

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Nuba people; Otoro (Dhitoro, Kawama, Kawarma, Litoro, Utoro); Kordofanian; Bantu/Niger-Congo (1)

1.2 ISO code:

ISO 639-3: otr (1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

Sudan among the Nuba mountains; “situated in the centre and south of Kordofan”; (“between Lat. 29 and 31W and Long. 10 and 12 30’ N”) (2p1)

“[The Otoro] occupy the centre of the broad range of hills sweeping south and south-west from Delami towards Talodi.” (2p84)

1.4 Brief history:

“The Otoro live and have always lived on the plateau in the high-lying valleys of their mountain range [for as far back as memory goes]... population movements within the hill range have repeatedly taken place, if tradition is to be believed, from the earliest times.” (2p86)

“Pressure and attacks by other groups or scarcity of food and land are said to have been the cause [of Nuba migrations].” (2p5)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

“The hill country itself is watered; springs, wells, and waterholes are found both within the mountain ranges and at the foot of the hills. It also has a much richer vegetation and is more densely wooded than the surrounding plains... the hills vary greatly in height and formation, low rocky chains, often little more than stony excrescences alternating with high, compact massifs or isolated hills rising abruptly from the plains.” (2p1)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

“The Nuba Mountains, or Nuba Jebels, as they are called on maps, cover an area of roughly 30,000 square miles.” (2p1)

“The total population of the Nuba tribes appears to be in the vicinity of 300,000; it is sub-divided in over fifty different ethnic groups.” (2p1)

“We find large groups like the Otoro with populations between 20,000 and 40,000.” (2p2)

The Otoro live across a narrow valley and are the largest tribe in the Eastern Jebels, inhabiting eight main hill chains. (2p86)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Maize, grains, milk—in particular for those who are old and have failing strength—via bulls, cows, goats, and sheep (2p65)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Beans, edible greens, ground-nuts, guinea-fowls (2p41)

2.3 Weapons:

Rifles, clubs, spears, shields (2p58)

2.4 Food storage:

“One of the two mud huts contains the indoor granaries and storage pots.” Outside granaries are made up of one or two high timber racks for drying grain. (2p88)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men perform most of the heavy work of farming, but both males and females cut firewood. Women do the lighter work of planting and weeding. Women work on the farm less than men in order to look after the home and prepare food. (2p41)

2.6 Land tenure:

“Small girls of ten to twelve already have little plots of their own on which they grow groundnuts for themselves.” (2p51)

“The produce from both far farms and house farms is regarded as the common property of husband and wife, and the husband will allot an adequate share in this family income to his wife for her own needs.” (2p52)

2.7 Ceramics:

Pottery and calabash vessels (6p53)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

The Otoro share quite well with one another, despite the fact that their cohorts exist independently from one another. (2)

“Neighboring communities which farm on separate territories will graze their herds on common pieces of land.” (2p62)

2.9 Food taboos:

“Clan-membership entails eating restrictions between members of different clans.” (2p4)

The Otoro believe that “to mix in your stomach food from the Lver and the Itobo causes lunacy.” (2p87)

The Otoro neither eat meat nor drink beer in their lonesome, but rather, do so in the company of friends and neighbors. (2p98)

Lizard flesh is forbidden to be eaten by Otoro. (2p98)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft:

None specified

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f)

[Referring to Tiv males] “The means and groupings of the measurements show [an average tribesman] to be: tall or medium, with a broad head and forehead, dolichocphalic, long upper facial height and leptoprosopic, and medium long and wide nose with a mesorrhine index.” (3)

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life history, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

Menstruation occurs around the age of twelve, when young girls are living separately in their *kur* and being courted by future partners. (2)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): N/A

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): N/A

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): N/A

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

“Courtship starts very early. Boys of thirteen to fifteen look around for a bride, whom they would find among the girls of eight to twelve.” (2p110)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

“It is altogether rare for the men to take the initiative of divorce... a wife will desert her husband (and eventually divorce him).” ... “of the different kinds of divorce we need consider only divorce on the grounds of a change in the affections of the wife, which represent both the most frequent, and to us, the most interesting variety.” (2p127)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous; percent males married polygynously:

All evidence has demonstrated that the society is polygynous with men taking multiple wives; he may have several or only one. (2)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry:

A bride price is a transaction that establishes a contract.

“Far from degrading the position of the woman, the bride-price gives her a definite status in the general social as well as legal sense of the word, and even helps to secure her a certain potential independence; for its economic *quid pro quo* represent a concrete and on the whole easily workable instrument for dissolving marriage (by means of a refund of the bride-price). But the bride-price is nevertheless a ‘price’, paid for an unusually commodity—the fertility of the woman—which the clan into which she was born releases for the benefit of the clan into which she marries.” (2p117)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

“Daughters go live with their husbands when they marry.” (6)

“Married sons may build themselves a new house near their father’s house; but as often they may move to a new place, some distance from the paternal home, even into another village or hill community. But they would move far away only if there is a good reason for it—above all, if they have quarreled with their family, the link between brothers is frequently so strong that, if an elder son moved to a new locality, his younger brothers would join him later.” (2p89)

Fathers may hand down land to their sons as “the allotment of new farm land to junior male members of the family [occurs] when they marry and found families of their own.” (2p29)

“Inheritance of land may skip one generation: a man may inherit his father’s farm, but leave it unworked until his son puts it again under cultivation... the inheritance of land from a ‘grandfather’ (a mother’s mother-brother) is very common.” (2p33)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

No attitudes (positive or negative) towards homosexuals are discussed.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Clan exogamy is a thing of the past in Otoro; “the old men in Otoro maintain that in the past the negative definition of exogamy was supplemented by positive rules of intermarriage between specific clans.” (2p94)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

One male fathers each child and is recognized as the father, but socially, a mother’s brother may also be considered a “father-figure.” (2)

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly?

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:

Sexual coercion and rape have severe consequences among the Otoro, allowing me to infer that they are not common.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):

No preference appears to exist.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

“Sexual intercourse with different wives does not always follow a strict roster [for men],” but there is no evidence that females enjoy this same amount of freedom when married. (2p89)

“Sex morality—marital and pre-marital—is extremely lax. Virginity of the bride is appreciated—vaguely and in a platonic fashion; it is rarely, if ever, a reality.” (2p119)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:

Gift-giving during courting does seem to exist as the men try to pursue women. (2)

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

“The formula, ‘children go with the bride-price,’ for example, stands for the whole set of rights and obligations implied in adoption—physical care, education, moral and economic responsibility. It is inevitable that these relationships should be expressed most forcibly (through the medium of bride-price payments) in the event of widowhood, i.e. that reorientation of relationships which must follow upon the death of a husband or wife, a father or mother.” (2p124)

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades:

Couvade, or 'paternal confinement,' implies "that the father shares all the avoidances and observances of the woman in confinement: he must not wash or do his hair until time for the final purification rite has come; he must not stir from the hut, nor do any manual work. If he did, he would, like the woman who breaks these rules, endanger the life of the new-born."

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older):

A mother's brother, as well as one's own father, are considered to be fathers.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:

"One of the reasons cited by Tiv for their preference for socially distant marriages [is that] marriage between people of sufficiently large lineage segments allows a man to lump his affines with his enemies and gives his children a large *igba* already disposed to support him against his *ityo*." (6p25)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

Sexual intercourse in forbidden kinship degrees is associated with clan exogamy; the concept is applied to women who marry into the clan. "Adultery or even flirting with wives or brides of clansmen is an offence against the code." (2p94)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

There does not seem to be a formal marriage ceremony, but rather, the transaction and fulfillment of the bride price is what constitutes such.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

"A most conspicuous 'matrilineal' trait is embodied in the naming of children. Males have two names: an adult name, which they assume during adolescence and of which we shall hear more later, and a first name, bestowed on the new-born. Women have only the latter name. The number of these birth names is very limited; there exist altogether only six different names." (2p106)

During maturity and as he enters manhood, a "young man will choose a name he fancies, mostly that of another man whom he admires, and inform his friends and relations that he would henceforth be known by this new second name." (2p133)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community?

The wife comes from a different clan than her husband and is "adopted" into his after she has either borne him one to two children or lived with him three to four years. (2p107)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

"Marriage is arranged entirely between a suitor and the girl's parents, and courtship is largely reduced to financial transactions... [an] initial present [is given to the bride's father] and this transaction establishes the marriage contract; afterwards, the man and girl are regarded as publicly engaged." (2p112)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

5. Warfare/homicide

5.1 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare

5.2 Out-group vs. in-group cause of violent death:

In killing an enemy, an Otoro must undergo certain purification rights before he could return to his daily life. “He slept outside the village, in an abandoned hut, for either days; he had to eat from broken gourds and had to paint his body white. [After] sacrifice, he was allowed to return home.” (2p148)

5.3 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

“If an Otoro kills another person within his own community, he violates the group code.” (2p148)

Treaties exist between tribes that surround the Otoro, but they are not intended to exclude or replace revenge. Reconciliation ceremonies take place to stop all further hostilities and re-instate intertribal peace. In such, two “Chiefs of Path” from each group would perform a sacrifice together to swear to be no more killing; the result of such would be that leprosy would befall on the one to break it. (2p159)

5.4 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

The Otoro hail from the same lineage as their Nuba neighbors so relations with such societies are quite peaceful. Homicide between clans of the same community is rare for the Otoro. (2p152)

“When there were people of clan A and B living in the same community, the rights and wrongs of the case [as to from whom they all diverged] became problematical. There could only be two solutions: either to regard the split-off clan section as separate clans, or to recognize blood feud between the different communities, and so extend the ‘in-group’ law until it embraces wider and wider groups [to achieve tribal unification].” (2p154)

5.5 Cannibalism

6. Socio-Political organization and interaction

6.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Group sizes vary throughout the mountains and valley because there is no real village structure that exists. (2)

6.2 Mobility pattern (seasonality):

“Population movements within [their] hill range have repeatedly taken place,” but the current plateau on which the Otoro reside is their present home. (2p86)

6.3 Political system (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

“The clans are, social, of equal order. There are no ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ clans... neither the possession of unusual magic faculties nor the memory of descent subserve such a distinction.” (2p93)

Otoro have a newly indigenous tribal chieftanship that has emerged as it’s political organization, but it is not well documented. (2p146)

“[In reality it is a society] without machinery of government. There are no local heads, no clans heads, no councils of elder... the group has [an irregular pattern of belonging together, which does not define [it] at large.]” (2p162)

6.4 Post-marital residence:

Women take up homes with their husbands after being married, but unmarried children remain in the home of their parents. (2)

6.5 Territoriality (defined boundaries, active defense):

“There are no artificial boundaries to distinguish the tracts of land belonging to different hill communities. Nor are the land rights rigid and exclusive with regard to individuals from other neighboring hill communities.” (2p25)

Tribal hill land is vaguely “owned” in that it often belongs to nobody, but the Otoro boundary is semi-definite in that it is marked somewhat by the back of a hill and a river bed. (2p27)

“The liberal attitude [of the Otoro] towards strangers [likely] contributed to keeping tribal land fluid and far from exclusive.” (2p29)

6.6 Social interaction division (age and sex):

“Adolescence is fitted into a rigid framework of age-grades, which lead the adolescent, step by step, from early youth to adulthood, and partly even beyond, to the highest grade of mature age.” (2p132)

Boys and girls diverge sociality with one another once they have the onset of puberty. (2p132)

6.7 Special friendships/joking relationships

6.8 Village and house organization:

“Otoro homesteads are scattered loosely and irregularly over hilltops and valleys... The eight hills of Otoro form as many separate hill communities (*ken*, or *amrgen*), each with numerous homestead and hamlets. Each hamlet or ‘village’ bears a special name [based on either the name of the hill range or the name of the main settlement on the hill].” (2p87)

“Man, wife, and unmarried children form the complement of the Otoro kitchen.” (2p88)

“[They do not possess] a conspicuous centre of community life, like a market-place or an imposing chief’s house.” Boundaries are fluid. (2p88)

6.9 Specialized village structures:

“A homestead consists of two to three round mud huts arranged in a row or at an angle and leading into each other. As a rule, a flat-topped mud-and-wattle structure, round or square, adjoins the huts, serving as an entrance-hut, store-room, and sleeping-hut for the boys.” (2p88)

6.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?:

Beds are scattered throughout the home. “Bigger girls, if they are staying at home, sleep round or on top of the big indoor granaries.” (2p88)

6.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

“The local community is not organized on a kinship basis. Neither families nor the wider social unit based on kinship, the clan, coincide with local groups... many clans appear concentrated in different local communities, occurring in large numbers in one, and being absent or weakly represented in others.” (2p89)

“The small individual family living in one house (or in several connected houses of co-wives) forms the nucleus of the social organization of the tribe.” (2p90)

6.12 Trade:

6.13 Indications of social hierarchies:

“The clans are, social, of equal order. There are no ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ clans... neither the possession of unusual magic faculties nor the memory of descent subserve such a distinction.” (2p93)

7. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

7.0 Time allocation to RCR

7.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

“Two clans, which are *qua* clans, invested with a certain healing magic [potentially possess] the gift of *nadyama*, of curing intestinal apins by laying his (or her) hands on an ailing body.” (2p95)

7.2 Stimulants

7.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Couvade, or “paternal confinement,” takes place in preparation for the birth of a new-born. (2)

“In burials, the direction in which the head of the body is placed varies in accordance with the clan the dead belonged... the ‘ritual direction’ is not an absolute one; it is orientated not on the points of the compass, but on a concrete landmark—the flank or peak of a mountain.” (2p72)

With the onset of puberty, both boys and girls undergo the same mutilation of having their lower front teeth being broken out. (2p132)

7.4 Other rituals:

Scarification rituals are performed on male warriors to mark their work and as evidence of their ability.

“The two peaks of age-grade life are the triennial promotion ceremony and its sequel, the taking of adult names of the newly promoted *kamju*.” (2p137)

7.5 Myths (Creation):

7.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Dancing is extremely valued by the Otoro and it is “sinly” to be restricted from doing so. Festivals during the dry season consist of dancing games. (2)

7.7 Sex differences in RCR:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 RCR revival:

7.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

7.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

7.12 Is there tekonymy?

No evidence of tekonymy exists.

7.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

Magic exists in that it is believed that supernatural devices must be access in order to bring justice to those that commit crimes. A goat may be sacrificed during the trial of a culprit, in which the perpetrator's soul is said to die with the animal unless he repents. (2p155)

“Witchcraft is not an evil force of certain individuals. Rather, it is a magic which any can use, and which is effective only if directed against a person (known or, above all, unknown) guilty of a crime. Witchcraft is thus itself a form of retaliation, an agency of fictitious justice going beyond the realm of action attainable by ordinary human efforts.” (2p157)

8. Adornment

8.1 Body paint:

“A certain quantity of milk is regularly made into butter, which is used, never for food, but for the decoration of the body. (2p65)

No tattooing evident. (3)

During dances that take place during the dry season as social events, *dongoro* and *babo* warriors wear war paint with the former having their entire body white and the latter wearing “white-painted stockings.” (2p137)

8.2 Piercings

8.3 Haircut

8.4 Scarification:

“Cuts or scarification are present on the cheeks and temples of many.” (3)

“Men who killed an enemy in a fight are entitled to have a small pattern of scars (four to seven rows) cicatrized on their backs.” (2p141)

Women often get scars starting their breasts leading to their navels as a marking of a significant event, such as her first menstruation or the birth of a child. (2)

8.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

“The finery with which they don when going out to a dance or some tribal sport—dried palm leaves tied round arms and legs, a few feathers in the hair, a goatskin round the waist—is incomplete without at least a thing coating of butter on arms, shoulders, and head.” (2p65)

8.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

During dances that take place during the dry season as social events, *dongoro* and *babo* warriors wear war paint with the former having their entire body white and the latter wearing “white-painted stockings.” (2p137)

8.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Men who have killed an enemy may rally under an old symbol of ostrich feather tied to a long stick. (2p141)

8.8 Missionary effect

8.9 Cultural revival in adornment

9. Kinship systems

9.1 Sibling classification system

“In the nucleus of the individual family, two planes meet which, together, circumscribe kinship structure. One appears as an extension of the biological family, with all its various relationships—paternal and maternal, affinities of descent as of marriage; all these we subsume in the term ‘kindred.’” (2p92)

9.2 Sororate, levirate:

“Widows are expected to remarry in a modified form of levirate, i.e. to a brother or at least a clansman of their late husband.” (2p117)

9.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

10. Other interesting cultural features

The Otoro are considered to be fiercely singled-minded. (2p144)

In Otoro society, suicides are frequent. (2p172)

Numbered references

1. www.ethnologue.com
2. Nadel, S.F. (1947). *The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan*. London: printed and published by Oxford University Press.
3. Field, Henry (1952). *The Faiyum Sinai Sudan Kenya*. London: Cambridge University Press.