in his stomach, which was thought to be a case of poisoning. After his death, major changes were made in the government system within the kingdom, including an agreement on the rotation of kingship between the families of mek Jeelyh's sons, Jabouri (the 8th king) and Karbos (the 9th king). Rufa'a was deported to the Mount of Jarad, accused of poisoning his father. Later, he was installed as king of the Mount of Jarad, simply because he was from the kin-group of leopard, according to the traditional system of succession to political authority. Later on, mek Gedayl (1897-1910) sent some fighters from the kin-group of leopard to bring mek Rufa'a to the Hoash village on the pretext that he had caused a halt to rainfall in the region via the asbar. On the road to the Mount of Tagoi, one of the fighters killed mek Rufa'a. His son Ulayh, mek Isma'il's father, became the new king of the Mount of Jarad.

The above accounts tell about how the previously cited myth of creation reflects main tracks in the Tagoi history. Whereas the oral history tells us that the Mount of Jarad was an exile for anyone from the Mount of Tagoi who committed a crime or misbehaviour, the legend tells us that the locusts were expelled because they had committed a crime of theft at their family's grain-store.

IV. The Transfer of Political Authority:

One of the king's sons, and then the son of this son, ideally inherits the political authority. In case the king has no son or no one of his sons accepted to be appointed as king, one of his paternal brothers is installed instead. The Tagoi customary law, however, provides priority to the first boy born by one of the two girls married by the king on the day of his coronation, as will be clarified later. This son will be the right holder of power after the death of his father. The appointment of any of the other king's sons is permitted only in the absence of such a son. This exception appeared in the cases of mek Adam and mek Hamdan, after the death of their brother mek Gedayl who did not undergo the traditional coronation process and, therefore, did not have successor in the

conventional way.

There is a space here to give a much abbreviated version of the complex set of events which make up the coronation. A new king is installed when his predecessor dies. His name is announced—for the first time—after the mourning period; but still he is allowed to appear to the public at the moment of installation only. People from all Tagoi areas and neighbouring tribes are urged to attend. The kakar, sheeted with an untanned spotted leopard skin that is stripped with the head and claws, is brought for the new king to sit on. A horned hat is put on his head. Two girls who have never been married, and who are selected according to certain criteria, are then seated on stools beside him, one on his right and the other on his left. One of these two girls must be from his mother's side, and the other from his father's (to satisfy the two parties). He must marry these two girls at that moment, even if he has been married before. The first son he fathers by one of these two wives becomes the crown prince, i.e. the son who has the right to be the next king. He is kept unknown and stashed under a heavy guard duty by his mother's kin-group in their own residential area during the whole period from his birth to his installation as king.

After that, the ambaranj, who is the first advisor and the official spokesman for the king and his advisory board and who is the person who crowns every new king—as stated before, hands the "royal emblems" to the new king: the royal sword, a whip, a horn of hartebeest, and a horn of rhino tied with some giraffe wisps. Each of these four emblems has a symbolic meaning: (1) "Be decisive in your decisions and judgments, just like a sword, but with justice and without discrimination!"; (2) "Like beating with a wiper, discipline the offenders and deter anyone who is at fault against others!"; (3) "Be full of cavalry, just like the hartebeest that couldn't be easily hunted!"; (4) "Address the cases of your people with wisdom and constructive manner, just like the rhino that is characterized by sharp intelligence, awareness and alertness!"; (5) "Make your tribe gather in one pot, and your work on it should be unrestricted to a certain place or category of people, but should be done in a wide range and the best way, in a scope just like the size of a big giraffe". The new king is also handed the royal drums (kuldong)—a fifth royal emblem, which symbolizes heritage. These meanings express some of the qualities that should be epitomised in the king's personality: determination, justice, deterrence, wisdom, responsibility towards all citizens, and

safekeeping of heritage.

The ambaranj then garbs the new king with the royal dress and addresses him with the phrase: "Now we have handed the political authority over to you," before giving him seven conventional advices: (1) live in peace with the neighbouring tribes; (2) To accept all citizens in the kingdom in the spirit of the great father; (3) To be patient with those who live with him; (4) To accept criticism; (5) To consult the advisory board in all small and big matters; (6) To preserve the tribe's heritage and land, exactly as received from the former king; (7) To maintain security within the kingdom borders. At this point, the coronation ends and one of the male attendees informs the crowd of people by uttering a loud shout. Sacrifices are then offered, some men start to play the kuldong for the crowd of people to dance to their rhythm in a big public square, and the new king—betweenwhiles—leaves the kakar to greet the revellers. Immediately after this celebration, the ambaranj takes the new king to stay at his home for a week. This week is invested in the orientation and training of the new king, before he returns to his home to act as king.

An important question here is: Why the first boy born by the king after his coronation? To marry a girl born by wiye wulla and who did not get married and hence had no sex before allows the leopard, which accompanies the king most of the time (under a strong spiritual relation), to identify the king's first son who is born by this girl. Then the leopard remains a regular attendant for that boy, i.e. the crown prince. An untanned spotted leopard skin that is stripped with the head and claws is used as mattress for that boy during the first forty days after his birth, the postpartum period in the Tagoi communities. It is believed that if a child lies on such a leopard skin during this period, it will acquire the qualities of the leopard. The informants express this by saying, "So as his heart gets hot." In addition, the heart of any leopard that is caught anywhere in the Tagoi area is brought for the grown-up crown prince to eat and thus acquire the same qualities. Putting the crown prince on a leopard skin also strengthens the spiritual relation between him and the leopard. This means that the leopard accompanies both the king and the crown prince.

The kings from mek Kaday to mek Gedayl, except mek Idris, were the first boys fathered by Tagoi kings after their coronations; thus, the leopard was with them. The informants say that the leopard had been in the company of mek Gedayl until he was

executed in Keraia, the capital Tegali kingdom. It ran away thereafter, for it did not know a living king or crown prince to go to him. Mek Gedayl himself did not undergo the traditional coronation; therefore, he had no successor known to the leopard. That is, the leopard has not accompanied the Tagoi kings since then. However, the leopard returned to the Tagoi homeland when Adam Jabouri, the brother of mek Gedayl, had been installed as king. It resumed its visits to the families of the kin-group of the leopard, including the king's family, to take its share in the slaughtered sacrifices. Sometimes it paid visits to these families just as a guest. Most important, it has not stayed at the royal house thenceforward.

For the informants, the king who is accompanied by the leopard bears the qualities and the spiritual powers over nature that the leopard gives to him. The king who is not accompanied by the leopard is frail and his reign witnesses weaknesses in governance and great losses to the kingdom. This explains to informants, why mek Hamdan and his son mek Mohamed Ahmed sought to take over the spiritual authority from the kings of the Mount of Jarad; perhaps to compensate for the loss of the leopard's qualities and spiritual powers. It also explains to informants why the Tagoi have lost their independent political administration since the execution of mek Gedayl.

Salah, the second-born son of mek Mohamed Ahmed and whose mother was married to mek Mohamed Ahmed before his coronation as king, said: "In the early years of my father's reign (around 1972) I was a child at the age of five. One night (just after supper), I went out to attend a dhikr ceremony in an open space near our own house. While I was out of the house, carrying a lighted torch, I suddenly glimpsed an animal bigger than the cat, jumping hurriedly in front of me. Terribly horrified, I shouted loudly and broke the outer door, running into the house. That animal was the leopard. The next morning my father told us that he had met the leopard last night, spoken to it, and asked it not to come again to our house, mainly for terrifying me". The leopard has stopped visiting the royal house ever since that event. Members of the royal family have started to enter the king's private hut without permission and at any time of the day since then; mainly because they do not feel that the leopard is inside with the king. The hut even has been without guard.

V. More Symbols of Power and Authority:

The way of building the conical roof of a hut and the

old housing style on the Mount of Tagoi mirror the political structure of the Tagoi tribe and the need to protect its king. They constitute pyramids of power and authority symbolically.

The hut (*kon*) is the room in the traditional house. Its construction starts with a circular- or square-shaped wall of stones, constituting the lower part (*kon kudom*) with height of about two meters and with thickness of more than half a meter. Experienced elders force the large stones tightly together, putting small stones (*karuro*) or mud in the spaces to fix them. An area of one-meter width is left for the door. After finishing the *kon kudom*, a conical roof of sticks and straw is placed upon it, as the higher part of the hut (*kon gadlang*). First, four thick sticks of equal length are installed in vertical positions. Each of the first two sticks has a bifurcated head called *chianno* (female), and each of the other two sticks has a straight pointed head called *chiyitto* (male). The feet of the four sticks are fixed on the *kon kudom* and their heads are clasped with each other in a nested shape, putting the *chiyitto* sticks on the *chianno* ones. Then, a number of at least twenty smaller sticks are tied vertically beside the main four ones for extra support. The four vertical sticks are tied with each other with three main bonds of horizontally placed sticks. These three bonds bear the names of the social strata that appear in the old politico-administrative hierarchy. The bond at the bottom, upon which the heaviest load of supporting the cohesion of the entire roof falls, is the biggest and called “*yara yidro*” (the circle of the public, *yirye*). Above the *yara yidro*, we find a number of minor bonds, each of which is in the shape of smaller circle called “*yara*” (circle). Above these minor bonds comes the second main bond, which is smaller than the first, bearing the name “*yara jindi*” (the circle of the king’s advisors, *jindi*). The third smallest bond, “*yara jittar*” (the circle of the king, *wattar*), is then placed at the confluence of the-vertically-fixed sticks, at the top of the hut. Unlike the lower main bonds (*yara yidro* and *yara jindi*), which are tied from outside, the *yara jittar* is tied as protected inside the vertically-fixed sticks and made of comparatively thick sticks. Next, a certain type of straw (*kandarmung*) is woven on the wooden frame from the outside in a way that prevents any possible leakage of rainwater into the hut. A cap made of straw is then put above the *yara jittar* with the perception of putting a crown on the king.

Regarding the housing style on the Mount of Tagoi, the king used to live on the top. His married children lived at their own homes beneath his. Directly below

were the homes of the *jindi*. At the bottom were the homes of the *yirye*. This hierarchical housing was strengthened against attacks by six fortifications (*yilonj*) stretching around the mountain at different levels. The primary target for building these fortifications was to protect the king on the top of the mountain. It is the same target behind locating the *yara jittar* at the top of the hut. Protected in this way, the Tagoi king—in addition—had at his disposal some bodyguards.

When the Tagoi began to descend from the Mount of Tagoi and spread out on the plains below during the reign of *mek Adam Jabouri* (1910-1933), they attempted to build their kingdom across its wider geographical area, using the same perspective for building huts and homes. It was essential for them to demarcate the borders of their kingdom and hence to reserve the land and its natural resources and control the entry by non-Tagoi. They installed Tagoi families from the various social strata at mountains along the borders. Small families from the royal kin-group of leopard were sent to these border sites to be the first residents and hence the holders of authority and the guards of land there. Sooner after some families of the king’s advisors were sent to reside at the level below the residences of the royal families, just before sending families of the commoners to occupy the place at the bottom of the border mountains and become under the control of the families that had arrived earlier.

The royal drums (*kuldong*) are used in formal or royal family’s occasions and in gathering or mobilizing people. There are professional men who play these drums with rhythms that differ by occasions. They appear at that moment as very serious and at a high degree of concentration, as they do not show any smile. The *kuldong* consists of four large drums, which range in size with names inspired from the sounds that they produce. The largest of these drums is called “*yuonang*”. There are two medium-size drums called “*toombang*.” The fourth and smallest drum is “*tubbal*.” The *yuonang* is the only one made of copper; thus also called “*nihas*”, the Arabic word for copper. It is a king, for this reason, and should therefore stay at the royal house and not get outside. This explains to informants why the king and his extended family are the only Tagoi people who are still staying in the home area despite the current bad security situation. This security situation has resulted from the recent surge in the conflict between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People’s

Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) in South Kordofan, including the Tagoi area. They have been involved in the ongoing civil war since that time, many of them fighting alongside the SPLM/A-N. The customary law prevents the king and his family from leaving the Tagoi land under any circumstances, even if they risk extermination. This is despite the fact that the king has the right to override the laws and the ethics in the kingdom, whenever it is necessary and in the interest. He is considered outside the legal and moral systems of the society. He stands outside the society, and therefore the laws and ethics of this society do not apply to him. This is what we observe, for example, in the annulment of betrothal of any girl who is chosen as wife of the king. The former fiancé should look for an alternate fiancée.

VI. Copying From Nature:

The Tagoi king is likened to the bura tree (*balanites aegyptiaca* L). In imitation of the observation that not any other plant grows in the shade of a bura tree, the Tagoi king lives and eats alone, as mentioned before. For its multiple practical benefits, the bura tree becomes a king of nature (the king of plants). It is the symbol of generosity, protection, good omen and health for the Tagoi. It also has a spiritual value, as it is the only tree with demon-and-jinn expelling property and hence used in rituals. A new king cuts a small bura branch with the royal sword during his coronation; the grooms and the circumcised boys do the same. It is deemed true that the newly crowned kings, the grooms and the circumcised boys are at thresholds leading into new lives full of risks, which are caused by demons and jinn. Such risks include the destruction of one's life. It is supposed that the branch from the bura tree should cast all demons and jinn out of one's life. The Tagoi also produce from the bura trees the wooden plates, which the disciples at the Qur'anic schools (khalawi) use in writing the Qur'an. The beads of rosaries are kernels of bura fruits. The spiritual value of bura trees leads the Tagoi to produce these tools, which are believed to expel demons and jinn when used at reading or memorizing the Qur'an and at praising of God. Noted also, the khalawi in the different Tagoi communities are founded amid the areas covered with bura trees. The demon-and-jinn expelling property is behind such a phenomenon. The Tagoi king also enjoys the capacity of expelling demons and jinn, like the bura tree.

For the informants, bees live in groups like humans. Inside the beehives there is the queen bee, the third

king of nature (the king of insects), amidst a large number of worker bees. All the worker bees wait on the queen bee. While some of them build the hives, others collect flowers, soak up fruit buds, and then transport both into the hives. A third group of worker bees make wax and fill the hives at both sides with flowers and nectar of fruit buds. Then, a great number of white cabbage butterflies appear inside the hives as a product of the mixture of flowers and nectar. Sooner after, worker bees add a specific substance to the cabbage butterflies, which makes their colour change to yellow and then red. With the passing of time, some reddish cabbage butterflies convert to a liquid that develops into honey. Other cabbage butterflies remain buried inside the hives until they develop into bees. In the latter case, the new bees leave to another location, together with a new queen bee. As such, the beehives expand spatially. During this description, the informants recalled the installation of Tagoi families from the various social strata at mountains along the kingdom borders during the reign of mek Adam Jabouri, as they also feel that life in their kingdom is analogous to life in the kingdom of bees, mainly in its organization. This tells us about how the Tagoi informants are affected by their way of conceiving the bees' life in telling their own history.

Accordingly, people in the different Tagoi communities cultivate the king's farms and give him shares of everything they produce. Some of them provide a variety of services in his house. Almost all the Tagoi serve their king without financial compensations, just as bees serve their queen. This is because he is the one who faces the enemy, reaches out to the needy persons, and honours the guests on behalf of the whole tribe. Like the bura tree and the queen bee, he is a symbol of protection and generosity, good omen and health. He is "the eye and the hand of the tribe," as some informants say. He is the symbol of the Tagoi tribe as well, and, therefore, his attributes apply to the tribe.

VII. Bulding Upon Findings:

The various symbolic meanings and imitations reflect the character of the king, with its many desired qualities: his kijet chulla character and the qualities that he acquires from the royal emblems, the conventional advices that he receives during his coronation, the spiritual leopard, and other elements of nature and culture. It is for this that the behaviour of the people towards him is characterized by respect and appreciation. They apparently divinize him.

Contrary to Frazer's theory, however, the Tagoi's concept of "divine king" does not imply a dying embodied god. Frazer's notion of regicide, therefore, does not apply to the Tagoi culture. What exists in their culture is that the spiritual leopard accompanies the king most of the time (under a strong spiritual relation), giving him spiritual powers over nature, an observation that matches Seligman's ideas about the connection between king and nature and dismisses Frazer's postulate of an incarnated god who, being mortal, must be transferred to a vigorous successor. In brief, like the structural interpretation, the Tagoi case does not substantiate the concept of regicide.

Like Evans-Pritchard's description of the African monarch, the Tagoi king is at the apex of the kingdom's structure, the symbol of its unity and continuity, the embodiment of the culture's values, and the guarantor of prosperity. However, he stands outside the domestic legal and moral systems. The laws and the ethics in the kingdom do not apply to him. In harmony with some neo-evolutionists, he is transformed, through coronation rituals, into a "stranger," becoming, with the help of cosmology also, the preeminent axis through which the relation between transcendent and normative orders is constituted.

The Tagoi's creation mythic story and the resultant perceptions tell that humans, animals, plants, and other non-human forms are blood relatives inhabiting ontologically different worlds, but incessantly interacting with each other. Many things in their communities are based on such story: the stratification of society, the political hierarchy, the housing on the Mount of Tagoi, etc. The Tagoi liken their king to, as he also imitates, what they define as "kings of nature." Affected by their conception of the "kingdoms of nature," they managed to establish a kingdom modelled as a galactic polity, conforming to a centre-oriented mandala scheme in its arrangement: of central and satellite domains characterized by structured relations among leaders and followers. All villages surround the royal village with a view to protect the respected and genealogically defined king, the symbol of the Tagoi tribe. Their galactic polity codes cosmological, topographical and societal features. They are engaged in an intense production of structures that are modelled on natural entities and processes. What confers distinction upon them, therefore, is not merely symbolism, but it is the reincarnation of nature as well, i.e. 'mimesis,' the ability to put oneself imaginatively in the place of

another, reproducing in one's own imagination the form of the Other's perspective (Willerslev 2004: 629-630, 647-648). The wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power (Taussig 1993: xiii). The Tagoi—in accordance—live in nature as one of its various forms. These remarks could support and be supported by perspectivism, which proposes that different sorts of subjects or persons, human and non-human, inhabit the world and each of them has a distinct perspective that provides it with 'humanness,' such that it sees itself as humans see themselves. Animals and spirits thus live in households and kin-groups similar to those of humans (de Castro 1998: 469; Vigh and Sausdal 2014: 629-630, 647-648). Perspectivism suggests a spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity, i.e. mutlinaturalism. Here, each body is with a capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies (Hage 2012: 298-299).

Notes:

It is practical to use the term "tribe" in this article because the Tagoi and their neighbouring groups identify themselves as "tribes."

The Tagoi fled from their home region in 2011 because of a surge in the conflict between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) in South Kordofan. They have been involved in the ongoing civil war since that time, many of them fighting alongside the SPLM/A-N. They have been seriously affected, becoming almost an internal diaspora population, spread across various parts of Sudan. Only the royal families are now in Alfaydh, the capital of Tagoi kingdom, as Tagoi customary law prevents them from leaving Tagoi land under any circumstances, even if they risk extermination.

The historical accounts that follow are based on a version of oral history that is narrated by informants of different ages and from different social strata. No other versions of this history were touched on during the fieldwork. Hardly any documents were available to cast light on the history of Tagoi: documents that related these accounts were burnt in 1942 in a lightning strike on the home of mek Hamdan Jabouri (1933-1968), a former king of Tagoi (source: mek Mohamed Ahmed Hamdan in an interview, Khartoum, 24/11/2012).

This period saw major political changes in the Funj Kingdom that explain why and how the small Funj

group was exiled from Sinnar. Between 1650 and 1750, the kings of Muslim Nubians reigned over lands from Dongola to Ethiopia and from the Red Sea to Kordofan. Their kingdom was known both by the name of its capital, Sinnar, and as Funj Kingdom, after the name of its ruling group, the Funj (or Unsab), who were recognized as Arabs. The Unsab dynasty was overthrown in a coup in about 1718. The reigning sultan was replaced by his maternal uncle, Nol. After a brief reign, Nol's son, Badi IV, succeeded him, and their combined reigns (1718-1762) constituted the opening phase of what Jay Spaulding called the Heroic Age of Sinnar. The Funj then suffered repression, and Badi IV made a bold bid for the support of other elements in society (Spaulding 1985:3, 96, 212-223, 284-286).

Those who settled in the area of the Mount of Tagoi split in turn—over time—into more three sections: the Tagoi Proper, the Turjuk and the Tukom. The Turjuk and Tukom have administratively been under the neighbouring Kingdom of Tegali since this second split of Tagoi.

For more details on this process of amalgamation see Ali, Osman M. O. 2017, "An Islamised, Arabised Alterity: A Story of Social Change among the Tagoi in the North-eastern Nuba Mountains—Sudan" In Manger, Leif (ed.): *On War and Insecurity, Survival and Development in South Kordofan*, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI): Bergen.

These villages were: Hoash (for the king and his extended family), Tadamar, Taiimo, Tubor, Tigir, Tigmir, Talon, Taglinbor, Tugla, Tahrak, Tazba, Tabablinj, Taidong, Idirinj, Tagori, Tadyam, Tawbo, Tabdiranj, Tabanjok, Towuur, Ta Bakah, Tukdongor, Tarinja, Tubgol Bart, Tawongan, Tao Tugolan, Tagambal, Taybayh, Tagohil, Tundok, Tijmil, Taybih and Tundoro. Like Tubor, Tao Tugolan, Tubgol Bart, Taglinbor, Tabablinj, and Taiimo.

Like Tadamar, Tabanjok, Towuur, Tigir, Tigmir, Tijmil, Tundok, and Tahrak.

After the descent from the Mount of Tagoi, tasbah included all the villages in the eastern and north-eastern plains, such as Jibaylat, Abu Al-Hassan and Tarawah. Tasa'iid included the villages in the southern and south-western plains, such as Toamah, Um Berimbata and Kalobah.

The deputy king acts on behalf of the king in conducting the politico-administrative affairs. He is appointed from among the king's paternal brothers or paternal cousins, i.e. from the kin-group of leopard. During the meeting of the advisory board, he stands to the left of the king.

The ambaranj is the first advisor and the official spokesperson for the king and his advisory board. He crowns every new king. He is appointed from the Yalon, a sub-kin-group of leopard, provided that he is the oldest son of the deceased ambaranj. During the meeting of the advisory board, he stands to the right of the king. Many informants tell that after the death of mek Kundan, his two sons (Kaday and Haroon) agreed that Kaday and his descendents take over the office of the king; Haroon and his descendents take over the office of the ambaranj. The ambaranj, however, continued as an effective office until the reign of mek Hamdan Jabouri, viz., there was no ambaranj during the reign of mek Mohammed Ahmad, the last of the kings of Tagoi.

The promulgator (arrai in the Tagoi language) had assistants in all villages. They had to promote the news and decisions, which were announced by the ambaranj, in the various villages.

The person in charge of hunting also had assistants in all villages. They were usually from Tahrak whose inhabitants were famous for hunting and eating prey-meat.

The tomanj: the military battalion (about ten guards), which escorts the king and secures the Hoash village. It consists of the king's close loyal maternal relatives. Its commander is called "chohnie."

These key persons had assistants in all villages, necessarily from the kin-group of bees. All persons in charge of the barn were from Tubor, a blessing place whose inhabitants perform asbar rituals intended for controlling crop-eating pets. All persons in charge of honey were from Tigir and Talon. All persons in charge of iron were from Tigir whose inhabitants usually specialize in blacksmithing. All persons in charge of weapons and gunpowder are from Taiimo whose inhabitants are famous for making gunpowder and for controlling the thunderbolts through the asbar. The key person in charge of hospitality (alamoh) manages hospitality and other affairs in the king's house and cares for the members and guests of the royal family and the poor. His assistants (alamohot, plural of alamoh) are from Tabablinj whose inhabitants are famous for performing the harvest-related asbar, which are intended for blessing the new crops and for controlling the wind, rain and cold.

The term "taborat" applies also to the area where the king and his advisors were living.

The kakar was made of wood with six legs. It is described as a very shoddy arrangement and as similar to the Funj and Abyssinian royal stools (see: J.

1928:231).

All kings in this list, except the last six ones, were buried in a royal graveyard located to the west of the Hoash village and earmarked for kings only.

There were two kings named "Jeelyh" in the history of Tagoi: Jeelyh Eidos (Jeelyh I) and Jeelyh Jabouri (Jeelyh II).

There were two kings named "Jabouri Jeelyh" in the history of Tagoi: Jabouri Jeelyh Eidos (Jabouri I) and Jabouri Jeelyh Jabouri (Jabouri II).

An office, which came with the amara system, is the "wakiil," an authorized deputy of the amir.

For more details on reasons and implications of this change see Ali, Osman M. O. 2016, "Conflict with Others at a Bleeding Frontier: The Case of Tagoi in the North-eastern Nuba Mountains—Sudan," *Égypte/Monde Arabe*, Vol. 14: 113-136 (available at <https://ema.revues.org/3634>).

These figures assume that the number of Tagoi nowadays is between 18,000-27,000 persons (an average of 22,500 persons). Worth adding here also, a sheikhdom is ratified according to the size of the particular village or kin-group and a call for separation from the mother sheikhdom. This is what may cause the existence of more than one sheikhdom within one village or kin-group.

Separated by a small rainwater valley, the Mount of Jarad is located to the west of the Mount of Tagoi. An oral tradition states that some Tagoi intermarried here with a group coming from Abyssinia and produced its residents who are still known as an integral part of the Tagoi tribe. Consistent with this tradition is another one, which recounts that the first king of the Mount of Jarad (named "Jeberti") was from the Abyssinian Muslim Jeberti. This seems to have some taste of authenticity when we recall a historical statement by Wainwright (1947:14): "the king of the Ethiopian empire, which lay on the eastern side of the Nile and there it stretched far up into Sinnar... dispossessed certain Ethiopians with whom he was at feud, and occupied their land in South Kordofan." These Ethiopians were more likely living in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains.

Persons inherit their fathers' social statuses, whether the kin-group of leopard, serpent, or other spiritual being.

The value of "courage," which the Tagoi attach to the leopard, is greater than the value of "strength," which they attach to other animals. Whereas strength is linked to muscles, courage is linked to the heart. Courage, together with the other above-mentioned

qualities, must be part of the king's personality. Here, the Tagoi informants quote an orally transmitted saying: "the leopard has the strength of one man, but its courage equals the merged courage of forty men; while the lion has the courage of one man, but its strength equals the merged strength of forty men."

The term kujur is applied to all different possession and other priests in the Nuba Mountains. The use of kujur may mean any of the following types of priest—shaman, medicine man or woman, grain priest, rainmaker, or any other minor magic expert. In the Nuba languages, the names for kujur and for the ancestral spirit are the same and their persons are regarded as highly sacred. They always eat alone and in privacy. No one may share their seat. Anyone greeting a kujur should bare the left shoulder to receive his blessing. Every kujur has a special house in his enclosure, which is known as the house of the ancestral spirit, and in which are kept the paraphernalia of the kujur. The kujurs themselves wear a number of metal bracelets and rings, which are the insignia of their office, and carry some form of stick or axe adorned with brass wire or some other kind of metal (see Nadel, S. F. [1941: 85] and Hawkesworth, D. [1932:163-164]).

This even though there was a prison ("Talgayt" in the Tagoi language) in the village of Taybih at the western side of the Mount of Tagoi and adjacent to the royal Hoash village. The prisoners were usually harnessed to serve the royal family.

The succession to kingship was peacefully rotated between these two families, for about sixty years (from 1828 to 1896). Since the assassination of mek Idris by mek Gedayl in 1897, however, the access to the royal office has been monopolized by the descendents of mek Jabouri I.

In such a case, the political authority is supposed to be stronger than the spiritual one (i.e. the leopard kills whoever it believes to be harmful).

The persons banished from the various Tagoi kin-groups, including the kin-group of leopard, most likely intermarried with those who had been living in the Mount of Jarad beforehand, i.e. the Ethiopians who fled from the oppression of the Ethiopian empire.

As a result, several of the Tagoi kings were in childhood when their fathers died, namely Kaberdai, Lama, Eidos, Jeelyh I, Jabouri I, and Jabouri II. In such cases, the deputy king processes the administrative affairs of the kingdom until the child king reaches the age of maturity.

From coronation to his death, the king should sleep on a bed sheeted with a leopard skin. No one else,

except the crown prince, is allowed to lie on a leopard skin. If someone else uses the skin or any other part of a leopard body, he will be considered as committed a crime or misconduct, which is punishable by flogging for the purpose of discipline. Lying on a leopard skin or using any other part of its body is like imitating the king who is of great value to the Tagoi people who take off their shoes, headdresses, and weapons before entering his place. Accordingly, if a leopard is caught or killed anywhere, it must be sent to the king's house.

An ideal man regarding the ideal qualities of masculinity is called "kijet chulla." He is the man with the highest value, compared to the rest of men. He enjoys lot of good qualities, like: even-minded, smart, obliging, with prowess, generous, problem-solver, serves people, and felicitous in everything. An ideal woman regarding the ideal qualities of femininity is called "wiye wulla." She should be intelligent, successful, responsible, economical, quick in completing her housework, caring for her husband and children, and obliging in her home and her neighbours' homes at occasions of grief and rejoicing. She should also be skilful at leading and organizing other women companions, highly skilled in monitoring women's work at public events in the area, attached to people, a good entertainer of guests, active and efficient in all mandated services, while also staying inside her home most of the day. An overlap between the political authority and these ideal gender types is felt in that the king historically has been described as kijet chulla; and his wife, who is his successor's mother, as wiye wulla. The families from which the two girls the king marries at his investiture are chosen should have mothers with the character of wiye wulla. Accordingly, a kijet chulla, the king, and a wiye wulla, one of the king's wives, beget the crown prince.

The people closest to the king normally are the sons of his sisters or of his mother's siblings, who always serve him, make great efforts to secure his safety, and maintain his secrets. They have no claim to the political authority; thus, they make up the side on which he depends without fear of betrayal. The sons of his brothers or his father's siblings are far from him, as they likewise do not serve him. They may kill him before or after his investiture as king, if given the chance, in order to devolve the political authority to themselves, because any of them has the right to inherit in the kingship.

At the time of the king's death, the ambaranj regains the possession of these symbolic stuffs until they

are delivered to the next king. The dead king is then buried like the rest of people.

Such hartebeest horn is usually curved like an oboe. It is puffed to assemble people at various occasions.

Such rhino horn is carved in the form of a small wand. The king carries these things while performing the investiture rituals, at the local public events, and in his official visits.

Some informants add "the prevention and treatment of others," because the Tagoi kings used to insert rhino horns into their food to spoil or remove toxins, and thereby avoid attempts of poisoning.

Sitting and lying down on the leopard's skin make this relation strong and durable.

A tale recounted as evidence of the ability of the leopard to identify the crown prince or the next king is that a sound was emitted from the biggest royal drum inside a store at the moment of the birth of mek Mohamed Ahmed, the late king of the Tagoi. A few minutes after confirming that there had been no person or other creature inside the store, mek Hamdan received the news of the birth of his son Mohamed Ahmed. That event, for the informants, was a declaration of the arrival of a king.

Mek Gedayl led an active Tagoi rebellion against the British colonial rule until he was captured and executed in 1910. Later in the same year, the colonial authorities preferred his brother, Adam, as his successor in order to calm the volatile situation in the Tagoi area. The Tagoi then became subject to the kingdom of Tegali, which, with the support of the British rule, became the dominant kingdom in the region, before it was converted into the "East Jebels District." In the run-up to the reign of mek Adam, no regional government had authority over the Tagoi area. It was only after the execution of mek Gedayl that the British colonial authorities established their tutelage in the area, which has been part of the State of Sudan since that time (see: Kenrick 1948: 144-148). The leopard is given the large intestine of the sacrifice. For being bitter, the large intestine could only be eaten by the leopard, as it is also called "the eldest brother" (*vis-à-vis* the other small intestines), just like the pair of leopards (*vis-à-vis* the other pairs in the legend). That is, the leopard is given what suits its status best of the sacrifice.

Usually the king has four wives, each of whom has a gated section inclosing her hut and kitchen. They alternately prepare food for his family and guests, each at her section. In normal days, each wife should be in the service of the king and his family and guests

for an entire day by fits and starts. The wife on service also goes to the king's private hut to spend the night with him. The king himself has a separated courtyard; open to his wives' sections and containing two huts. One of these huts is the king's private khalwa, where he sleeps and stays most of the time. The royal sentry who does not allow anyone (even the king's wives, children or advisors) to enter without permission attends it. The other hut is where the king meets with the loyal paternal and/or maternal relatives for consultation and opinion-support. There is no room for sociability in the king's house, as the visits are limited to discussing important issues only. It has to be noted that the king eats alone, not with his family or guests, and his is a special food (normally, honey and meat cooked with sesame).

In official occasions, the sound of one of the two medium-size drum—for the Tagoi—is a repetition of the name: "Sultan;" the other iterates the word "rules." The smallest drum then sounds the word: "justly." Then the largest drum follows with sounding the word: "kills." In a second round one of the two medium-size drums sounds the name "Sultan;" the other repeats the word "kills." The smallest drum sounds the word, "justly." Then the largest drum follows with the word, "jails." Therefore, the four drums together reiterate two phrases: "Sultan rules; justly kills," followed by other two phrases: "Sultan kills; justly jails," ("wattar nga ahkam ngar ya... alhag men nga eeni... alhag men nga ugni," in the Tagoi language).

Most cases of betrothal take place just after finishing the circumcision operation, which is practiced on girls at the age of 7-10 years. A man or boy who wishes to marry a girl is urged to approach the place, where the operation is done, to bury the hole containing blood and the removed genital parts and then give the girl a gift, such as a necklace. A man or boy who does so is said to have "touched her blood." No one else is entitled to marry this girl.

The juice from the brown substance under the peels of the bura fruits is used for cleaning the belly of worms and bacteria and as laxatives to relieve constipation. The fruit kernels are dried up and then smashed to get out the pulps from inside, which are eaten as nuts or pressed to draw out oil. These are of benefit for diseases of the abdomen, rheumatism and malaria. Drinking water in which the bura fruit peels are soaked is believed to reduce hypertension. The eyes with conjunctivitis are washed, as treatment, with water in which some bura leaves have been soaked. The

fibre remaining from the kernels of used bura fruits are deemed as effective insecticides. They are placed on fire to smoke out and hence destroy or expel mosquitoes and midges. A sauce with the new bura leaves is cooked in times of famine. The powdered bark of bura tree is used as soap. As therapeutic practice, a person infected with running cold or sinusitis and hence suffers a constant headache is jabbed at his upper nose cavities with a fresh bura thorn until he bleeds. The fresh bura thorn is used also to treat persons with difficulty in tolerating exposure to bright light due to albinism. In such cases, the lachrymal glands under the upper eyelids are cauterized with a hot fresh thorn. The fresh bura thorn is used in darkening by jabbing women's lips too. The bura timbers are used in house buildings or in producing home furnishings.

This is added to the practical qualities of its timber: solid, does not crack, soft, and easy to write on.

For example, mek Hamdan Jabouri used to expel demons and jinn away from the road on which he was walking, as stated by the informants.

As described, bees perch inside the large openings on the trunks of big trees, amid the stones accumulated in the mountains (kabangdin), or in the white ants hills (hadamet). Sometimes bees congregate in hives hanging down at tree branches.

All nearby men, women, and children must participate in the cultivation and harvesting operations in these farms, except for acceptable excuses. Work on these farms is announced, and people are gathered by puffing a curved-as-oboe hartebeest horn. The harvest of sorghum is the responsibility of the alamoh. Harvesting, cleaning, and spinning of cotton are the responsibility of sabah and sa'iid kings. The cotton threads are sent to the Tagoi king's house, where they are woven into clothes and then stored in order to be used later in meeting the needs of the royal family, the tomanj, and the needy. The sorghum is distributed in the same way.

A number of men and women provide these services. All of them should be from the king's maternal relatives. Among them are four men storekeepers (hanyetmoran), four men bodyguards (nyuhunninat), and a man who takes care of the horses and donkeys owned by the royal family (dabakoon). All women who work in the king's house are those who have disputes with their husbands. It is usual that a woman with a recurring dispute with her husband comes to the king, requesting for his intervention. Such a woman usually takes hold of his legs and tells him the details of her

problem. Having heard her problem, he orders her to remain at his home. During her stay in the king's house, she is put into service to help the king's wives in housework.

For more information on these ideas, which link to the model of galactic polity, see: Tambiah 1977: 73-74.

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