

21A.100

Final Writing Assignment – Neur

Due in class Thursday 12/02/04

Marcel Mauss and the articles on exchange in the reader are concerned with the movement of objects among people and their significance for social relations. Hutchinson's Nuer Dilemmas, although it does not mention Mauss, is in large part about the circulation of things, both tangible things like guns and imagined things like blood and pollution.

Choose at least three things from the following list—money, cattle, blood, food, spears, and guns—and write an essay about their movement and meaning among the Nuer. Consider the following:

- How does the circulation of objects affect relations among people (men vs. women, husbands vs. wives, young men vs. older men, etc.)?
- What meanings and values are attributed to these things?
- How are things treated as equivalent or not equivalent by the Nuer? That is, can one thing (e.g. cash) be exchanged, completely or partially, for another or be converted into another (e.g. cattle)? Is one thing seen as (completely/partially) the same as another?
- How have civil war, colonial rule, and other hardships and changes affected all of this?

Do not mechanically answer the above questions, and do not just spit back a section from Hutchinson's book. You can't cover everything she says, anyway, even on one subject. Write your own essay.

There many ways to organize the essay, but one obvious way is to divide it into two or three sections, devoting each section to one thing and its relationship to people and other things. Alternatively, you could devote each section to a pair of things (money/cattle, blood/food, guns/spears). If you have enough to say and are willing to take the risk, you could devote the whole essay to one thing and its meanings and connections, or to one pair of things.

See your section leader if you need a brief extension.