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Anywaa Traditional Administration and Political Systems



1. Introduction

The Anyuak/Anywaae-plural/ are riparian/ riverbank people whose villages are built along the banks of five rivers: Openo, Alworo, Gilo, Akobo and Oboth in East Africa. The legacies of colonialism left Anywaa people divided into two countries, Ethiopia and Republic of South Sudan. Most of Anywaae are living in the Southwestern of Ethiopia, Gambella Region, where as minority of them live in Southern Sudan mainly in Akobo and Pochalla counties adjacent to the border of Gambella Region. The name 'Anyuak' or 'Anuak' or 'Anywaa (Anywaae)' literally means 'I shared' or 'to share'. As a member of Nilo-Sahara people's group whose economy is based on agriculture, the Anyuak are dominantly farmers, semi cattle's herders, fishermen, gold miners and iron technologists. They share a similar language origin with their neighboring Nilotic peoples such as, Acholi in Uganda, Joluo in Kenya, Tanzania, and Congo; as well as Jor Chul, Paari, Shilluk and Pajulu in South Sudan. Most of Anywaae are Christians, although some traditionally believed in almighty spirit known as 'Jwok'. The total population of Anywaa worldwide is estimated to be 350,000. This article focuses on main features of Anywaa traditional administration, political systems of headman (Kwarri) and Nyiye (nobleman or king), migration, origin and functions of the two political leaderships.

2. General Trends of Anywaa Migration

The early history and traditional political system of Anywaa-Anyuak headman/ kwarro will go back to about 2200 BC (Kevin, 1995) and Chief Cheway who had been a founding father, grandfather, and creator of the Anywaa ethnic, empire, and kingdom. He is an Anyuak man whom we all believed in as Chief and divine God. He had moved from the Sahara Desert downward to settle around Lake Chad for number of years when he and his followers were struck by drought and then moved to live near confluence of White and Blue Nile Rivers; currently known as Khartoum Bare in Sudan. According to Kevin Shillington this was the same period of 2200 B.C "when Sahara was drying out increasingly... rapidly and the large numbers of Sahara pastoralists and hunters... push into the Nile valley, disrupting the settled farmers whom they found there." Cheway was a member of Nilo-Sahara African peoples' group and had migrated together with his "Lou" people group along the Nile River downward to southwest. For instance, there is a proverb in Anyuak language that the name 'Lou people' was obsessed from migration. It means, let us (Innocent and good people) walk along the river bank to southward following this monster, longest, and giant river; the Nile.

Most importantly, Kwarro Cheway was a well-known architect, explorer, political leader, peacemaker, and pioneer who took the lead in certain areas around Nile River and its' tributaries.

As a pioneer, he had gone into the great unknown areas to explore strange new lands and settled there. In those new areas of space "We have already seen that the harvesting of sorghum, wild, domestic, was taking place in Khartoum region as early as 6000 BC" (Kevin, 1995, P. 30) and there could be no more evidence other than this to confirm that Cheway and his people were among those settled communities to invent sorghum. This iconic figure created a new system of government known as Kwarr or Kwarro traditional political system. His political system was personally headed by him and other leaders to administer and protect the entire Anyuak kingdom, empire, and ethnic group as they migrated along River Nile before his descendants scattered along its tributaries: Openo, Alworo, Gilo, Akobo, and Oboth rivers.

On these tributaries we had many villages that were governed by his descendants.

For further research about him, I would encourage scholars and recommend to them that they better carry out research in Jocheway clan villages such as Itang Burra, Pumoli, Edeni, Egilo, Erwanyo, Phino, Anyali, Perbongo, Pochalla Olura, Ojalo, Omilla and Pochalla Dhewatnyilak.

Furthermore, Cheway's cabinets who helped him to administer the first generation of Anyuak in the newly created political system had become our twelve clans. But in early headman chiefdom, evidences are indicating that there were only eleven senior officials (cabinet members). The secret of Chief Cheway success in protecting his kingdom from extinction was his quality leadership and performance in implementing the political and organizational structure he created. This early political system or governance and organizational structure are still functioning as a model in many chiefdom and kingdom villages today. For example in one of Jocheway villages of Itang Burra the governance and organizational structure of Kwarro /Granymatch Omot Oway Oja Gilo on diagram 1 in this article was identical with that of Cheway in which 'Burra' served as the governing body of Itang village. In the same diagram, as well as diagram 2 and 3, the headman/Kwarro was not only the head of governing body, but also chief peacemaker, commander in chief, head and political leader of the village.

The inception of Anywaa kingdom had become the introduction of new clan, political unit, and stable political culture which marked the beginning of the first ruling class in Anywaa political history. Prior to that, Chief Cheway had only one and the first clan known as Cheway. Kwarro Cheway was the only leader of that free one clan and nation. He had played a remarkable and decisive role in defending, protecting, and leading the Anyuak ethnic to peaceful way of life. He was also the only Kwarro, chief of justice, political leader to lead and protect the Anyuak ethnic (population) from enemy attacks for many hundreds of years. But some people views on delicate replacement of Kwarro Cheway by his daughter's son do reflect neither its appropriation nor misappropriation to his kindness, heirs and descents. The replacement itself was not only controversial but also full of 'conspiracy' theory and tactics. The mystery was that even though King Gilo Okiro/Ochudho came to throne/power by fortune and cleverness, he had marked the downfall of Kwarro Cheway chiefdom and beginning of the new era of kingship which was the hitherto political system of Chullo- Shilluk, one of the Lou people groups.

Traditionally, King Gilo Ochudho is believed to be son of a strange man known as Okiro/Ochudho who had been caught from fishpond nearby village. Up to now no one knows about where that fishpond and adjacent village are located. King Gilo Ochudho mother, Koree was daughter of Chief Cheway and First Lady (Gwanyo) Ajo. Many people believe that Koree was decent girl who obeyed order of her father to provide all accommodations to that stranger guest with whom she eventually had controversial pregnancy. Apparently, King Gilo Ochudho was the first Anyuak king who came to power through his grandfather family tree or lineage because of the mistake or conspiracy that was committed by another clan, Jowadtong, who killed Chief Cheway's heir apparent son. The killing became good opportunity for those of Jowadtong clan to introduce feudal monarchy political system. In many aspects, King Gilo had replaced Kwarro Cheway tradition and political system by changing 'Burra' into 'Chwott' to conduct his political, administrative and court affairs independently. He became instrumental in the reformed political system which became second or another option to attract many Anyuak people into the Kingship's political spectrum.

According to interview with Kwarro/Granymatch Omot Oway Oja Gilo conducted in 1993 by UNDP enumerators in Gambella (Ethiopia), youngest children of Cheway had revived movement to resurrect political power of the Chiefdom. The revival of the Chiefdom was led by Kwarro Cheway's youngest son by the name called "Owthwonth." Therefore Owthwonth Cheway was the first descent to reclaim Cheway's political power.

However, the son of Owthwonth known as Ogwyieno had migrated into today's Itang where Jottido Anyuak and Olani ethnic group were living. The movement of Ogwyieno to find his own new space was supported by King Gilo Ochudho who never wanted to hand over his throne to his uncle son. Instead of that King Gilo made a little favor by instructing the members of Cheway clan to move into separate and different new land known as Openo/Baro salient/ on the bank of Openo River.

His Excellency Kwarro Granymatch Omot Oway Oja Gilo in the same interview pointed out that Ogwyieno and Cheway clan people were accompanied by King Gilo's body guards on his way to Eastward where those of Itang village people resided until today (Omot Oway, 1993).

3. Origin and Functions of the Two Political Systems

In recent history, Anywaa has two very close and identical political systems in running their affairs. In addition to the Kwarro traditional political system, Anywaa have /had a second Kingship political system. Most importantly, Anyuak kingdoms political system is almost a direct copy from that of the headman traditional political system. Of course slight changes have been made to formulate things differently while most of them stayed the same. Previously Kwarro was the head of the government and representative of the all village and its people. As the same as that, the King is also the head of his government and leader of his village and its people.

Anyuak kingdom has a conservatory of Kwarro Cheway early Chiefdom tradition political system and decent organizational structure, which maintained the ancient Lou tribal unity, political culture and societal stability. It's political, administrative, social and economic institutions provided ample evidences that Anyuak is a nation that could manage its own affairs as a democratic republic rather than a political system that is based on old feudal monarchy of one man supreme authority. But how many people know that Anyuak kingdom was among the oldest kingdoms in the world with no written historical documents? Who were the first Anyuak Kwarro and Nyiea to establish the Anyuak kingdom? Why and when did Chief Cheway put his grandson to his own throne to be the King in the past and even today? These are mysterious questions that I would not intend to answer in this article. But there is fact that Anywaa themselves, friends, and other readers need to understand. That is about Cheway Kingdom's throne transference to Gilo Okiro when the empire was almost close to collapse and decline due to Chief Cheway physical malfunction; and his war commanders' conspiracy and atrocity in killing his heir apparent son. In fact, the transfer of Cheway kingdom to his grandson, Gilo is the extension of Cheway chiefdom political system to several kingdoms in some villages around the east bank of Akobo River. I believe researchers and scholars need to do more findings about how Cheway kingdom was transferred to King Gilo Ochudho; by determining it as either the peaceful or unlawful mechanism in successions to power? In the following paragraphs in this article there will be short brief, comparison and contrast between the early Kwarro Cheway chiefdom and Kingship political system.

Culturally, there are some differences in term of the names of objects and possessions. For example the military headquarters of Kwarro is called "Balla", and "Bura" for his Capitol Hill, where as for the king is known as "Chwott." The farm land for Kwarro is known as "Omahal" while it is called "Odiek" to King. When it comes to other services, there are similarities and differences notably 'Pandwong'/palace, and 'Owanyongo'; 'Kwaylwake/kwatchlwake' for Kwarro is a person who is in charge of youth population. Whereas for Nyiyea, Kwatchlwake means is a strong person who is in charge of war as a commander.

The message here is that as the nobles spread and emblems circulated through many villages around eastern part of Akobo, the king for the short time of his tenure of emblems had great prestige but little authority outside his own village (Evans-Pritchard, 1977). This means that the king was powerful enough in his own village to penalize commoners/subjects who disobeyed him but no moral authority over other villages and commoners. Similarly, there was no central authority in Anywaa two systems of leadership that governed the entire Anywaa people.

Yet, few Anyuak exaggerate the old school of Kings central authority and jump to general conclusion that in Anyuak political and organizational structure there is one powerful king to preach to when we do not have any one at all. This is true also to Chiefdom in Anyuak tradition and political culture.

Many people do agree that there was no centralism obeyed by all chiefs/Kwarri or Nyiye due to absence of unification movement in Anyuak political history. In case some argue that there was one central leadership, I will be happier to review the tangible evidence rather than bringing cooperation acts and unity of the past in which ancient and modern Anyuak have been helping each other to defend and protect their livelihood from outsiders enemies' attack.

On the other hand, I would like to divulge that the hierarchy of Kwarro and King is not set either into written law or unwritten law as to who has the supreme power over another. Historically, Anyuak Kings refer to Kwarri as their uncles or grandfathers while kwarri called Kings as their nephews or grandsons. Throughout the years we have never seen any power struggle between the two ruling families on issues of accountability. In reality, study on governing structure shows that all kwarri were independent and accountable to their respective villages. No Kwarro is/was accountable to other Kwarro or Nyiea. The records indicate that ordinary Anyuak people were subjects to their village chiefs/Kings. They paid taxes to their own village Kwarro or Nyiea. Similarly, no Kwarro was required by law to pay taxes either to other village Kwarro or Nyiea. Taxes were paid in form of kinds rather than cash. No paper money existed in the traditional political system. Any Anyuak citizen was/is obliged to give expensive wild animals and products eligible to taxation, such as elephant, lion, and leopard, tiger, 'Kong', rhino and 'Omhoa'. Only Kwarri had the right to possess these tax items. Anyuak snipers and hunters were/are blessed and awarded by all villagers when they kill these expensive wild animals because of obvious reason that they would present them to Kwarro in the form of taxation. The whole purpose of giving these expensive wild animals to Kwarro was that Kwarro would be able to help other citizens in the village with these taxes or assets. He would award other poor people from taxation to become married couples. This system provided opportunities for prosperity and increased the population of the village.

For further understanding of functions, the following were some of senior officials appointed in cabinet of kwarro to fulfill public duties.

- 3.1. **Karwang**, Special Administrator and Advisor to Headman/Kwarro to assist him in administrative matters, political policies and public issues. In the absence of Kwarro he would run all affairs of the village as speaker of Kwarro.
- 3.2. **Nyikugu**, Head of the Balla department who provided assistance in the administrative and political affairs of the village during the absence of both Kwarro and Karwang.
- 3.3. **Nyitoga**, General Counsel of internal affairs of the village who provided assistance to kwarro in social, economic and cultural matters. He was the strongest man in the village to advocate and mobilize the entire village for prosperity. He was responsible for awards and special ceremonies among the leaders and ordinary people in the village. He also performed as Chief of Security and Advisor.
- 3.4. **Nyiburr**, Head of land tenure and Census. He made decision on use of farm land. He distributed farms and residential lands for the landless people, and kept update on the statistics of land and population. He also provided justice for those in need of it and supervised village's borders demarcation.
- 3.5. **Nyieatowieli**, Head of Public Relations and Information serving as Special Messenger.
- 3.6. **Nyikano**, Head of Home Economics, cook, and food services for Kwarro and offices of Pandwong. A chef of Kwarro should be a male in gender.
- 3.7. **Kwatchtong**, Military chief of staff & commander who provided assistance to Nyikugu in time of war in the defense services.
- 3.8. **Nyipour**, Head of Economic and Welfare services department responsible for management and sanitation of 'Amoa', food court.
- 3.9. **Kwachluak** of Joburra was one of the commanders who provided assistance to Nyikugu in the time of war. He was the war front commander who put a lot of efforts to make all assigned soldiers fight accordingly.
- 3.10. **Nyibatbogo**, Personal Advisor and Protocol Officer who provided assistance to Kwarro on personal

matters. He protected Kwarro as security officer when moving on unofficial visits to other places out Burra and Pandwong.

3.11. **Kwatchongno**, coordinator or contact person of Girls Club. He was responsible for management of the club and supply of drinks and sanitary services in Burra. He also organized youth of the village for occasional dancing and celebrations. In most of chiefdom political structures three senior officials: Kwatchong, Kwachluak of Burra and Kwatchongno are accountable to Nyikugu rather than to Kwarro.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

To sum it up, all kwarri and Nyiye of the entire Anywaa Chiefdoms and Kingdoms had equal positions. There was no major distinction between the two political systems and structures except slight reforms. Both Chiefdom and Kingdom were independents to their villages and had similar officials/seats to exercise the identical types of political duties and administration. Chronologically, it suffices to conclude that Kingdom is the copy of Chiefdom political system and organizational structure established later in the 15th century by Gilo Ochudho who was the grandson of Chief Cheway. Both systems have had interrelation and interconnection. For example, both Kwarri and Nyiye did exercise the public power on the basis of principles of neutrality, and non-interference policies into other village political affairs except when major cooperation and deals were required to defeat the common enemy of Anyuak society.

Most of anthropologists who had been in Anywaa land for research particularly in Cheway settlement areas agree that Cheway was the founding father, grandfather, and creator of the Anywaa ethnic, empire and kingdom. We have to keep the legacy of his leadership as well as ownership of sorghum farm producers and consumers. The discovery of sorghum and wild rice that took place in Khartoum region in the early 6000 B.C was the reliable indication and evidence of real legacy of Cheway political organizational structure that made Anywaa society stable and long live free nation on earth. Finally, I recommend that Anywaa society as free nation, needs to reestablish Kwarro chiefdom political leadership at village, district, zonal and regional levels by creating an alternative house known as 'House of Traditional Chiefs' to save the Anyuak population and culture from extinction. The current security concerns prevailing in both countries, Ethiopia and Republic of South Sudan are pertinent conditions for such institutions.

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Appendix or Diagrams

Diagram 1- Kwarro/Headman Organizational structure of Governing body

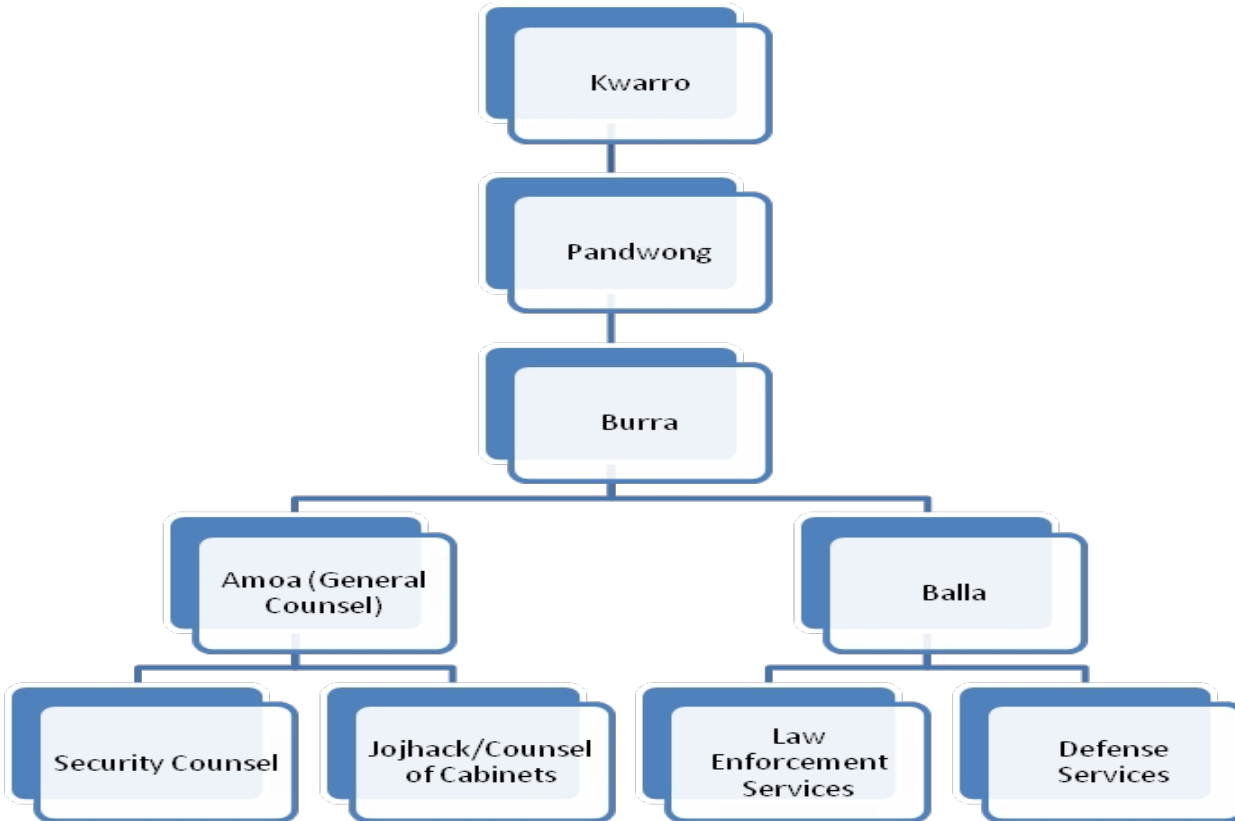
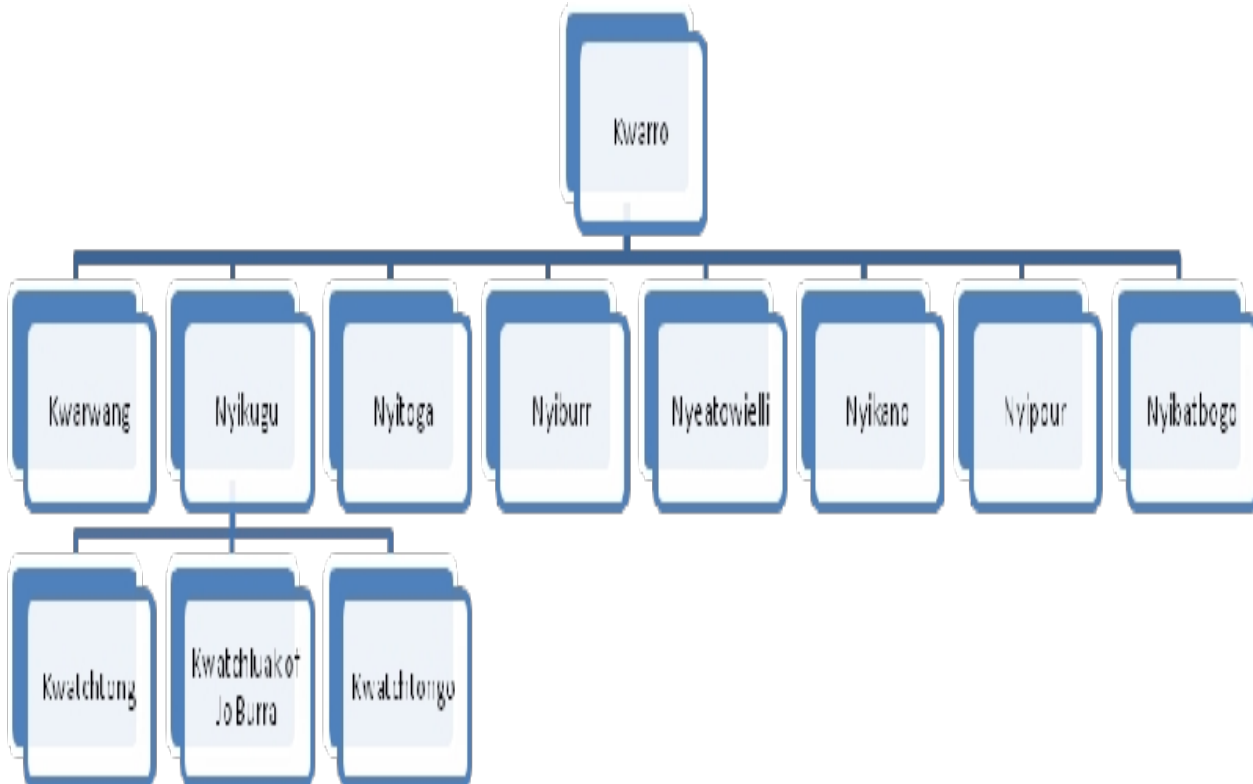


Diagram 3- Kwarro Chieftom Leadership Structure of Appointees and Senior Officials.



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