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Dear Mr Brokensha and Hayano ,

I was most interested in your letters regarding the Times article on the Sudan village. I certain agree with and understand your objections to the ethnocentric tone of the article which was emphasized by the adjectives as you pointed out.

But as a layman, I was puzzled by your objections to the nouns--particularly the term Witch doctor which both of you jumped on very hard. I am particularly interested in this because I have used the term in some of my own writing which will soon be published, and I'm not anxious to upset anthropologists.

I've only lived in Africa (Kenya) for a couple of years, so I'm certainly no great authority, but I did learn enough Kiswahili to get along, and I really don't believe that any of the English-speaking Africans (except for the very small minority of University educated people) would know what you were talking about if you said Shaman--but every one of them would know about and commonly use the term Witch Doctor.

Nor do I understand the objection to black African tribes, goats would be sacrificed. Both of these seem to me to be ordinary enough, commonly used and understood and correct interpretations. Tribe has got to be one of the most frequently used words in highly divisive, tribalized, Africa and many of the tribes do sacrifice goats, as I'm sure you know.

I would really appreciate it if you would comment on this, because, as I said, I don't want to make the same mistakes, and the fact that you have both written, independently, in the same vein confirms that there is something very valid that I'm missing as a layman anthropologist.

Sincerely,



Jack Couffer