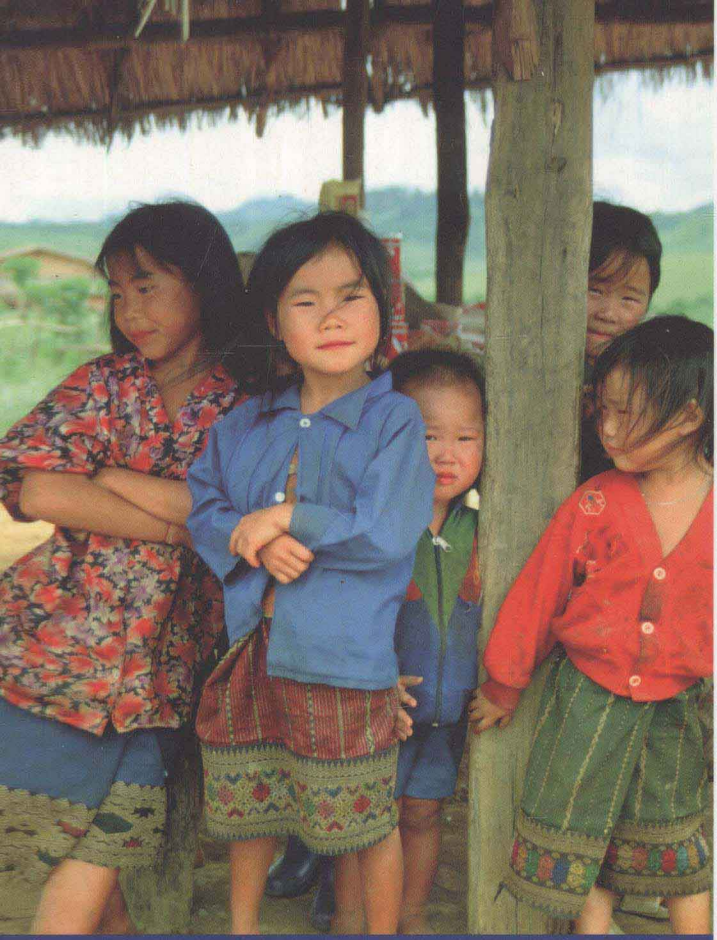

HOLLY
PETERS-GOLDEN

FOURTH
EDITION

culture sketches

CASE STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Fourth Edition

CULTURE SKETCHES

Case Studies in Anthropology

Holly Peters-Golden
The University of Michigan

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York
San Francisco St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi
Santiago Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

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CULTURE SKETCHES: CASE STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY
Published by McGraw-Hill, a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 QPF/QPF 0 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-07-287608-5

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Associate Production Supervisor: *Jason I. Huls*
Composition: *10/12 Sabon by GTS —New Delhi, India Campus*
Printing: *PMS Black, 45# New Era Matte, Quebecor World Fairfield Inc.*

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Peters-Golden, Holly
Culture sketches: case studies in anthropology / Holly Peters-Golden.—4th ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-07-287608-5 (softcover : alk. paper)
1. Ethnology—Case studies. I. Title.
GN378.P47 2006
305.8—dc22 2004063170

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a website does not indicate an endorsement by the authors of McGraw-Hill, and McGraw-Hill does note guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.
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for Rebecca and Jenna,
my first students, my best teachers,
and, I hope, the ones who know

PREFACE

Anthropology offers a unique perspective. Through its lens we can see, at once, both our kinship with all the rest of humanity as well as our uniqueness. Students peering through this lens for the first time often ask, "How are they the same as we are?" "How are they different?" It is usually with delight that they discover both striking similarities and surprising differences.

This volume is an introduction to 15 societies, and each glimpse is brief and necessarily incomplete. It is my hope that any student who is intrigued will look further into the past and present lives of these people. The following chapters are aimed more at sparking interest than appeasing it.

The groups selected are all peoples whose traditional cultures are uniquely their own. Each has distinctive patterns and practices; each has faced the challenge of an encroaching world, with differing results. Moreover, they often provide the prime illustrations of important concepts in introductory anthropology courses: Azande witchcraft, Aztec human sacrifice, Trobriand *kula* exchange, Minangkabau matriliny. As such, this volume can stand alone as an introduction to those central concepts through these 15 societies, or serve as a valuable companion to anthropology texts, most notably Kottak's introductory texts, which use all of these societies as examples.

Many of the peoples presented herein are involved in the diaspora; some struggle to preserve old ways in new places. While Ojibwa culture flourishes, tribal members contemplate how gaming on the reservation may challenge tradition. Kaluli music has been the vehicle for an aggressive campaign to prevent rainforest destruction. The isolation of the Tiwi was a salient feature in the development of much of their indigenous culture. Today, they are no longer isolated. They encourage tourism, while making sure younger generations are still taught to gather preferred "bush foods." Haitian immigrants and Hmong refugees have envisioned their place in American society quite differently. Nomadic pastoralists like the Basseri face challenges from both governments who think sedentary peoples are more "civilized" and environmental analysts who are concerned about the impact of pastoralism and expanding deserts on agricultural lands. Resettlement and development, such as that undertaken among the Azande, cannot succeed if motivated solely by goals of industrial development but uninformed by indigenous culture.

Our world is more than ever a world of change. The exploration and promotion of cultural diversity has been embraced as a mission on some

campuses, feared as a strategy of separatism by others, used as a weapon in other venues. As we are increasingly faced with a global culture, anthropology takes on an even greater responsibility to foster respect for differences in the face of change.

→ THE FOURTH EDITION

This edition updates most chapters from the third edition to include recent ethnographic information. Each of those contains an expanded discussion of the contemporary situation of each group. The volume includes all new maps in each chapter, showing the location of the group in its region, as well as a world map with each group indicated. Expanded references have been moved to the end of the volume to serve as a bibliography. Also new to this edition are additional sources for further learning about each group, including museums, Web sites, and videos; these can be found on the Web site that accompanies *Culture Sketches* at www.mhhe.com/peters4. This Web site also provides links to maps and other pedagogical aids, including a test bank of multiple-choice questions.

The following is a brief overview of the chapters with the most significant additions:

The Azande

Included is a new section entitled "Azande Today: Resettled, Unsettled," which retains the discussion of the "Zande scheme" and adds a discussion of Azande involvement in Sudan's civil war, their internal displacement, and the struggle to control resources.

The Aztecs

This chapter includes five new ethnographic references, several of which suggest a rereading of the conquest from an indigenous perspective.

The Basseri

Reasons for sedentarization unique to the Basseri are expanded upon in this chapter. Included is a new last section entitled "Customary Strangers: Nomadic Pastoralists in the Modern World" which discusses educational programs for pastoralists ("Iranian tent schools"). This new section contains contemporary scholarship regarding nomadic peoples, examining the changing nature of their social systems, which are challenged by political and environmental transformations in numerous nation-states throughout the world. Also discussed is the demarcation and enforcement of new international borders, which in these tense political times have transformed some pastoralist travel along traditional migration routes.

Haiti

This edition updates the political situation in Haiti, noting the replacement of Aristide's government.

The Ju/'hoansi

An updated section, "The Ju/'hoansi Today," discusses the San court case contesting their displacement, as well as the modern challenges of alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS in the region. Botswana is the nation with the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world; Namibia is fifth. This places the San, 90 percent of whom reside in these two nations, at the epicenter of the epidemic.

The Kaluli

This chapter includes a new section, "'Before' and 'Now': Modernity and the Language of Missionization," that examines cultural change as evidenced by language change.

The Nuer

This chapter has a new section, "Modern Challenges: Civil War and Resettlement." It includes a consideration of the Nuer involvement in Sudan's civil war, its inclusion of the tribal rivalry between Nuer and Dinka, and also expands the examination of Nuer in the United States with a section on the "Lost Boys of Sudan," tens of thousands of children who fled their villages and walked hundreds of miles to refugee camps, 4000 of whom were eventually resettled in the United States.

The Ojibwa

This chapter includes a new section, "Environmental Degradation: Triumph over *Pijibowin*" (poison), that focuses on environmental degradation and land endangerment by industrial development.

The Samoans

This chapter introduces a discussion of the renewed visibility of chiefs in a number of modern nation-states, who mediate local realities and larger spheres of national and transnational interaction.

The Tiwi

This chapter considers the way dance in the *pukamani* ceremony demonstrates kin ties.

The Trobriand Islanders

This chapter includes a new section on tourism that discusses the ways in which Trobrianders create for their "customers" the performance tourists expect to see.

The Yanomamo

This chapter now includes information on the controversy surrounding Patrick Tierney's book *Darkness in El Dorado.*

→ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Errors in fact and judgment in the text that follows are mine alone. I extend thanks, however, to those who share in whatever is most successful therein. To Conrad Kottak for his continued confidence; to Kevin Witt and Larry Goldberg for their editorial skills. My appreciation to those who reviewed the third edition and whose comments helped shape the content of this volume: Michael Murphy, University of Alabama; Mark Tromans, Broward Community College; Greta Uehling, Eastern Michigan University; and Marilyn Walker, Mount Allison University. Their suggestions played a large role in its final form. I am indebted to Professor James Taggart, Franklin and Marshall College, who was the first to open anthropology's door to me and ably guide me over the threshold.

As always, it is my family to whom I offer thanks and admiration of a kind that is reserved for them alone: Rebecca and Jenna, women of grace, passion, and intellect; Marc, who provides all that no one else could.

Holly Peters-Golden

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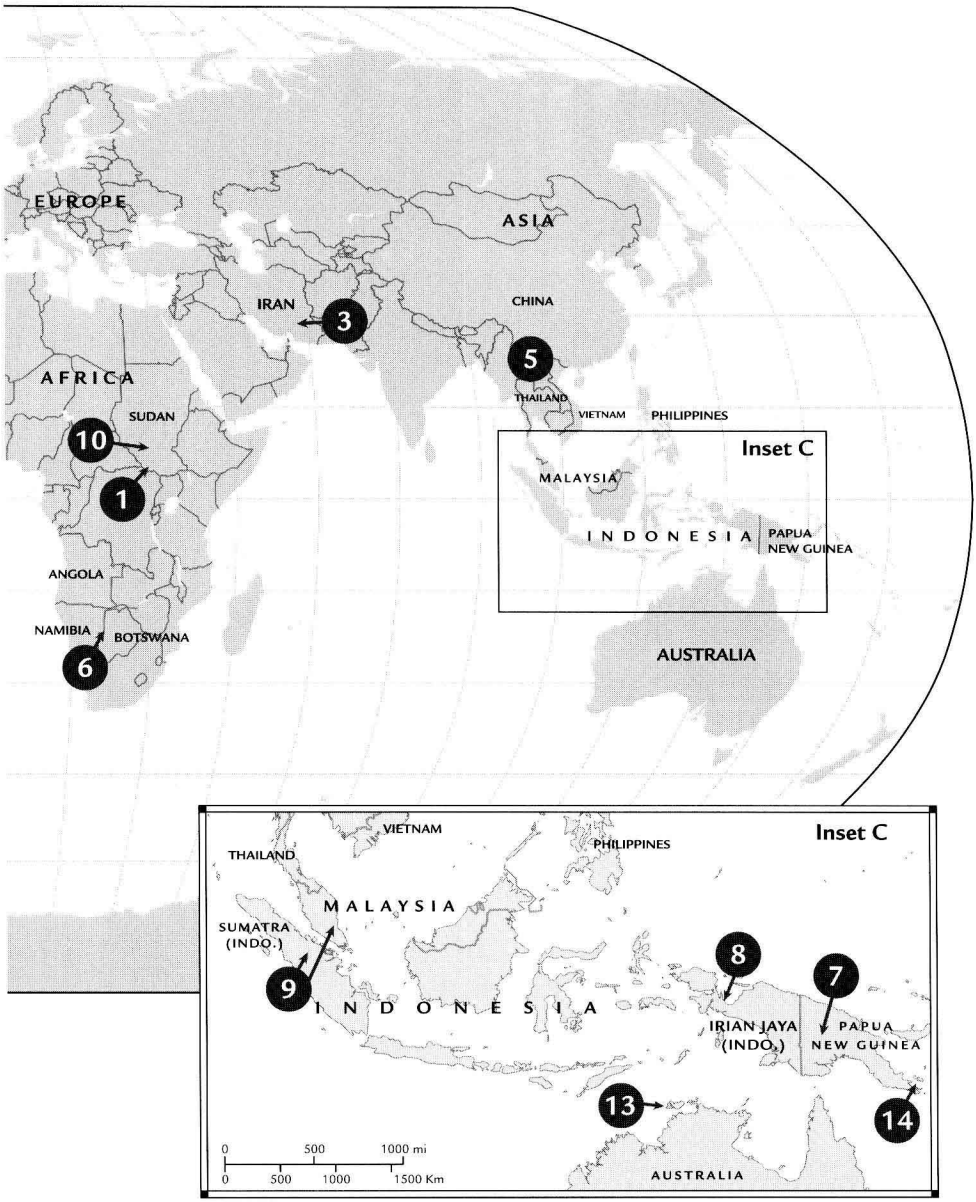
Location of Cultures Numbered by Chapter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THE AZANDE

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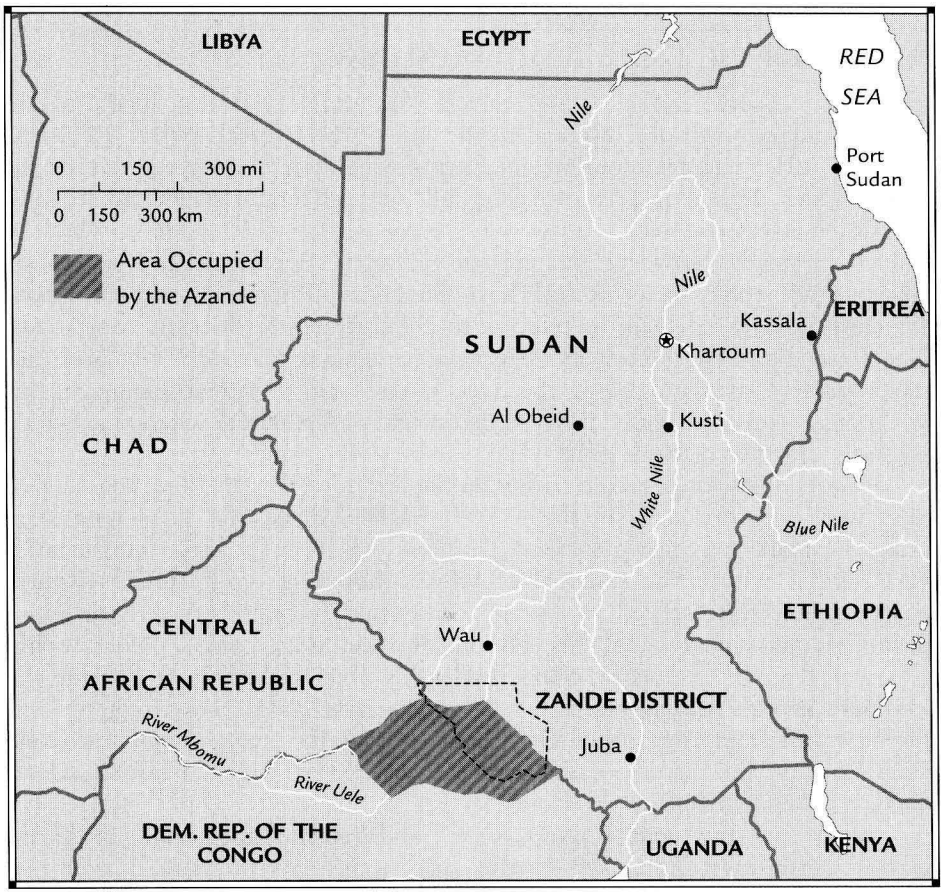


Location of the Azande in southwestern Sudan.

→ The Beginning

There are those who can set broken bones. Only they, and people healed by them, can do this. The first of them long ago fathered a child, and the child had no arms and no legs. He was round, like a cooking pot. People saw him and knew he was a child of Mbori, the supreme being. The ancestor had a dream. In the dream he was told to burn the child, and this he did. He was told to take the child's ashes and mix them with oil; this he could use to heal broken limbs. The ancestor did all he was told to do. He used the ashes of the child born with no limbs and created the clan of those who can heal the broken limbs of others.

→ Introduction and History

The Azande people live in a large area in the center of Africa, in the southwestern Sudan, north of Zaire and to the east of the Central African Republic. Sudan is Africa's largest country, measuring roughly a quarter the size of the United States. This is an area of rolling hills with abundant rivers and streams. On the banks of the waters grow tall trees, which provide shade in which to build homesteads. However, Azande fell victim to sleeping sickness spread by the tse-tse fly, which breeds in thick bush. Sudanese authorities, concerned about this exposure, forced them to relocate to concentrated settlements near roads. (The closeness of the houses in these new settlements was especially problematic. Formerly, structures along the river banks could be spread far apart; this was preferable to the Azande, who feared neighbors' potential witchcraft, which was only effective at close range.)

The peoples known collectively as the Azande are a melding together of what were separate clans in the past. In earliest times, the clans who lived along the banks of the waters were autonomous local groups. Clan disputes were settled within the families of which they were comprised. Disputes between clans were settled by elders from each. Zande history tells of a single individual who, through his wisdom and kindness, gained power within his own clan, the Avongara. Soon, under his able leadership, it became the dominant group. Moving eastward along the riverbanks, the Avongara conquered more than fifty other clans, and eventually amalgamated into one Zande group. The history of the area is characterized by such invasions and warfare (Reining 1966).

In the late nineteenth century, French and Belgian expeditions had set up military outposts in the Sudan; by the early twentieth century the Zande district was under British rule, which lasted until 1953. In that year, growing Sudanese nationalism led to Britain's granting of self-government. Sudan claimed independence in 1956, setting into motion a succession of unstable parliamentary governments and military regimes. Fundamentalist Islamic law was instituted in 1983, and was followed by a series of civil wars among Sudanese of varying religious, ethnic, and political allegiances.

→ SETTLEMENTS

Traditionally, the individual homestead of each couple and their children is the focus of the economic system. The construction and maintenance of homes are constant occupations, especially owing to the toll taken on them by weather, insects, animals, and fast-growing vegetation.

Homes are built of mud and grass framed on wooden poles, and thatched with grass. (One addition to traditional Zande homes is the European introduction of doors fitted with hinges and locks.) In addition to this living space, each household unit has a granary for storing millet. Houses are built around courtyards, which provide ideal places for gathering and conversation. These enclosed courtyards are seen as a window into the household life. Their upkeep is critical since they are seen as evidence of the responsibility or industriousness of their owners. Reining (1966:69) reports that his Zande informants would comment on the state of disrepair of their neighbor's homestead, and "analyzed courtyards as reflections of the inhabitants." They did not exempt themselves from such scrutiny; he continues: "I received a number of apologies from the heads of households about the state of their courtyards, with full explanations for the deficiencies of which they were ashamed" (Reining 1966:69).

The traditional courtyard arrangement appeared to have changed very little with European contact (Reining 1966), with the arrangement of each courtyard reflecting the composition of the household to which it is attached. Because each woman must have her own house and granary, polygynous households will have numerous homes and granaries around its courtyard. In a monogamous household, the average courtyard space is about sixty-five feet in its largest dimension. Households with more adult women may have yards that are one hundred feet square. Courtyards belonging to the households of chiefs are double this size.

"Kitchen gardens" are planted adjacent to the courtyards. These are used for plants that don't require large-scale harvesting or great attention. Pineapple, mango, papaya, and miscellaneous perennial plants used for meals immediately upon picking are found in these plots.

→ SUBSISTENCE AND MANUFACTURE

The Azande practice shifting cultivation (that is, no crop rotation, and incorporating a fallowing period), relying mostly on maize and millet, gourds and pumpkins, manioc and bananas, groundnuts, and beans. The tse-tse fly, problematic to animals as well as humans, makes cattle herding impossible. Whatever meat is consumed is secured through hunting. There is also a tradition of using forested areas to gather plants they do not cultivate. Dogs and chickens are the only domesticated animals.

The region has ample rainfall and many springs. These were a focus of Zande life, because they provided usable water nearly year-round. Water for daily use was carried from stream to homestead and the washing, among other

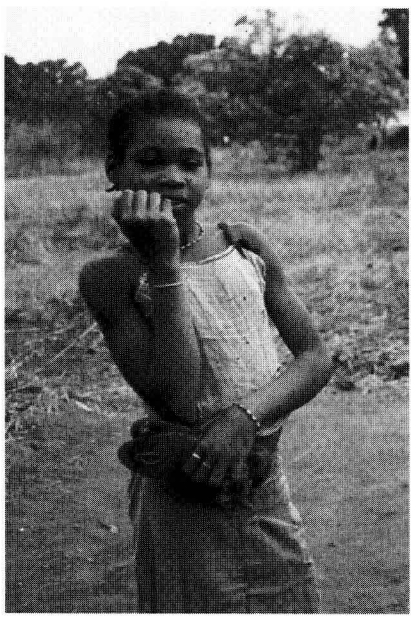
activities, was done at the river banks. In fact, the stream was central to Zande life in conceptual as well as practical terms. For example, distance is expressed by the number of streams between the points in question; the length of a journey is the number of streams crossed during travel. When asked about an exact location (such as an individual's birthplace) the answer will be the stream nearest that location. Given the centrality of the stream to the Azande, their relocation by the European administration caused major disruption in their cultural beliefs and practices.

The year consists of two seasons, one rainy and one dry. During the rainy summer, Azande cultivate their land. Although they have a long growing season and no frosts, the soil is not rich and insects are troublesome. As the hot, dry weather begins, crops mature and are harvested.

Hunting was most feasible in the dry season, when tall grasses had died or were burned, and when the harvest was over. During the rains, vegetation was too dense to allow necessary visibility.

Because rivers were low during this dry season, fish were more accessible. Men employed basket traps, which they set in the rapids of rivers; women dammed the streams into small shallow pools, drained them by bailing, and collected the fish, snakes, and crustaceans that remained. Termites were a favorite food, and their high fat and protein content made them a nutritious part of the diet.

In pre-European days, each family was an independent unit of production. Iron tools and spears were used as bridewealth items, but in general there was no tradition of exchange between households, which consisted of a wife or wives, husband, their children, and other dependents (such as widowed elderly). There was a sexual division of labor, and both women's and men's work were necessary to maintain an efficiently functioning household. Construction and repair of the house and granary were the responsibility of men. The arduous task of maintaining the courtyard and its gardens fell solely to women. Wealth, possessed mainly by chiefs, was primarily in the form of foodstuffs; the tradition of destroying a person's worldly goods upon death left little chance of inheritance of property.



Zande girl.

Azande have no tradition of occupational specialization. All manufacturing and craftswork were considered largely avocations, done by most. Woodworking and pottery, making nets and baskets, and crafting clothing out of bark were the most important of these skills.

→ Social and Political Organization

Kinship

Among the Azande, clan affiliation was not stressed at the local level. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1971), the ethnographer most responsible for knowledge about the Azande, found, as he endeavored to gather genealogies, that "except in the royal clan, genealogical relationships between clansmen were very seldom known and usually quite untraceable" (p. 14). Local groups, according to Evans-Pritchard, are, in essence, political units. He reports that his discovering members of the same clan living near one another is due as much to chance as anything else.

Chiefdoms

In pre-European times, the Azande were organized into a number of chiefdoms (sometimes called kingdoms), each of which was independent from the others. The Avongara were nobility; in the days of Zande chiefdoms, it was to Avongara lineages that chiefs belonged. Despite the fact that chiefs of differing groups all belonged to the same clan, there was ongoing hostility and warfare between them.

Chiefs ruled their lands and peoples by appointing emissaries (usually sons, but always Avongara) who were sent out to manage various sections of their territories. Within these communities, commoners were deputized to aid in administration.

Chiefs functioned as military leaders, economic leaders, and political leaders. Unmarried men were recruited into groups that functioned both as warriors and laborers on the king's lands. The governors of the territories had gardens which were also worked by these troops. Both governors and chiefs collected food from the peoples in their domain (provincial governors sending to the chief a portion of their tribute as well) to be redistributed. In addition to food, spears and other items (often payment for fines or bridewealth) were redistributed by the chiefs.

Warfare

Several miles of unsettled forest and bush were maintained between chiefdoms. Watch was kept on these borders by trusted sentinels who were designated to build their houses along these boundaries.

During the rainy season when grass grew tall and provided good cover, surprise attacks were made on these border sentries, usually ordered by the provincial leader. He undertook this action on his own, without permission granted from the chief. Counsel, however, was sought from a poison oracle, a process wherein poison is administered to an animal while questions are posed to the inhabiting spirit. The poisoned animal's behavior, as well as the point at which it succumbed to the poison, were interpreted by those with such skills.

Information was obtained concerning the most propitious days and place for the raid, the expected level of casualties, and which companies of warriors should be entrusted with the most dangerous duties. If the oracle indicated that the time was not right for victory, the plans were abandoned.

The oracle also designated a suitable time and place for the attack, and the proper individual to act as a spy. This individual was sent to report on as many aspects of the homestead to be raided as he could determine. Often the spy went under the pretense of visiting a relative or wishing to trade. The best time for a raid was on a feast day when men would be involved in the festivities, not likely to be armed, and quite likely to be drunk. To determine the exact day of the feast, the spy would plan his visit during the preparations for the festivities. Because beer was always brewed for the celebration, the spy could determine the feast day based on the stage of the brewing process.

A successful raid yielded tools, arms, food, and chickens, some of which were sent to the chief for redistribution. Whatever could not be carried off was destroyed. Huts and granaries were burned.

In addition to raids, there were larger mobilizations of war campaigns on a grand scale. These were ordered by the chief, after having consulted his own poison oracle, and might continue over a period of weeks. While knives and spears were used exclusively in raids, the introduction of rifles into these larger confrontations resulted in a shift from hand-to-hand combat to shots being fired from a distance. Only when ammunition was exhausted would those warriors wielding spears converge on the enemy.

Marriage

The traditional Zande system of marriage was greatly disrupted by European involvement. Administrators legislated broad changes, especially regarding bride payment, divorce, and age at marriage. Although many of these were ostensibly designed to improve the status of women, ethnographer Reining (1966:61–2) regards them rather as "an experiment in altering some aspects of a culture without providing for changes in values. . . . [illustrating] the unpredictability of arbitrary cultural changes." Azande did not share the European view that marriage was especially disadvantageous to women, whom they never regarded as servile, despite administrative interpretation of their customs.

Traditionally, the instigation for marriage among the Azande came from the potential groom. When a man wanted to marry a woman, he asked an intermediary to approach her father with his offer. Unless the suitor was deemed undesirable immediately, her father would discuss the matter first with his brothers and sisters, and next with the woman in question. If she was agreeable, the money sent with the intermediary was accepted.

Several days later, the suitor would visit his promised bride's parents, bringing gifts, and demonstrating his respect. In turn, their daughter visited her suitor's home for a "trial period" of several weeks, after which she returned to her parents home to make her final decision regarding the marriage.