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FORM AND INTENTION IN EAST AFRICAN STRATEGIES OF DOMINANCE AND AGGRESSION

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INTRODUCTION

We are accustomed to using the same terms to describe aggressive behavior between human individuals, groups and collectivities such as nations, and we often use the same terms as well to depict such behavior both in small scale rural societies and highly complex urban settings, and both for animal and human populations. An everyday vacabulary exists which has drawn from quasi-scientific developments in Psychology and Ethnology, Anthropology, and Political Science, concerned with systems of conflict among primates, non-Western societies, and nations, and notions such as 'dominance hierarchies', 'blood feuds', and 'balance of power' are commonly used together with the sort of metaphorical exactitude which characterizes most ordinary language, communication by suggestion and nuance. All too often, however, the use of such concepts as 'dominance', 'threat', or 'aggression' to label behaviors across diverse levels and cases seems to suggest the proof of their validity for comparative analysis. In this essay, and drawing primarily on examples from East Africa, I would like address the problems and possibilities of comparison between dominance and aggression systems at several levels, while critically reflecting on the nature of the models we use in bridging diverse cases and disciplines.

The thesis which will be discussed in the next section can be depicted in condensed form; it will serve as a set of guidelines for a discussion of ethnography in the third section. The thesis is:

1).<u>structure and intentionality:</u> a). that behavior should be understood as involving aggression, conflict or dominance within the context of 'systems' that are internally structured; b). that the significance of each element of the structure (which may relate directly to actions) derives from a level of 'intentionality' which depends in part on the actors' intention or meaning and in part on the elements'

meaning within the structure and in the context of its enactment.

2). form and analogy: a). that there are useful analogies to be drawn between the subject matter of non-human primate dominance and aggression, conflict and warfare in small-scale pre-industrial societies, and the military strategies of highly mechanized armies in nation states, for which similar terms may be used out of convenience and for constructive comparison; but b). that many of these analogies cannot be demonstrated to represent homologies, stemming from a common primate heritage, but are more formal than substantive, deriving from either formal constraints on social interaction or on the reasoning underlying these analogies or more elaborated explanatory logic.

In the third section, the question of form and intentionality will be applied to several issues in the ethnography of East African societies, with special reference to the Maasai;[1] each of these issues will yield useful analogies to primate and strategic studies, but, I will argue, require a structural and meaningful (intentional) account, rather than a behavioristic one, and may result from formal rather than substantive relations to those other fields of study. The issues to be discussed are aggression and symmetry, dominance and power, and the motives and functions of dominance and aggression systems.

INTERPRETING CONFLICT

A baboon chases a rival away from a section of bushland, a group of warriors deters a herder from crossing a river to reach a section of pasture each claims, and an alliance establishes a transnational military line across which the army of the opposing alliance must not cross. Are these examples of 'territoriality'? In Maasai society, a ritual village may divided in half by moieties,

the pasture outside a cattle gate reserved for the livestock of the family of the gate, and a water source may be identified with a given clan. Territoriality?

A large, young male baboon offers its rear to an aged 'alpha' male, a proud warrior waits expectantly for a tired elder to recognize him in greeting, and a small nation waits to see the opinion of large and powerful nation before voting. Are these examples of 'deference' and 'dominance'? In one society, a wife may wait for a husband's opinion before offering her own, a child will refuse to sleep in the same house as its father, and a seat is left vacant during a council for the spokesman to occupy. 'Deference', 'dominance', all?

Such parallels are compelling for those who seek unified patterns of behavior scross human communities, and between human and animal populations. They suggest common processes, perhaps within primate species, with diverse manifestations. Yet these parallels are remarkably unsatisfying for students at each level, or observers of particular ethnographic settings, who feel that what may be gained is far outweighed by what is lost: understanding of the particular phenomena. The tension between the particularizers and the generalizers is quite intractable, in large part because their interests differ and their common ground is weak. When the division between those who seek law and those who seek reality also crosses disciplines, the possibility of tention becoming warfare is high. Yet any anthropologist must recognize the complementarity of the two projects, of providing an ethnographic account rich in detail and reminiscent of a history, while entertaining the validity of regional cultural systems and a general social science to which each ethnographic case contributes.

The opposition between particularizing and generalizing is, in short, not fundamental, despite the sniping of the former and the condescension of the latter. Their argument raises, however, at least one fundamental issue which challanges both positions with the obligation to collaborate. What 'particular' form of

behavior is to be used to 'compare' between cases? As previously suggested, generalizing concepts - such as 'aggression' or 'dominance' - seems to suggest the problem does not exist, that what is to be compared is self-evident, that we all know aggression or dominance, or whatever, when we see it. However, the methodology of ethnology was dramatically advanced when it adopted certain procedures of behavioral psychology, and began to define general notions in behaviorally specific ways, operationalized as behavioral 'indicators' rather than as general impressions. Even controversy between those advocating controlled versus naturalistic observation could not hinge on the desireability of defining 'rage' or 'deference' behavior in explicit terms. Comparison, then, could depend on behavioral indicators rather than on general concepts, providing a point of rapprochement between generalizers and particularizers, since the subject matter of the latter becomes the data of the former. The fundamental issue, however, remains: how to define a bahavioral indicator, especially for creatures with culture?

An epigrammatic critique of behaviorism in the social sciences might suggest that a method which is a necessity in ethnology and animal psychology has been wrongly taken as a virtue by anthropologists and sociologists. Without even considering subtlety in animal behavior, one who studies human language use knows that meaning can change dramatically with context, that the same language <u>behavior</u> means one thing if uttered to a lover and another to a friend. There may be useful behavioral indicators of rage or anger, but what if forceful articulation is used in a speech, as part of a form of political discourse, or as parody, with a gleam in the eye? Children do not learn literal use and then alter it, but grasp the esentials of language and culture through play, by 'pretending' to be angry or through elaborate games which provide practice. Such a moderate criticism of defining actions, in behavioral terms, which assumes an intrinsic link between an

indicator and a process which may under circumstances be transformed, reversed, or parodied, should not be allowed to mitigate the strong criticism, that different cultures express rage, anger, dominance, etc. in different ways that must be given specific account, or that different cultures tend to emphasize quite different social forms and that even a universal underlying process of 'dominance', for example, may not be assumed.

The challenge of accounting for aggression and dominance systems in a comparative setting is to understand; first, whether such systems are appropriately seen in given contexts; second, to understand how their elements are manifested and indicated in each universe of expression; and third, to grasp broad commonalities between such systems, without reifying analogies or yeilding to the compelling yet potentially superficial evidence of behavior indicators.

STRUCTURE AND INTENTIONALITY

What does it mean to suggest that it is within a system that behavior can be seen as aggression, etc., and that such a system will also be internally structured? At an initial level, the question of behavioral units raises the image of units with which they can be contrasted, or similar units which convey different messages. Correct identification of a unit implies grasp of a larger system of units of varying form and meaning. The way such systems fit units together represents their internal structure. Two examples may be useful in describing a 'system'.

Among the Maasai, all males carry sticks, the form of which signifies their age, status and activity. One stick is used for herding, for beating animals into a line, or for waving in front of herd to keep it from approaching water until the source has been cleared of other animals. The theme of beating is ever-present in

the society, with sticks often being raised to chase away even small children, as well as to threaten other adults when conflicts arise. Actual beatings might be rare, but the theme underlies the perpetual carrying of sticks and their use in gesture and threat. Now, most of these threats are in humor, and most people who flee a raised stick do so with laughter; indeed, a pattern of flight is one way of expressing deference. When a minor fight does erupt, a stick is the usual weapon employed. It signifies, however, not only conflict but also restraint, since a stick is not a sword or a spear, and can stun but will rarely kill. Sticks are also used as symbols of authority, and are wielded by speakers during council meetings, for histrionic effects and emphasis. Sticks become symbols of elderhood in general, and evoke divinity through being carved from certain species of trees and being pointed at the sky at the time of the blessings.

Thus the carrying of an apparent weapon, a stick, requires an understanding of the system in which it is embedded: the system of different sticks, and when they are used and what they imply; the system of occasions when different sticks are used, and how their impact may change if the context is an exchange of words between two angry men or a council; and the system of persons who use sticks, and how their positions and statuses are signified. Further, to evoke aggressive acts in which sticks may be used, the same gesture may imply inter-generational play, a dramatic accompaniment to discourse, or a real threat.[2]

A second example follows from the first. Leadership among the Maasai may be described very generally in terms of authority and deference, similar terms used to describe authoritarian kingships or chieftainships. Maasai 'spokesmen' (Ilaiguenak) are separated from their age peers when chosen, become individuals set apart from everyday familiarity and conflict, and receive respect and deference more appropriate to elders. Their authority is supported by a set of sanctions and curses. However, these attitudes must be seen within an overall system of quasi-

democratized politics, carried out primarily in local councils, in which the spokesman speaks first and last, but where any eligible male can speak freely. The process of speaking requires articulation, presence and poise, and can be seen not only as involving decision-making and consensus-building, but also a pattern of display, oratory and recreation of intrinsic interest and enjoyment. Speaking involves the use of logic and argumentation, but also the use of verbal force and aggression, all to the end of persuasion. Spokesmen may be those with particulr abilities of oratory and persuasion, but their techniques do not differ from those of lesser ability. Their is no behavioral indicator to identify the spokesman at council when he is speaking, other than the fact that he carries a smaller, highly polished black stick, and emblem of office, and has a seat reserved for him when he sits. Dominance is implicit rather than explicit, and exists, but to use the same term for a spokesman and a despot is to misunderstand the situating of Maasai leadership within a context of consensual decision-making and an equalitarian ideology, a system quite different from that of a highly stratified political order.

I suggested that the significance of each element of such a system should be seen in terms of the intentionality of actors. At one level, human behavior is often a means of accomplishing intentional acts, that is, acts embodying purposes which can be either communicated by actors or are implicit in those acts. To grasp those acts as meaningful is to reconstruct the intentions behind them.[3] A Maasai may raise a stick, which is recognized not as a prelude to a beating but as an assertion of age, a humorous retort, or as a means of gaining space for another elder to sit, all intentional meaning immediately transparent in context. That is, an aggressive behavior is merely a communicative token to achieve any number of diverse ends. At another level, human behavior embodies culturally codified 'intentionality', or significance which transcends or is assumed by actors, without contributing to their situationally-specific aims. The spokesman carries a black

stick as a token of office, but does not do so specifically to assert the greater weight of his contribution to dialogue in a given meeting. His 'dominance', then, is an outcome of cultural intentionality (in a specifically Maasai sense), resulting in part from the significance of his office and in part from his intentions of the moment. One spokesman's style is to actively intervene with arguments and wit, another's style is to remain aloof, speak rarely and with parsimony, or even to absent himself when mundane matters are considered. Both styles depend on, and achieve 'dominance', although behaviorally divergent.

It is commonplace to observe that human languages achieve a virtually infinite scope of expression through the combination of a quite finite number of sounds. The even greater limitation on the gestural repertoire should be apparent, facial expressions being well-captured in a small number of discrete images and emotions, forms of social interaction in a few modes of behavior or response. Of course, behaviors are compounded in sequences and any set of activites might appear complex, but the essential aim of ethnology is to reduce complex sequences and motions to a set of interactional functions. Humans, we know, use their finite number of behavioral forms - waving sticks at each other, for example - to achieve a far greater number of intentional ends. Among the Maasai, 'aggression' - taken in some sort of general sense - is a cultural theme, as is 'respect' and 'dignity', which is not simply signified by various gestures, but itself becomes a signifier or a conveyer of information far from any intrinsic value of the aggressive form. 'Dominance', however, is not pervasive, and while multiple forms of deference exist, they are not replicated and transformed into a cultural theme by Maasai as has been done by, for example, the Amhara of Ethiopia. If we are to grasp the structure and intentionlity of human acts, it must be within their universe of discourse, rather than in terms of the vagueness of general comparative concepts.

FORM AND ANALOGY

Obviously, if forms of behavior are few, and largely similar, then the possilibities for a comparative behavioral science are increased. Inversely, if forms of behavior were many and largely unique to given species, then the possibility of developing such a comparative science would be decreased and its problems magnified. The question of the behavioral range of primate species is beyond the scope of this paper, though it is clear that significant behavioral differences between primate species do exist. The theoretical question, however, is clear; do different behavioral patterns between species merely represent different ways of achieving a few essential functions, perhaps indentified as a single underlying primate pattern of social and emotional needs and drives, or do those essential behavioral patterns and functions serve as a repertoire for expressing or enacting a more diverse and complex set of aims, motives and acts? Or course, the first solution seems appropriate to species without language, the second to the single species with language, and thus the question is largely irresolvable. Clearly, analogies between species, especially between sub-human and human primates, must be based on explicit behavioral criteria, with all the pitfalls previously enumerated, or on postulated underlying drives, emotions or organic functions, the identification of which depends on a logic of inference from empirical phenomena. In most cases, the comparison made assumes the underlying commonality between species, and the successful comparison in turn seems to verify and validate the commonality in a not unusual exercise of circular reasoning. That is, the very process of comparing seems to support an assumption of a common bio-behavioral structure, presumably a genetic heritage, manifested in behavioral homologies. [4]

Unfortunately, the strategy is ill-suited to determining whether or not the

observational concepts and analytical analogies do or do not indentify underlying homologies between species. The alternative hypothesis is that analogies represent formal rather than substantive parallels, and result not from genetic constraints but from formal constraints either on the social and behavioral process or on the process of model-building. In human societies, the symbolic capacity tends to intervene in both the shaping of social interactions and the creation of models after behavior, so the formal constraints may well coincide. That is say that, unlike the study of animal psychology, the study of human societies and cultures tends to involve processes of observation, creative inference and interpretation not unlike the processes of social life itself, and presumably model-making and model-following are implicated in the genesis of behavior, along with formal patterns of constraint.

One sign of the power of sympolic processes is their tendency to overdetermine that which they observe or define: choice of object, focus, observation, and report tends to be carried out by the same agent with a single lens or motive, and thus it is not surprising that we humans often see a world of our own making. The awareness one might have of ethnocentricity, bias, or simply powerful expectation serves in part to control for distortions in perception, for the common man or for the social scientist. Anthropologists have, to a large degree, elevated the problem of observer bias into a sub-field of methodology, and emphasize the importance of the "viewpoint of the other" and entering into a culture's "universe of discourse", both as means of control and as means of access into its very subject matter. Thus it is not surprising that Anthropology reacts with suspicion and reservation at claims of analytical accuracy based primarily on the transparent adequacy of descriptive concepts of common currency in our own culture applied to other cultures, other species, or human collectivities. Reservation is not refutation, but, in the absence of further evidence, makes avid pursuit of the comparative research program difficult unless placed on firmer

foundations, such as awareness of the formal nature of our comparative constructs and results.

What, for instance, is 'dominance'? It may represent a pattern of activity whereby one individual's behavior tends to be determined by that of another, the converse not being so. A 'linear' dominance hierarchy would be one in which a set of transitive dominance relations obtained, each individual subordinated to any other individual being also subordinated to those the other is subordinated to. However, the research strategy may involve eliciting a series of paired conflicts which result in dominance being ascertained being individuals; the results may not approximate the actual social dynamics of dominance relations, but may rather represent a result formally determined by the nature of the planned situation and the expectation of the research design. The question of dominance, posed to a pair, is equivalent to a question answerable by a yes or a no, posed to an informant; the results are clear-cut, but it is unclear what they mean.

This critical discussion points, in actuality, in one direction, towards the investigation and analysis of a given society, with the following questions in mind. If general interest in dominance, aggression and conflict systems exist, in what systematic relations to each otehr does each element have, and what structures of significance, meaning and intentionality define each behavior or more general element, and by what internally-generated definition can each be seen as representing the general comparative concept? Second, on the basis of what principles can analogies between levels or species by suggested, and what formal constraints might exist which would account for those parallels, before attribution of genetic, historically-based homologies are made? Thirdly, if such formal principles are identified, how can they be used in a constructive manner for the purpose of comparison without their being taken for signs of a single bio-behavioral inheritance?

FORM AND CONFLICT IN EAST AFRICA

The question of inter-group conflict and warfare in East Africa has interested observers from outside the region of centuries. Chinese texts from the 9th c. A.D. refers to East Africa: "From olden times they were not subject to any foreign country. In fighting they use elephants' teeth and ribs and the horns of wild oxen made into halberds, and they wear armour and have bows and arrows." (Hirth 1909:48). An early missionary reference to the Maasai states that "when cattle fail them they make raids on the tribes which they know to be in possession of herds (Krapf 1867:359), continuing that:

> ...they are dreaded as warriors, laying all waste with fire and sword, so that the weaker tribes do not venture to resist them in the open field, but leave them in possession of their herds, and seek only to save themselves by the quickest flight (Ibid.).

The East African interior was the last explored by Europeans, and at an astoundingly late date of the 1880s was a void on the map of Africa, due to outside ignorance of its even most rudimentary georgraphy. This was in large part due to the avoidance of the region even by Arab slavers until the latter half of the century, which in turn inhibited European adventurers and missionaries, and this reluctance has largely been attributed to the military strength of the Massai.

The above citations reveal several factors in the militarism of the Maasai and other East Africa groups, that is, the relation between specialized pastoralism, with its inevitable fluctuations due to an unpredictable climate, and livestock raiding, necessary for immediate subsistence as well as to build up herds necessary for continuing pastoral viability. It has been suggested that the exigencies of

pastoral production, including highly autonomous and reliable young herders and an opportunistic and responsive economic strategy, represent adaptive pressures towards individuals with personalities characterized by overt aggressivity, open expression of emotions, and obedience to authority (Edgerton 1971). In actuality, early caravans and European exploration through the Maasai interior was carried out with little bellicosity (Thomson 1883), and violent clashes that did occur were invariably precipitated by pugnacious yet uncertain Europeans (Peters 1891). While the notion that Maasai were "peaceful pastoralists" may be overstated (Jacobs 1979), the opposite view that the Maasai, and other East African pastoralists, were congenitally rapacious is surely exaggerated and inaccurate. The fact is that armed conflict was common, but primarily carried out in the process of cattle raiding, a specific, limited and largely reciprocated form of aggression. If in specific cases, livestock raiding provided an opportunity for individuals to build up herds sufficient for domestic life, in the aggregate, raiding provided a mechanism for evening out the radical shifts in livestock numbers due to drought, famine and pestilence.

Most East African pastoralists, however, entertain a military tradition and could be said to harbor an ethos of assertive masculinity. This ethos may be to a large extent due not to a pastoral practice but to elaborated age organizations which lend codification and regimentation to a period of 'warriorhood' for adolescent and young adult males. Such age organizations are found among most Nilotic, Cushitic and Bantu-speaking peoples of East Africa, and include groups practicing animal husbandry, hunting, and cultivation. It is clear that such Bantu-speaking groups as the Kikuyu (Leakey 1970), Embu (Saberway 1970), and the Meru (Bernardi 1959); conbined sedentary agriculture with agesets and age-grading, and developed highly assertive warrior classes. Certainly it is today recognized that relations of armed conflict and raiding between these groups and nearby pastoralists were reciprocal (Muriuki 1974), and that if postoralists such as the Maasai

dominated East African, politically and militarily, prior to the advent of colonialism, it was due to an economically-based capacity to occupy huge areas of savannah through nomadic practice and the use age-organization as a means of lateral mobilization, beyond the capacity of sedentary groups bound to limited and fixed locales, between which enmity existed.

Among the Maasai, "warriorhood" or "young manhood" (Ilmurran) has its own sub-culture. Young uncircumcised boys are largely occupied with tasks of herding, and are considered culturally of little consequence, especially by circumcised warriors, because of their unfinished state. They in turn look forward to when they will become Ilmurran through circumcision, which can occur anytime between the ages of 12 and 22, and practice in secret the forms of warrior practice denied them in public. When one age-set has graduated from the grade of junior warriors, the groups of older boys begin to acquire the accoutrements of that grade and to publically assert warrior prerogatives. They grow their hair long, braid it and smear it with red ochre and fat; they dress in red robes, wear certain styles of jewelry, and begin carrying weapons. Dances and songs which were previously denied them are now practiced and sung, together with the courting of young uninitiated girls, theoretically denied them by the now graduated warriors. But of most consequence here, they begin to form small neighborhood cadres and sub-sectional warrior groups, and to identify with them in opposition to other neighborhood and sub-sectional groups. A pattern of tension, raised by taunts, challenges and competition for the favors of young girls, begins to dominate relations between boys, which culminates in beatings and clashes between individuals and small groups.

This period of transition, during which the new warrior group is being formed, is ritually marked by collective ceremonies which officially open the age-set, to which boys will be recruited by initiation. The ceremony of Enkipaata,

signified by a great skipping dance the boys carry out in long lines, in actuality does three things. First, it formally creates an age-set by endowing the group with a name (I will not elaborate here the complexities involved in the question of whether the age-division, olporror, is of the "right-hand" or of the "left-hand")(cf. Galaty, in press). Second, it begins to weld disparate neighborhood and sectional groupings into a single age-set, through physically congregating the boys, acquainting them with each other, and celebrating the unity of the age-set and the overall section. This level of integration becomes progressively more important and more salient as the life of the age-set proceeds. Thirdly, it defines the terms of symbolic unity which must obtain between members of the same age-group. Through sharing the "three calabashes" of the collective ceremony, drinking the blood of the sacrificial ox, eating its meat, and later drinking milk together, they are bound by an oath to collective life. They must put age-set solidarity above all division, must always offer hospitality to an age-mate, and must demonstrate respect to the "fathers" of the age-set, the sponsoring elders' set. In fact, during the initial period of warriorhood, the young mates seal their solidarity through additional prescriptions, to always travel and stay in groups, to take milk with other age-mates, and not to eat meat seen by initiated women, that is, to slaughter outside of the domestic villages in special meat camps. or olpul (Rigby 1979). This is a period during which warriors form intensive friendships, involving mutual grooming, play, physical wrestling and competition, confidences, collaboration in courting, and mutual trust built up through joint escapades, such as cattle raiding. Of importance is the edict that age-mates should never allow women to come between them, though this often applies more to those in a local group than in a larger arena where jealousy does occur. The establishment of generalized solidarity with the entire age-set and a set of close male friendships with age-mates at the time following Enkipaata and the opening of the age-set inevitably implies that when the

strictures of warriorhood are loosened, when the group graduates at the collective ceremony of Eunoto, great emotion is felt as warriors fear they will lose the intensity of experience and comradeship of that period.[5]

The process of establishing an age-set relates to systems of conflict and aggression in several ways. The sub-sectional cadres form great villages composed of houses made by the mothers' of warriors, and these Manyata represent military batallions. The age-grade of junior warriors represents, in effect, a standing army, charged with the defense of the country. It is also expected, however, that they will also engage in offense, through carrying out of small and large-scale cattle raids. While theoretical solidarity obtains across the entire age-set (which provides the major mechanism for social relations across groups), the pattern of conflict and armed clashes involves opposing territorial units of the same age-set. It is expected, and warriors internalize and act out this expectation, that they will initiate and accept aggressive encounters; this readiness is, of course, exploited by the rest of the society for their own ends, as in generalized conflict over pastures.

This warrior complex is situated within a network of meaning, implied by this discussion, whereby actions are shaped and defined through terms of expectation and orientation regarding age-group solidarity and competition, norms of respect and familiarity, and motives of defense and aggression. One way to grasp this intentional pattern is through forms, through patterns which seem to emerge and which appear to represent a structure underlying meaning and activity. In the succeeding pages, the formal aspects will be revealed in systems of aggression and symmetry, dominance and power, and motives of conflict.

AGGRESSION AND SYMMETRY

Evans-Pritchard's classic study of the The Nuer (1940) suggested that this acephalous group carried out its system of "ordered anarchy" through an implicit structure of "segmentation", which defined degrees and qualities of relations between individuals and groups. A genealologically-based lineage system defined relations between lineages in terms of their relative distance in time from their common ancestor; given conflict or question, siblings would unite against cousins, based on descent from two different brothers, while the entire group of siblings and cousins would unite as one against second cousins, based on a common grand-father. In actuality, such a system operated with respect to lineages which understood their respective relations to one another in terms of quite distant ancestors, but in terms of a comparable system of simultaneous alliances and oppositions, which depended on the genealogy of the actors in question. Such a "segmentary structure" involved a certain "complementary opposition" between lineages, since groups opposed to each other in cone context might unite in a complementary form in another, to oppose yet a more distant group.

Evans-Pritchard perceived that such genealogical structure of lineage also occurred within an implicit political system of relations between territorial groups, both directly, because territorial groups were identified with dominant lineages, and indirectly, since the system of political segmentation had a resilience and a permanence beyond the lineage base; indeed, in some sense the political system was unserstood in terms of genealogy and lineage, as much as constituted by it. "Segmentary theory" predicted a pattern of coalitions and alliances, and seemed to account for just how serious conflict between groups could become, since relations between closer groups were kept under greater control and constraint than those between more distant groups. In the Maasai case, it is well understood that

conflict within a section (Olosho) should involve only clubs, while conflict between members of different sections, especially more distant sections, might involve mortal weapons, such as swords and spears (cf. Galaty 1981).

In some sense, segmentary theory suggests that political units will grow and then split (fission), much as kin groups grow until more distant lines of a family separate, perhaps by no longer celebrating common feasts. But if kin groups and lineages do not grow at even rates, what of territorially based groups? An outgrowth of segmentary theory suggests smaller groups tend to identify with larger groups, or even unite with them in a process of fusion. Smaller lineages will, over time, tend to indentify themselves with the ancestors of those lineages which dominate a local area, or will tend to act in concert with those lineages through an idiom of marital alliance, and may tend to lose their own distinct identities with regard to their own apical ancestor. This a segmentary system will represent not just a mechanical tree of growth and splitting, projected from the dimension of time onto the dimension of space, as groups expand and colonize new lands, but rather will represent a more stable and highly domesticated tree, with a more finite number of branches, whose shoots are pruned. In large part, this constraint on segmentation is probably due to a certain demography and structural limit born out of processes of conflict, since smaller lineages or political units may not have the strength or resistance to exercise themselves as autonomous entities over time, but will maintain themselves only within a larger branch.[6]

It seems evident that segmentary theory, while born out of an Anthropology of non-centralized societies, in effect resembles a theory of balance of power more salient in the strategic study of modern warfare and the diplomacy of nation-states. First, there is an inherent dualism in both models, since alliances tend to congregate units of disparate and varying interests into large blocs, and when conflict occurs, units which attempt to sit on the fence tend to be pushed to

one bloc or the other. Similarly, segmentary theory rests on the premise that a multitude of diverse political units tend to become organized according to a dualistic logic of opposition, which replicates itself at each level. Second, the various sides tend towards balance, in part because smaller groups gravitate towards alliances with or assimilation into the larger, and in part because an asymmetry in relations between the two might produce a form of instability that will lead to diplomatic realignments. If one bloc decisively prevails or absorbs the other, a process of fission within may well replicate the dualistic opposition within the bloc that formerly existed between it and another.

Implicit in a notion of balance is a concept of appropriate response to hostilities, or a "limitation" on warfare. The feud, which underlies the system of relations between opposed units in a segmentary system, represents a system of justice based on the appropriateness of response, in a sort of "tit-for-tat" form. If an individual from one group murders one from another, the second group will be honor-bound to avenge the murder, through taking the life of someone from the first group. Since action is considered to be collective, a murder may be seen not as an individual act for which responsibility is borne by the murderer, but a collective act for which the murderer is simply the active hand of the group. In Western understanding, the essence of the feud is that it is a permanent relation between two conflicting groups, irresolvable because any retribution calls for yet another round of retribution. In systems such as the Nuer, the feud is a mechanism not just of justice but of stabilization. Without organized systems of courts, the threat of retribution - combined with notions of pollution of a murderer - acts to deter violence, in theory at least. The threat of retribution is a major incentive, as well, for resolution of the crime through the payment of compensation to the family or lineage of the victim. The notion of balance, of life-for-a-life or material payment for a life, is intrinsic to the system of the feud. Among the

Nuer and the Maasai, the murderer is polluted until cleansed, and the family of the murdered person is also polluted, both until cleansing ceremonies have been held and until rectification occurs. The blood-wealth payment does not represent a mercenary assessment of human life in material terms but rather a cosmological mandate of restoration. In practical terms, livestock are seen to mediate human reproduction through bride-wealth, and thus can serve in the form of blood-wealth payments to make possible the acquiring of a bride by the lineage who will them produce offspring to replace the lost individual.

The feud, then, is not an institution directed at meaningless retribution but is a mechanism for restoring order after it is disrupted; it is aimed at resolution rather than continuance of hostilities, and represents an intrinsically limited notion of conflict, since an act of aggression calls for a balanced and specific, rather than an unpredictable and generalized, response. It is not unlike the diplomacy between political and military blocs in the west, whereby careful discussion and analysis goes into determining an "appropriate" and "balanced" response to given political and military torts.

In Maasai history, warfare itself has usually been dictated by principles of limitation, in some ways reminiscent of the formal procedures of pre-20th century European warfare. Conflict has largely been seen as involving warrior batallions, who fight in daylight in long opposing lines using the same weapons. Women and children were excepted from the process, and often carried on trade between lines of hostilities. Some engagements resembled tournaments or duels, sometimes with champions, where the manner of engagement and the honor with which one fought was seen as important as the outcome. Cattle raids are themselves described in terms evocative of escapades and adventures, and were clearly directed towards acquisition of stock rather than the killing of human beings, although this inevitably did occur.

However, mortal clashes between sections did occur, in which the rules of limited conflict seemed to be disregarded in a series of escalations matched on either side. A series of 19th century wars sew autonomous sections of Maasai-speakers come to conflict over a series of years, with defeated sections in effect ceasing to exist. Myth and recent history describe the demise of the Losekelai, the Uasin Gishu and the Laikipiak, all north of present-day Maasailand in Kenya. Under threat, perhaps heightened because of devastating plagues and famines of the latter half of the 19th century, sections of the central Maasai banded together to oppose these sections and ultimately to disperse them. Even with this loss of restraint and limitation in warfare, it would appear that the disappearance of the opposed sections as political units does not imply wholesale massacre, but merely indicates that they were assimilated into the body of the victorious group and the political-military threat removed. Perhaps the threat of uncontrolled escalation always represents an apparent deterrent to ignoring the proper rules of limited conflict, but when such a turn towards unlimited warfare occurs, with fear of defeat and opportunity of victory motivating both participants, it is difficult to see anything being deterred. These events in one case of small-scale warfare are the only possible analogues to the "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) theory behind the nuclear deterrence of NATO and the Warsaw Pact which appears effective insofar as it is not acted on, but will have assuredly failed if it ever is.[7]

DOMINANCE AND POWER

The warrior pattern is in many ways directed towards achieving certain effects on others, and in the Maasai case has been quite effective. It was earlier suggested that the political dominance of pastoral groups, especially the Maasai, in

East Africa, was in part due to their ability to extend their influence over vast regions through the practice of nomadic pastoralism. If effective military control of pastureland represented one necessary condition for successful and highly productive pastoralism, the practice of pastoralism itself made possible that form of extended control, since animals represent mobile subsistence which can support warrior cadres inhabiting or extending themselves into marginal lands. Another factor in pastoral dominance was their ability to sustain political cooperation between sections, largely through mechanisms of segmentary alliance previously discussed. While each regional skirmish may have had the appearance of a certain balance between forces, in a regional perspective, the Maasai clearly dominated the central Rift Valley and its surrounding highlands. This was true to the point at which an ethos of superiority was clearly established, echoed in every 19th century record of virtually all East Africa groups, which recorded that fear of Maasai raids became a material factor in determining where groups would live, how they would live, and how they would use their resources. Intimidation kept Maasai neighbors off the plains and in the highlands, stimulated larger and more concentrated villages, and shaped a more cautious and limited form of animal husbandry, including stall feeding.

Fear may be based on rational apprehensions, but becomes a motivating force in itself. Indeed, dominance as a concept implies not the use of force by a superior to keep an inferior in line but precisely the opposite: the largely symbolic determination of an inferior's behavior by the superior without the use of force. The Maasai reputation may have been earned, but it served in following as a factor itself in producing the dominance that it reflected. Theories of response to punishment in Psychology have shown how strongly resistant to extinction is fear of punishment, since every occasion on which a punishment may have been received and is not becomes, in effect, a reward, through the relief it produces; and since

organisms tend to practice forms of behavior which are rewarded, punishment avoidance responses tend to be perpetuated even in the continued absence of the aversive stimulus. Similarly, a devastating Maasai raid could produce specific defensive responses on the part of their victims, which would be perpetuated even in the absence of continuous and sustained threat. In this way, a pattern of dominance relations could have been established, even in the absence of a sizable enough Maasai population to thoroughly monitor and police the vast regions they were able to seasonally exploit through pastoral use, or the even greater regions they were able to occasionally terrorize through raids.

At a more micro-level, the issue of "display" arises. If a pattern of violence and raiding is feared and has been experienced, it is only necessary for a group to sight a member of the threatening group for it to experience intimidation. The force of the Maasai visual display is heightened by its elaboration. The young warriors wear their hair long and ochred a bright red, a fact interpreted by some as an incident of a more general phenomenon of long hair signifying lack of restraint and expressive sexuality and aggressivity (cf. Leach 1958). In full regalia, many warriors wear head-dresses of lion mane and ostrich feathers, which sweep up above the head in an imposing arch. Painted shields, made of buffalo skin, are three feet high and can be used not only to cover but to extend the body into a more projective force. For ceremonies and ritually sanctioned raids, warriors paint their bodies with white or red substance, in swirls up the legs, and across the face, to form images or spectres of themselves equally horrific and beautifying. Audible as well as visual imagery is used. Warriors wear bells on their ankles, so a long line of approaching warriors is accompanied by a melodious clanking and ringing, strong, loud and evocative. At the same time, a grunting chant magnified over tens or even hundreds resembles a drum with all its resonance and reverberation. One can only imagine the effect of such display on those whom it was intended to

intimidate; perhaps the obverse effect we can observe is equally as interesting, for the effect of such dramatic synesthesia on participants themselves is such as to produce fits of paroxysm and gripping urges to fight those who might oppose them, in order to justify the audacity of their warrior postures, to others and themselves.

Threat, then, can be experienced directly through attack, or indirectly through signs which evoke past or future attacks. If Maasai attacks were carried out with some frequency, still the signs which they and others associated with raids were displayed even more frequently, in the very garb and appearance of warriors whose role included long journeys and explorations, as well as raids. Here, at the individual level, we find a form of intimidation through display comparable to the placement of Maasai age-set Manyatta and cattle camps near the boundaries of pastures. If the forces of threat are not known they cannot be experienced, but insofar as they are seen as well as known, they will invariably have an added impact. In strategic analysis, assessment is often made of a nation's military potential rather than their military intentions, though intentions are combined with capability in the last analysis. Since the value of much military force is in persuading others you will use it, its visibility is also a factor in its influence. For instance, the presence of troops from the United States are, according to NATO theory, less intended as material factors of intimidation of the Warsaw Pact forces, since they are too few for that purpose, but more as a factor of reassurance that given hostilities, the United States will be bound to assist Germany. One can also suggest several solutions to the perceived problem of mutual vulnerability to ICBM attack by the United States and the Soviet Union. But one factor in the United States' decision to deploy the MX missile is apparently visibility; smaller missiles or submarine-borne missiles will not have the political impact that huge, land-based missiles will have, expecially when viewed through satellites.

Dominance is not, then, a matter simply of force, but of influence, which

may be effected by visible display as well as by invisible yet tangible threats. Threats may, however, be utterly unspoken or even unintended; indeed, a capability rather than an aim may underlie the experience of threat by a subordinate party, even to the surprise of a superordinate. Much dominance rests on a set of relations which are rarely questioned, and are not subject to the sort of reduction to vulgarity which overt intimidation or threats represent, but rest on differences of power accepted by both parties. Instability occurs when the ground of dominance shifts over a long period of time.

If Maasai long exercised dominance over East Africa, within Maasai society, elders assert a certain dominance over the society and over younger warriors which is unquestioned, and only challenged ad hoc rather than in principle. The major axis of dominance is between sponsoring elders, who in effect hold political power during the period when a sponsored group is coming into being and moves through the age-grades of warriorhood (a period of perhaps twenty years), and the group of sponsored juniors. The relationship is established when the youths are uninitiated, most in their early teens, and rests on the assumption by the elders of the symbols of "fatherhood", as they initiate the boys and accept them into the new age-set. Obedience to their "fire-stick" elders is a primary tenet of initiates, one implied by the shared instruments of ritual and assumed by comparable obligations of solidarity to the group of age-mates, whose unity is defined for them by their mutual age-set parentage. This obedience is sanctioned, however, by the power of the curse held by elders over the juniors, somewhat equivalent to the power of the curse a parent has over a child. A curse is a largely unmentioned principle of the relationship, entailed by the fact that the elders have "given birth" to the juniors and thus hold power over them. These obligations to obey, however, are mentioned in councils which seek to instill the proper attitudes of respect on the part of the boys, including specific forms of behavior, avoidance and circumspection. Of great

importance is the prohibition on any sexual relations between the wives of sponsoring elders and the juniors, for these women are considered their "mothers", although they may be only slightly older or even of the same age as their symbolic "sons".

Behavior between elders and juniors reflects the dominance of the former, with the juniors inhibited from speaking in the presence of the former, and bound to wait patiently for recognition before greeting or having an audience with their "fathers". Key decisions about the age-set and its activities are made by elders, and are carried out by juniors. This relationship is culturally given rather than negotiated, and clearly does not depend on overt force, since in such a case warriors would certainly prevail. Indeed, any resort to wrangling or conflict, especially of a physical order, would be considered extremely shameful for an elder to engage in, and a scandal for a warrior to initiate. If forms of disobedience do occur, boys are harrangued by their elders in general and fined, and they invariably accept their lot with silence and hanging head, if not apologetic then not resentful. The dominance of elders is sanctioned by the curse, which may be evoked when disobedience is experienced; but the curse clearly expresses as well as supports the lines of asymmetrical dominance between the two groups, and is surely most effective when not asserted.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Analogies have been drawn to concepts familiar in strategic studies and primatology, in this discussion of forms of East African aggression and dominance. To summarize, East African politics systems involve structures of segmentation and symmetry which act to produce a certain military balance, and most often reflect

assumptions of appropriate or limited response in warfare. Dominance systems exist which reflect the determination of one individual's or group's behavior by another, but which rarely involve overt force, relying on the more persuasive influence of assumed threat or simply relations of power. These forms of symmetry, limitation, dominance and power can be shown to occur at the East African macro-level, in relations between groups, and at the micro-level, in relations between individuals and in local communities.

Systems of aggression and dominance often result in specific material functions being served, that is, warfare may result in territory being taken and controlled, new resources being opened up, livestock being taken, while dominance may result in power for individuals, benefit for groups, wealth for the dominant. However, I would suggest that as systems they are internally motivated and cannot be accounted for by the specific functions which they serve, or the particular benefits which they appear to have obtained, at certain points in historical time. If territory is taken in one case, in another case territory is left vacant after a decisive battle. There is no evidence that the Purko occupied the Laikipia plateau after they decimated the group of the same name, and there is evidence from the lower Omo valley that land vacated by one group after a defeat was not occupied by the victors. Yet, on other occasions, military conflict is part of an expansionary process of a pastoral system, and new land is occupied and its previous occupants pushed out or assimilated.[6]

Systems of aggression and dominance have their own rationale, which leads to the exercise of force or the exercise of will, apart from specific benefit or return. Much of the debate over the two political blocs in Europe concerns the military realities and the possibilities of confrontation, rather than the issues which divide them. In short, political division becomes its own motivation, as the structure of segmentary alliance and the existence of latent coalitions may

demonstrate. Further, a military or warrior ethos becomes internally motivating as well, as readiness for battle incites battle, and defensive maneuvers are interpreted as provocative. The age-set system involves an ethos of assertive masculinity and an organization of warriors, which implies a set of assumptions about the value and the desireability of certain forms of conflict.

Thus it is not towards the functions of aggression and dominance that I turn, which may often concern fairly mundane interests and returns, but to the structure of those systems and their explanation.

Analogies between levels and species suggest, as previously asserted, a commonality of origin or a genetic base. Alternative arguments could assert various situational or motivational factors or factors of form, and factors of form can be attributed to constraints on social interaction or on the making of models, both inflected by the symbolic process. The symmetries involved in a segmentary structure, or one described as a balance of power, can be seen to bear the imprint of systems of social relations, which often involve coalitions in equilibrium, or the imprint of logical analysis, wherein a complex field is reduced to a structure of dualism or a series of oppositions. There is a definite logical constraint implied by the question of which two complementary and mutually exclusive sides an individual or group belongs. Similarly, the very posing of the question of limited or appropriate responses in conflict vis-a-vis unlimited or massive response reveals a two-fold yet exhaustive typology of possibilities which determines the logic of modeling as well as orientation to action. Dominance systems are constrained, as previously cited, by the transitive nature of linear series, which underlie any interpersonal relationship, short of notions and experiences of ideal reciprocal intersubjective relationships. The very generality of a notion of dominance in terms of asymmetrical determination of behavior suggests that wherever it is sought, it will be found. Of course, the question of "display" behavior producing certain results is

matched by the inverse case, where "non- display" produces similar results, where patterns are deeply ingrained or power makes display redundant. In short, underlying this discussion of Maasai and East African systems of aggression and dominance has rested a set of formal relations, which have helped elucidate and develop the relevant factors, and may well have represented not only heuristically valuable notions but also forces at work. But to use the concepts which are associated with these forms as major dimensions of comparison, rather than as useful analogies, may misconstrue their formal nature, constrained as they are by logic rather than species nature.

CONCLUSION

This paper represents a body of case material, developed with the expressed intention of providing comparative material for the analysis of aggression and dominance systems, and with the aim of reflecting on the nature of concepts used in such comparison. The social sciences are characterized by the fact that they utilize vocabulary and insights derived from ordinary experience rather than controlled experimentation. Many of the most profound insights they have developed stem from creative use of analogies, which places subject matter in new light, bringing novel perceptions to bear on old problems or redefining fields of thought and study. Where analogies bridge levels proper to given societies, species or families or species, the temptation exists to attribute their convincing nature less to a stimulating principle of symbolic connection, which yields the light of ancillary lines of rapport, and more to an underlying genetic commonality. Without refuting the possibility of such bio-genetic connections, merely because they cannot be demonstrated, I have suggested that necessary factors of form underlying analogies

should be accounted for before more substantive factors are evoked. If levels and species look alike, the commonality may well be in our eyes and minds, in the models we construct and apply; further, the similarities may well exist in the constraints on social interaction which face agents of comparable forms of action, as is surely the case, in part, with the segmentary structure which may underlie primate, human and nation-state behavior. If such possibilities are not carefully considered, Anthropology runs the risk of reducing itself to a sort of evocative bio-journalism, rather than a science advancing through the self-reflective use of general concepts to better understand the human situation, of being both within and outside the universe of human meaning.

FOOTNOTES

1. Case material from the Maasai is drawn from field research carried out in 1974-75 with the support of NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant No. 74-24027, in a brief field trip in 1981 made possible by the support of the Graduate Faculty of McGill University, and during research on Maasai ritual in 1983, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the F.C.A.C. of Quebec. Research affiliation with the Bureau of Educational Research, of the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College has made possible and greatly facilitated this work.

2. I have elsewhere described, in brief, symbolism associated with Maasai sticks (Galaty 1981), a topic pursued at greater length by Parks (1979).

3. I evoke here but do not review a literature, spanning sociology, philosophy and anthropology, on the meaningful nature of social action and its symbolic construction (cf. Weber 1947; Ricoeur 1974; Schutz 1967; Winch 1958).

4. Sociobiology represents the least subtle variant of this mode of reasoning, in which the assertion of the adaptive character of behavioral traits is assumed. since it cannot be demonstrated, to represent group selection of biological traits (e.g. Wilson 1978; but cf. Sahlins 1976).

5. For an elaboration of the social and symbolic dynamics of Eunoto, which underlie the system of Maasai segmentation, see Galaty (1983).

6. For further discussion and analysis of the Maasai system of political segmentation, see Galaty (1981; and in press).

7. One excellent, though somewhat dated, example from the literature on deterrence theory is Schelling (1966).

8. The excellent set of cases studied in the collection Warefare among East African Herders (Fukui and Turton 1979) offers no explicit conclusions regarding the territorial motives of warfare. However, several contributions lend themselves to the interpretation that these cases of warfare rest most immediately on factors of political competition and competition for livestock, rather than the factor of control of territory or use of pastures. In the long run, warfare surely involves shifts of regional power between groups and processes of territorial expansion and retraction, but usually as later, secondary and often unintended consequences (cf. Galaty 1982; but cf. R. Dyson-Hudson 1980 for the opposite interpretation).

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