

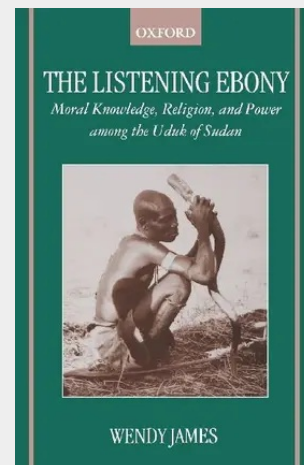
James

The Listening Ebony

Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan

Notions of the person and of the foundations of bodily and moral experience lie at the heart of this second ethnographic volume devoted to the Uduk-speaking people of Sudan. The first part discusses enduring elements of personal knowledge in the context of a hunters' worldview. The second part gives an account of how alien religious discourse has confronted the Uduk in the course of the region's political history. The third section tells the story of the contemporaneous rise of a new diviners' movement, in part an antithetical response drawing upon the older cultural strata. The key act of the diviners is oracular consultation of the burning ebony wood: through the ebony, personal healing is sought and the foreign gods are kept at bay. The author abandons a number of older anthropological paradigms and their relativist assumptions. In drawing upon general moral philosophy, historical writing, and literary criticism, she offers a modern, humane analysis with important implications for the cross-cultural study of religion. In a new introduction Wendy James explains how the Sudan-Ethiopian borderlands were overrun by war in 1987, and how all the villages described in the original edition were destroyed. Having revisited the Uduk for various UN agencies she is able to provide an indication of the way in which they have since been embroiled in the war, and how the survivors have increasingly embraced Christianity in the course of their exile. She refers to her own reports and publications written since 1988 and to the TV documentary on the Uduk and other refugees which she made with Granada in 1993. Details of other recently published work on the region and to relevant new emphases in anthropology which focus on displacement, violence, and memory have also been added.

This groundbreaking study explores the notions of person, and the foundations of bodily and moral experience among the Uduk-speaking people of the Sudan-Ethiopian border. James focuses particularly on enduring elements of personal knowledge in the context of a hunter's world-view, how alien religious discourse has affected the Uduk in the course of the region's political history, and the rise of a new diviners' movement based upon the oracular consultation of the burning ebony wood.



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