

Raiders and Elders: A Confrontation of Generations among the Dassanetch

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In this paper the vicious circle of reciprocal raiding which leads to the escalation of hostilities between neighbouring pastoral tribes provides a background for the analysis of three interconnected features of tribal warfare in East Africa. Firstly, it is shown how the age system functions to control the use of force by young warriors. Secondly, homogeneous strata based on common age are shown to be incompatible with the differentiated power structure of Dassanetch society, and with the economic and social independence of newly married men. This is a further factor which prevents the institutionalisation of militarism in a professional military class of warriors. Thirdly, in times of escalation, the opposing interests of elders and warriors are brought to the fore in public debate, each side being temporarily united on the basis of common age and political and economic interests, which cut across the dividing lines of generation-set affiliation. This process of change from a "routine" state of affairs, when raiding is an integral part of inter-tribal relations, to escalation and back again, provides us with a better opportunity to observe the nuances of power relations between elders and warriors than does a period of all-out war, when the entire tribe is temporarily united in an intense effort which overrides intra-tribal rivalries.

I

The association between age systems and warriorhood has been pointed out so frequently that several authors have concluded that defence of the tribe or military efficiency were the prime purposes of centralised age organisations (e.g. Andreski [1954: 141], Lewis [1972: 84], Hambly [1938: 2]), and, at first sight, the association would seem to have some grounds in fact. A centralised age system is one which is divided into age-groups which form discrete age-sets and which are linked into a hierarchical system.¹ The seeming ease with which age-groups can be mobilised,

The fieldwork on which this essay is based was carried out in Southwest Ethiopia during 1968-70. I thank the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Friends of the Hebrew University in England for their generous financial support.

¹ See, for example, Otterbein [1970: 7] who confirms, through a cross-cultural sample of 46 societies, an hypothesis that "if a society has a centralised political system, there is a greater likelihood that it will be characterised by a military organisation composed of professionals." On p. 44 he classes members of age-grades as military professionals.

the central role that warriors have in the system, the prominence of killing as a status symbol and of images which emphasise weapons and *machismo*, all tend to enhance the concept of age systems as prototypical military organisations. But observation of age systems in depth raises some serious doubts: even if all the military features mentioned above are found in any particular system, they usually only occur in one of that system's grades, to which a limited number of persons belong and which is not characteristic of the system as a whole. Some of the literature on age systems appears preoccupied with warriors; elders are described as 'graduate' or 'retired' warriors even in systems that clearly distinguish between the military and political functions of various sets. But, just because warriorhood has been put in the lime-light or romanticised by some observers, this should not deter us from dealing with the age system as a whole and from analysing warriorhood in its proper and fuller context.

We do not need to go into the nature of age organisation to realise that defence, or military success (or even efficiency) could not have been reasons for the evolution of complex age systems, however fundamental they may seem to be, for it is young men who have to bear the burden of fighting everywhere. So the mobilisation of warriors on the basis of common age (as compared, for example, with common locality, fealty, or cause) cannot in itself be a feature which explains the existence of age systems. Clearly a society does not need an age system to achieve military efficiency and success: the literature is full of examples which show that this can be achieved without dependence on an age organisation. As Evans-Pritchard [1940: 253-4] has pointed out, age systems are not necessarily military organisations and the military role attributed to East African age-sets has been exaggerated. I believe everyone who has studied an East African society with an age system will agree.

The question we should ask is why the age system did *not* develop into a tribal military institution, rather than how the image of age systems as prototypical military organisations arose. Most of the pastoral tribes of East Africa have age systems, and all were engaged in long-standing feuds with their neighbours. Their age systems combined several features: centralised authority, a hierarchy of groups and a distinct group of young warriors which has a strong *esprit de corps* and was controlled by the elders. Thus, the age system appears to provide a natural, almost automatic, mechanism for the exercise of civil and military power and (at least) the institutionalisation of military activities. But in fact the warrior groups did not display practical military attributes in life style, imagery or special activities which were shared by all groups.

East African herding societies are not primarily oriented towards war, despite the titles born by warriors, the rewards gained by killing enemy tribesmen, the use of names which employ the symbolism of killing, the high status associated with bearing arms, the hero-worship of warriors by those youngsters next in line, the councils of elders, sometimes called "war councils", and the masculinity and virility with which warriors are credited. All these attributes are merely superficial and visi-

ble aspects that have contributed to the association of age systems with military functions.

An age system is a form of social stratification based on the principle of age and, as in all such systems, the division into strata corresponds with divisions of power, access to and control of resources, status symbols, privileges and rights. Warriors are only one competing section and their power is restricted by the system itself. The very nature of an age system, as a differentiated and hierarchical power structure, prevents the military aspects associated with the grade of warriorhood from expanding and coming to dominate the other grades and hence disrupting the system.

I will discuss these general points through an examination of raiding because, in my view, power relations between warriors and other age-groups can be best examined in situations in which inter-tribal feuds have not escalated into outright warfare. In an all-out war the entire tribe is united in its goal of defeating the enemy, the effort is usually brief but intense and overrides at least temporarily intra-tribal rivalries. The different interests and rivalries which divide grades and sets can best be observed when inter-tribal feuds are more or less routine.

I intend to examine the activities of warriors among the Dassanetch of South-west Ethiopia, who raided, and were raided by, neighbouring tribes. The relationships of warriors to elders and the power rivalry within the age system will be examined in the "normal" situation of routine raiding and also when raids so proliferated that the rules governing them were violated and there was an escalation of inter-tribal hostilities.

The Dassanetch are an interesting and extreme case in point for the discussion of inter-tribal raids, because their warriors have gained a fearsome reputation as fanatic and bloodthirsty killers and because their centralised age system has been referred to as an efficient military machine, their raids on neighbouring tribes having, at times, even drawn international attention (cf. Turnbull [1944] and Thorp [1942]). Yet, Dassanetch society lacks any sign of militarism.

The Dassanetch number about 15,000 and live north of Lake Turkana on both banks of the Omo river. They practise animal husbandry, engage in flood-retreat cultivation and also do a little fishing. They maintain large herds and flocks and livestock transactions are central to their subsistence, values and social relationships.² Though agriculture plays an important role in their lives, they should be viewed as they view themselves, as pastoralists.

The Dassanetch do not have lineages and their kin groups are not localised and do not function as corporate groups. The basic unit of production and consumption is a mobile independent household which includes a married man, his wife or wives and their unmarried children. Each man, upon his marriage, establishes his own neolocal household and aims to establish a set, or sets, of affinal ties and of individual bond partnerships in order to weave a network of social relationships which can be

² For a fuller account of the economy and the structure of social relationships see Almagor [1978a].

used in times of need. In a mixed economy, such as that of the Dassanetch, no household can be self-sufficient in labour. Each man builds up his own economic and social status by his own endeavours, through the selection of kinsmen, affines and bond partners with whom he wishes to co-operate and with whom he shares reciprocal interests. Co-operation with cognates is fairly slight. The age system, in contrast to the kinship system, is cohesive and has a firm hierarchical structure which generates strong feelings of affiliation to generation-sets and embraces all men and women. I will elaborate on the structure of the age system later but first I turn to the subject of raiding and its escalation.

II

A typical Dassanetch raiding party consists of 10 to 15 men in their twenties, usually age-peers (*shele*), who form a bounded group, which I call a clique, affiliated to one generation-set. The clique and the place it occupies in the generation-set is discussed in the next section, but it should be noted here that members of a clique will have known each other for years and sometimes from early childhood. A clique not only acts as a group in warfare but constitutes a group in the age system for the duration of the lives of its members.³

Raiding is typically a small-scale, spontaneous and unco-ordinated venture. A raiding party is usually limited to a clique of age-peers in their twenties. The interval between planning and mounting a raid is usually short, decisions usually being triggered during the ecstasy of dancing, singing or debate. There are many occasions on which young age-peers participate in dancing or in ceremonial feasts which involve singing to, and blessing, their name-oxen and acting out attacks on enemy tribesmen. The singing, blessing and cursing may reach such a pitch, and the young men get so carried away, that they may decide to go on a raid. On other occasions the decision to raid may emerge from calm discussion under a shade tree or around a fire. Whether the aim of a raid is loot or revenge, the small group of age-peers usually sets off within a few hours, before rumours of the impending raid reach the ears of the elders who may well try to initiate a public debate in order to stop them. Raiding groups prefer to set out secretly under cover of dark so that news of the raid will usually only break after their departure. The raiders target is usually determined by chance encounter. Cliques do not co-ordinate and all tactical decisions are undertaken by the group itself in the field. The relationships of age-peers are dominated by a strong ethos of equality (cf. Almagor [1978b]) and raiding parties do not have leaders. Young men with qualities of leadership may play a dominant part during the raid but their influence is not transferable outside the context of raiding. Age-peers not only regard themselves as equals but also should not use *fargoginte* against each other. The concept of *fargoginte* is used differently in various social contexts but literally, it means "coercion" or "force".

³ The clique is very similar to the squad in the men's age-class of the Swazi. Cf. Kuper [1947: 120].

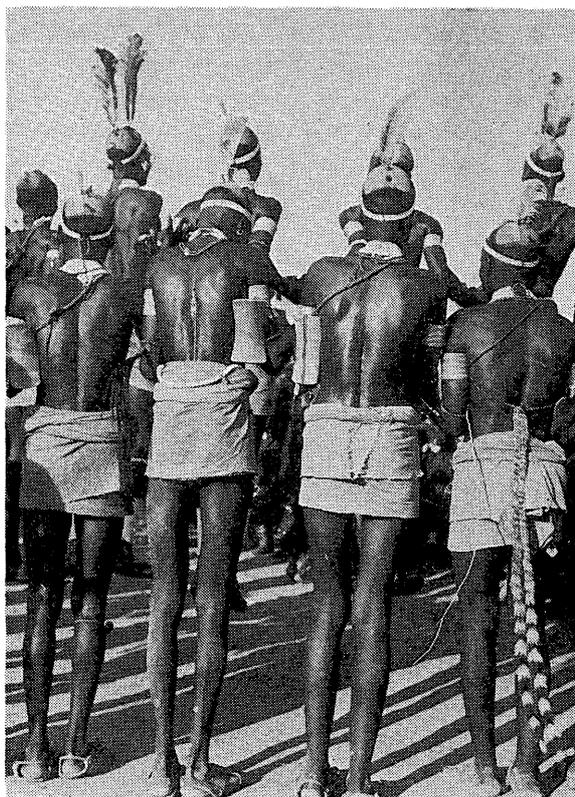


Photo. 1. Dassanetch youths dancing

When used between age-peers it means undermining the solidarity of equals by “showing off”, seeking an immediate reward at the expense of others, imposing one’s own will, or claiming superiority in situations which call for reciprocity and solidarity. Thus, although some men may distinguish themselves during a raid, fear of being accused of overbearing conceit prevents them from trying to use that distinction as a general social asset.

The method of raiding is referred to by the term *sariti*. This is difficult to translate, but it implies a “free for all”, during which no rules apply, each raider being free to grab, kill, loot or abduct as he wishes. *Sariti* gives equal access to the objects of attack to each of the peers.⁴

The rewards of raiding are cattle, young girls, and the prestige and other rewards

⁴ The *sariti* form of attack was accompanied by shouting which served to frighten the enemy and also to symbolise the absence of rules. Other contexts in which *sariti* is used are (a) when people rush to grab the goods of a deceased old woman, the goods going to whoever gets hold of them first and (b) when an animal dies and chunks of meat are cut and taken by whoever comes first. An informant likened *sariti* behaviour to that of vultures competing for meat from a carcass.

that come from killing an enemy. Looted cattle are either distributed to close kinsmen with a claim to a share of the loot, or are bartered for rifles and bullets. The latter involves driving the cattle for several days to Maji through territories held by hostile tribes.⁵ A captured girl is given to a close kinsman of the raider who abducted her, usually his father's brother or father's brother's son. The receiver "adopts" the girl, and while her "new kin" cannot marry her, they are entitled to receive bridewealth.⁶

The killing of an enemy has symbolic and practical rewards. If the killer smears the victim's blood on his body it is believed it will bring him and his cattle fertility. A witness to the killing, who is asked to confirm the act by spearing or shooting the dead man once again, establishes a bond partnership (*meso*),⁷ which, though considered "weak" (and some even deny that it is a bond at all) is unbreakable. This partnership does not carry rights in bridewealth but creates an emotional tie like that of "best friends".⁸ The most important "reward" is the scarification which the killer is entitled to bear on his chest (see Photo. 2) and which is the only visible sign that distinguishes a killer from a non-killer. Finally, a man who has killed an enemy can add to his existing set of names an honorary name which identifies him as a killer.⁹

Mair argues that raiding among the pastoral Karimojong stems from environmental constraints and that raiding generally fulfills an important function for

⁵ See Tornay's essay in this issue.

⁶ Dassanetch bridewealth rights are individual and derive mainly from the genealogical position each bride-giver occupies in a group of bride-givers. Thus, a raider will place a girl he abducts in the care of someone in the bridewealth of whose daughters he expects to share. It is not uncommon that such a girl frequently marries a peer of the raider who captured her.

⁷ The bond is actually established at the ceremony when the "beast of the enemy" (*ain kisiet*) is slaughtered. See Footnote 9.

⁸ A bond which is, in some respects, similar to this is created between two peers, one of whom has saved the other's life.

⁹ For more details of the variety of names a man has see Almagor [1972]. The killing of an enemy is followed by a series of rituals and acts of purification. First, a white sheep (*ai chilan*) is slaughtered and its blood used to appease the evil and anger of the dead person. After that the front part of the killer's hair (*shurte*) is shaved, and finally an ox, called the "beast of the enemy" (*ain kisiet*) is slaughtered and the members of the killer's generation-set participate in a meat-feast. The killer then takes an honorary name (*Yer mit kisiet*) which is derived either from the colour of the *ain kisiet*, or from a description of the killing or from an event that occurred during the attack. At a later ceremony the scars of killing (*chade*) are made on the chest of the killer. When a clique returns from a raid on which they have killed but suffered no casualties themselves, they enter the settlement, singing, and girls run out and give each one a necklace. If, however, one of the peers has been killed and his corpse left behind (Dassanetch do not bury people who have been killed), there is no singing, although the above rituals and ceremonies are performed if any one of the peers had killed an enemy.



Photo. 2. A Dassanetch elder

pastoral societies in times of drought. Whatever the reasons for raiding may be, it is a fact that it has become almost part and parcel of pastoral existence. According to Mair, raiding contributes to a vicious circle of inter-tribal conflict in which “the side which has lost cattle...will try to get them back in a raid” [MAIR 1974: 33].¹⁰ Indeed, tribesmen state that the main aim of raiding is to capture cattle (cf. Huntingford [1953: 77], Spencer [1973: 97], Peristiany [1951: 281] and Lewis [1972: 89]). Mair describes a cycle of sparring between tribes which is conducted like a game which has its own rules and a certain etiquette. Various reports also confirm that, paradoxical as it may seem, daily life among pastoral tribes can continue fairly undisturbed in spite of reciprocal raiding. Efficient livestock management depends upon free access to pastures, but two neighbouring tribes can compete for the same

¹⁰ Cf. also Sweet [1965: 1146–8] who sees raiding as a mechanism of exchange that serves to distribute herds relatively equally.

pastures without raiding each other for the purpose of acquiring territory.¹¹ Inter-tribal hostilities may, of course, curtail the use of pastures that are liable to be the scene of fighting:

It is helpful to distinguish between two degrees of warfare among pastoralists. One is a state in which reciprocal raids are normal, and the other, an escalation of the former, is one in which their tempo so increases that grazing areas are affected.¹² In reciprocal raiding, hostilities are governed by certain conventions, namely that the quantities of cattle looted should be reasonable, that casualties should be kept to a minimum (cf. Spencer [1973: 96], and Footnote 19 below), that the frequency of raids should not be excessive and, finally and most important, that each tribe may retaliate similarly.¹³ But even if some of the rules are broken (i.e. raids are too frequent,¹⁴ or too many young girls or cattle are looted), hostility need not escalate into full-scale warfare as long as the injured party receives compensation and is assured that the breach was an exception. Thus, reciprocal raiding among pastoralists may co-exist with co-operation at other levels.¹⁵

As long as raiding follows the rules it can be regarded as an integral component of pastoral existence, rather like an acceptable degree of juvenile delinquency in modern society, which does not really jeopardise fundamental economic, political and social concepts. Escalation occurs when the rules are violated—when great numbers of livestock are looted, casualties rise sharply, killing is deliberate and cruel, and raids become too frequent. Whereas reciprocal raiding remains a local affair, in the sense that the injured party limits itself to retaliation on a similar scale,

¹¹ Excluding, of course, wars of expansion, e.g., those of the Turkana in the 19th century and earlier.

¹² The Dassanetch have specific terms to distinguish different degrees of hostility. Inter-tribal hostility in general is called *os*, reciprocal raiding is *nyasagsag*, and escalation is termed *hol dim*, (which is also used of the major harvest); all-out war is *nyakiryam*.

¹³ This kind of reciprocity is also referred to by Otterbein [1970: 88], who writes: "...those societies which are frequently attacked by their neighbours are also those societies which frequently attack their neighbours." A basic feature in ongoing social reciprocity, that of equality between the parties involved, is also attributed to reciprocity in raiding. This is most obvious among the Arab tribes of Rub al-Khali whose raiding parties are organised "to capture camels from tribes of similar or equal status" [COLE 1975: 95]. East African pastoral tribes are not organised according to a known and accepted hierarchical status order and thus the issue of equality of raiding parties is not relevant.

¹⁴ Reciprocal raids between the Turkana and Didinga, for example, are reported as follows by Moyse-Bartlett [1956: 445]: "...no fewer than 52 (raids) were reported west of the lake during the sixteen months from April 1919 to July 1920". There was thus a raid on average approximately every nine days.

¹⁵ Relations between the Dassanetch and Nyangatom, for example, are described by the Dassanetch in terms of reciprocal raiding and co-operation (see Tornay's essay in this issue). Except for 1972 and 1974, which can be described as periods of serious escalation bordering on all-out war, hostilities in the Lower Omo between 1970–5 generally took the form of reciprocal raiding.

escalation results in a campaign which involves organised recruitment and strategic decision-making processes that extend beyond the limits of a certain locality,¹⁶ so that inter-tribal co-operation ceases and daily social life and economic routines are disrupted. Grazing grounds may have to be abandoned and village sites evacuated as people concentrate in defensible areas. At public meetings people of all ages invoke primordial sentiments and echo rhetorical phrases such as “the eternal enemy”, “revenge”, “our land” and “our ancestors”. At such times of tension populations are uprooted and resources and manpower are mobilised at the expense of economic and family activities. Obviously, a pastoral tribe cannot maintain such a state of tension and imbalance indefinitely, and events can either deteriorate into full-scale war or, after a cooling off period, return to the routine of reciprocal raiding.

Bernardi [1952: 326–8] notes that “When defensive action was required all men participated without reference to age class distinction,” whereas “the offensive action system showed clearly the stratification of the age sets.” Bernardi also points out that in offensive activities, i.e. raiding, “the part performed by the warriors as opposed to the elders was overemphasised.”¹⁷ Self-evident though this may sound the distinction between raids carried out by young warriors and the state of escalation which requires all available manpower for defence is by no means trivial. The two activities are linked, in that raids may lead to escalation and escalation may either lead to all out war¹⁸ or slip back again to raiding. Escalation is not usually the outcome of a premeditated strategy, but is more often a dialectic and stichic process, with its own dynamics.

Raids are carried out by young men who are regarded as unsettled, “wild”, and irresponsible, concerned only with immediate rewards, “machismo”, etc. and less with the economic and political interests of the whole tribe. Their raids must, therefore, in one way or another, be controlled by persons generally known to be wise, responsible, and settled, who can foresee the potential danger of uncontrolled raiding even though it may stem from factors beyond the elders’ control. Once a raid gets started there is no guarantee that the excited raiders will not commit excesses, which may escalate into large-scale retaliation. Elders can control the frequency of raids and their scope, either by virtue of their structural position in a rigidly stratified age system which invests them with authority, or by making any raid

¹⁶ Evans-Pritchard [1957: 225] describes a raid as “...the entire fighting strength” of a province including youths and elders. This is quite different from the small raiding group of Dassanetch age-peers.

¹⁷ An aspect of this distinction between offensive and defensive action is expressed in Dassanetch symbolism which stresses that, after circumcision, a man is stripped of some of his physical strength and is, in many ways, “like a woman”. Circumcised men for example are forbidden to walk for long distances, “since their bodies are weak”, whereas those who set off on raids are young uncircumcised men. See also Spencer [1973: 98], who emphasises that Rendille elders and youths both undertake defence.

¹⁸ Rev. R. Swart of the American Mission tells me that this took place in the middle of June 1970 during the Hamar-Dassanetch war.

subject to their permission or supernatural approval (cf. Spencer [1973: 96], Lambert 1956: 26], Huntingford [1953: 77–8], Lewis [1972: 87] and Hallpike [1972: 241]).

Societies obviously differ in the amount of control elders exercise over young warriors. We have noted that it is fairly easy for young Dassanetch raiders to evade the elders and to set off on a raid without anyone knowing about it. Raiders do sometimes seek permission, however, from senior members of their generation-set or, if they wish to improve their chances of success (especially if they are not sure of the right timing or have had bad omens) they may approach a diviner. Permission can be denied on various grounds, such as disapproval of the raid or of its timing. Elders try to control the youngsters, particularly during the time they are approaching circumcision, when excitement reaches a peak. (The circumcised are prevented from raiding, and instead may only kill particular species of birds specifically identified with neighbouring tribes.) If rumours about a raid reach the ears of some elders, they may bring public pressure to bear to prevent it. Nevertheless, young warriors usually do not consult, inform, or seek the blessing of elders, but depart secretly and carry out the raid independently.

At this point I deviate to refer to an historical point. Hostilities in the Lower Omo area appear to have escalated in numbers and intensity during the last fifty years, as, I believe, a direct result of the introduction of firearms (cf. Thorp [1942]). This created a temptation to violate the rules of reciprocal raiding, and whenever temptation was yielded to, the result was escalation, so that the number of casualties rose, a great deal of livestock was looted, settlements were destroyed, and entire areas depopulated (cf. Turnbull [1944] and Thorp [1942]). Outright warfare did not persist over the decades and hostilities fluctuated between peaks of escalation and small-scale raiding.¹⁹ But the “norm” of controlled, relatively low-key reciprocal raids that had prevailed before the use of firearms was never restored.

Between 1920 and 1950 outbreaks of hostilities were caused by combinations of such new and unfamiliar external factors as moves by colonial powers and the demarcation of new borders, and therefore the loss of traditional grazing grounds for some pastoral tribes. My main concern here is with relations between generations in the age system of the Dassanetch, and especially with the social implications of the power relations between elders and raiders, but let us first familiarise ourselves

¹⁹ If we take the western front, for example, which was the scene of hostilities between the Turkana and the Inkabelo tribal section of the Dassanetch, we find that during the last five decades escalation occurred in 1920–1, 1925, 1928, 1933 and 1958. It is interesting to note that British officials in Kenya could not explain the “peaceful years” at the beginning of the thirties. Turnbull [1944: 12] notes: “During the progress of these negotiations with the Sudan, raiding by the Merille (i.e. Dassanetch) and Dongiru (i.e. Nyanatom) had, by an unexplained coincidence, almost ceased. A peaceful year was experienced in 1930, and the death toll from raiders during 1931 and 1932 combined amounted to no more than six.”

with the structure of the age system. I present only as brief a sketch as is necessary to make my later analysis intelligible.

III

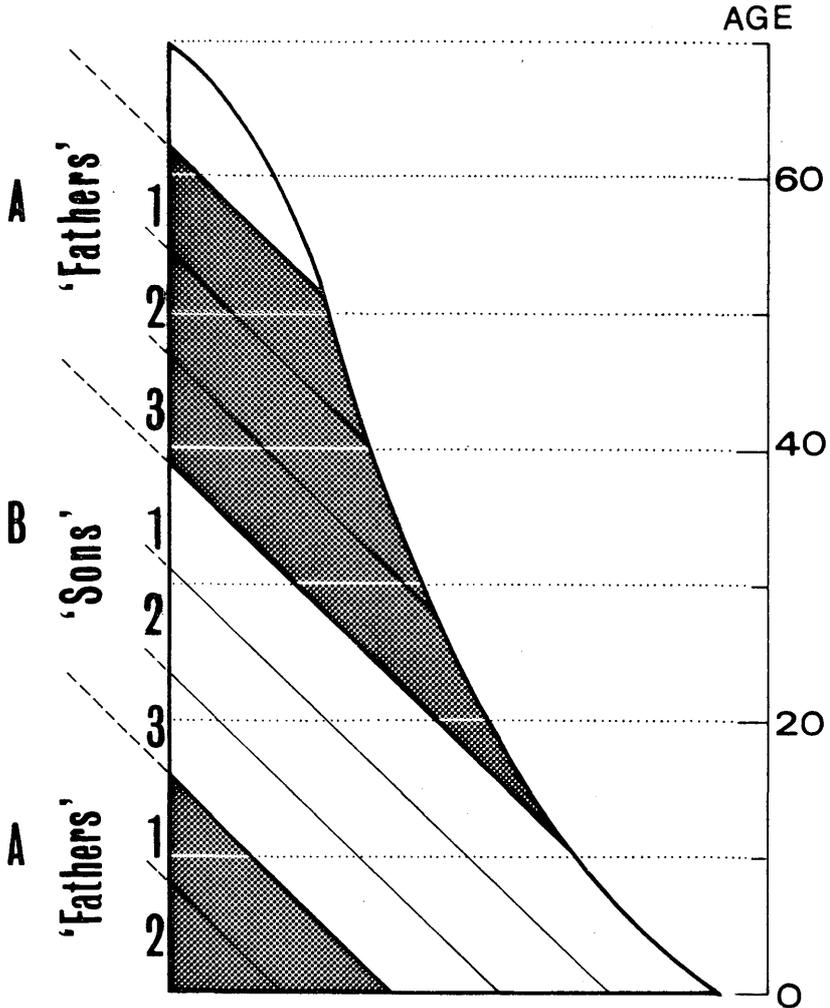
The age system of the Dassanetch is divided into six named generation-sets which may be ordered by seniority as follows:

A ₁	A ₂	A ₃
B ₁	B ₂	B ₃
A ₁	A ₂	A ₃
B ₁	B ₂	B ₃

A man's generation-set (*hari*) is determined at birth and he always joins the alternate set to that of his father. The six sets are divided into three pairs, each of which forms one line through which a man and his descendants pass. For example, the sons of a member of A₁ will all be members of B₁ and B₁'s sons are members of A₁. Similarly, the sons of A₂ will be members of B₂, and B₂'s sons members of A₂ and so on. There is considerable overlap of age across generation-sets but also some clustering. Although persons belonging to different generation-sets can be of the same age, the hierarchy of the sets is based on age differences. This is particularly evident when comparing the ages of the oldest or youngest in adjacent generation-sets; the oldest members of one generation-set (e.g. A₁) are approximately 8 to 10 years older than the oldest members of the generation-set immediately junior to them (A₂). Similarly, the youngest in each generation-set are older than the youngest in the generation-set below them by approximately the same number of years. Since entry into a generation-set depends on when its alternate one starts to beget children, and not on the inauguration or closure of other generation-sets, it means that age differences between members of any one generation-set may be forty years or more. Hence, a generation-set is not a set of coevals. Furthermore, since recruitment to the generation-sets is simultaneous, it means that men of similar age may join quite different generation-sets and several sets, therefore, which are ranked in order of seniority (A₁, A₂, A₃, B₁, B₂, B₃) may in fact contain men of similar age.

The six named generation-sets are organised into two triads or alternations (A and B). The senior alternation (A₁ A₂ A₃) is called "fathers" (*izam*) and the junior one (B₁ B₂ B₃) is called "sons" (*umo*), and either can fill the station of "fathers" or "sons".

Adults are not classified into grades beyond the major stages of the life cycle of youth (*nigen*) and manhood (*kabana*). *Nigen* are youths who become *kabana* around the age of 18-20. The ritual of transition to manhood is called the "hairdressing" (*me tagniya*) ceremony and is performed by a group of 10 to 15 boys who mark their transition to manhood by changing their hairstyle. This group of age-peers is what I referred to earlier as the "clique". Each clique holds its own separate and independent hairdressing ceremony and in any one year many such ceremonies are performed. All the young men of one generation-set who perform the hairdressing



A Schematic Model of the Dassanetch Age System

ceremony in the same year I call an "annual". Each new "annual" can be compared to a new layer added to the structure of the generation-set.²⁰ The boys of one locality are likely to start doing things together from around the ages of 7 to 10 years; during their teens they tend to become an informal group of friends but membership remains loose as some boys leave and others join. But, by the time they reach the ages of 17 to 20 and decide to undergo the hairdressing ceremony together, their relationship as age-peers of a clique within the framework of their generation-set is formalised and institutionalised. The clique becomes a bounded group and age-peers

²⁰ Note, however, that the formal entrance of any individual into a generation-set is at his or her birth.

remain in it throughout their lives. The formation of such a clique occurs simultaneously within and across generation-sets.

Of the four affiliations mentioned above (alternation, generation-set, annual, and clique), the annual plays only a minor part in a man's daily life. Annuals are not distinct or cohesive groups. They rarely, if ever, meet. Similarly, with one exception, the alternation has very little to do with daily routines and is primarily of ceremonial importance. Alternation affiliation is only invoked at times of escalation when generational interests are at stake and I shall return to this subject shortly. Individuals regard membership of their generation-set and membership of their clique as important to them and both are major social influences. But the gap which exists between what, on the one hand, is a small intimate clique of coeval age-peers, and on the other a large generation-set whose members differ in age and are only loosely linked, has an importance to which I shall return later.

A youth who has performed the hairdressing ceremony is called a "man" not a "warrior" but there is no change in his daily behaviour and he is still expected to be active in the defence of the tribe. While a warrior age-group does not form a corporate economic unit and neither possesses property nor engages in activities which are directly connected with the economy, they do engage in extensive slaughter of name-oxen which are owned by individuals but "belong" to the age-group (cf. Almagor [1972, 1978b]). At first glance the young bachelors might seem to be an unproductive class who engage only in leisure and war. It would be wrong, however, to assume that they are not integrated into the pastoral economy; nomadic pastoral societies are chronically short of manpower, and young men play a crucial part in the economy (cf. Dyson-Hudson [1966: 68], Spencer [1965: 58-62; 1973: 43], Gulliver [1955] and Evans-Pritchard [1940: 57-63]).

Graduation from youth to young man marks a change in a man's relationships with adults and in his responsibilities. It is also a dramatic change in his formal social position since together with his age-peers, he then formally takes his place in the hierarchy of his generation-set. The change in his economic activities, however, is not so clear-cut and depends on other factors such as the size of his household herd, the number of younger brothers he has who can tend cattle, and whether his father is alive (and, if he is not, whether he is the eldest brother who must assume responsibility for other dependents of the household). Although young men are not as fully occupied with active herding as they were when they were teenagers, most of them do undertake pastoral tasks which include herding.

This division in the occupation of teenagers and young bachelors also means a division in their loyalties. While each fulfils a role in the pastoral activities of his own household in which he has a personal interest, as an active member of a clique he is pulled away from these activities. It is during this period in their lives, when group solidarity is at its peak, that young men raid other tribes. Dassanetch men usually marry towards the end of their twenties or the beginning of their thirties. Marriage is a turning point for each individual. He then withdraws his personal livestock from the natal household herd and establishes a household of his own.

This, of course, must be at the expense of clique activities and clique solidarity. A newly established household cannot meet all the demands of a nomadic pastoral economy from its own labour resources, so a newly married man invariably requires the help of many people in order to cope with the management of his herd and household. As each age-peer becomes engaged in the economic pursuits of his own household, group solidarity declines, age-peers meet less often and the clique, although it meets from time to time, mainly on ceremonial occasions, becomes a group in name only. The peers are usually not co-resident, and each has to construct a network of social relations of his own, which includes persons of different affiliations, ages and social positions. Peers usually play only minor roles in each others' networks, since their economic interests alter and fluctuate and do not necessarily coincide with the emotional linkages of peerage. In other words, by the time a man becomes an elder, his social position depends mainly on the quality and quantity of ties he has developed and fostered over the years, rather than on the formal position of his clique in the hierarchy of the age system. A man's status is regarded as an outcome of his own endeavours rather than of general and diffuse attributes of age, or formal affiliation to a set or a clique. This is partly so because of the structure of the Dassanetch age system, which permits simultaneous and prolonged recruitment to various generation-sets and thus creates a system in which the age composition of any one generation-set is very broad; although there is a constant change of personnel, as annuals die out and others enter, the long duration of recruitment means that any generation-set can survive for two or three generations before it finally expires.

From a structural point of view, this means that there is no horizontal class or grade of warriors which cuts across generation-sets. Young warriors of different generation-sets may share the same feelings of antagonism towards the elders, but there is no formal body of any sort that can either co-ordinate or crystallise the diverse cliques of raiders. Cliques are divided along the lines of the generation-sets of which they are members, so any one clique's success in a raid does not generate feelings of solidarity among warriors throughout the tribe. There is a great deal of competition and rivalry between generation-sets, and the prestige which results from success in raiding attaches to the generation-set concerned, even though the elders of that particular generation-set may often be displeased with it. This is where the hierarchy of the age system, as a mechanism which checks the power of warriors, comes into play. In most East African age systems a consequence of the division into sets or grades is that control is imposed by a senior group on a junior one. The principle of generational or set separation and alignment links the various alternate groups, sets or grades, into one hierarchical system such as senior elders and senior warriors or junior elders and junior warriors (cf. Ruel [1962: 26-7], Gulliver [1958: 903; 1963: 29-31], Dyson-Hudson [1966: 157], Spencer [1965: 82; 1973: 33-5; 1976], Lambert [1956: 28, 47], Lewis [1972: 90-1] and Hallpike [1972: 200-4]). The responsibility of elder sets for junior sets is what restricts youngsters from using their manifest force against their alternate elders. This kind of control is probably more efficient in an age system which cuts across local groups and kin

groups and incorporates all the persons of common age into one system.²¹ A senior Dassanetch generation-set assumes responsibility for its junior counterpart in the opposite alternation. But the very structure of the age system prevents the effective overall control of junior sets by senior sets since each set recruits over a long period and hence is mixed in age composition. There is no clear distinction between the authority of older persons and subordinate youngsters. As there is generally considerable overlapping in age across generation-sets, there must be overlapping across two alternate generation-sets. As the figure on page 130 shows, the warriors of A_2 and A_3 , for example, who are aged 20 to 30, are generationally "senior" to the oldest members of B_1 , who are approaching the age of 40 and who are functionally elders. Furthermore, the rivalry between generation-sets limits any possibility of overall control of juniors by seniors, since the success a clique has in reciprocal raiding is attributed to, and strengthens, the relative position of that clique's entire generation-set. The absence of an overall clear-cut age strata means that alternate groups are not balanced in a single hierarchy.

The transition to manhood creates a dramatic change in an individual's attitudes towards the elders. From being a boy who was totally dependent on, and controlled by, elders in the livestock camps, a young man becomes formally independent and, being less tied to pastoral tasks, he enters the political structure with high expectations and experience in the use of force. The two mechanisms of control (elders and diviners and the age system) are often unable to check both the exaggerated value that the young men place on the use of force and their spontaneity of action. But these small armed cliques are partly held in check by indirect means, which reduce the benefits of raiding to a level where they cannot be used or converted into prominence or permanence in other spheres.

Firstly, it will be recalled that killing an enemy tribesman involves two rewards: a bond with the witness and the right to bear scars on the chest. The "bond of killing" is a weak one which does not entail reciprocal rights in bridewealth,²² and hence is bound to fade away once a clique no longer acts as a group. As I have pointed out elsewhere [ALMAGOR 1978a: Chap. 4], bond partnerships are a crucial means whereby individuals enlarge their network of social relationships and thus create a wide range of relations of different kinds on which they can rely in economic activities and for social support. But bonds are scarce resources; they cannot be created merely on a whim, as they are connected with, and depend on, particular occasions, usually life's milestones, such as the birth of a child or circumcision. The bond of killing is established in the context of "battlefront comradeship", and although it bears prestige, it lacks the rights and obligations inherent in bond partnerships which derive from either purely economic interests or considerations of social status.

²¹ Peristiany [1951: 281] sees Kipsigis raiding in a different light. The main aim of a young Kipsigis was to capture enough livestock to make an early marriage; when all the age-mates of a set have married, the raiding life of the set was over.

²² Dassanetch bridewealth rules allow the allocation of bridewealth to persons (such as bond partners of the bride's father) who are not kinsmen of the bride.

The scars that a man who has killed an enemy tribesman is entitled to bear carry great prestige, but this prestige has no impact whatsoever on his "civilian" status or power position. Though in one important ceremony, that of *dimi*, the killer of an enemy may gain prominence and honour through songs (*garo*) sung in his praise, they have little further effect.²³

Looted cattle, could, theoretically, boost a man's present economic situation and future social position either by serving as immediate means of exchange or as additional means of livelihood. The value of looted stock, however, is restricted in practice. Raiders cannot add looted cattle to their own herds; they must either exchange cattle for rifles (if the clique needs additional arms), or, more often, distribute the cattle among kinsmen. In the first instance, additional rifles can strengthen the clique and bring short-lived prestige to the individual and to the clique for the short time during which it acts as a group of raiders. Thereafter, rifles, like scars, are purely decorative (see Photo. 2). Livestock given to kinsmen are an investment in future social relationships, rather than an immediate reward. Raiders only enjoy the fruits much later, when they become elders. By that time, however, these benefits are part and parcel of relationships entailed within the context of kinship. Furthermore, the obvious debt relationships created by gifts of looted stock are to a large extent cancelled out by the fact that the recipients regard these "gifts" as a natural obligation of young raiders towards their elder kinsmen. All in all, looted cattle do not bring much actual economic gain or increment in social position, and have little immediate effect on the power position or status of the individual or his clique in the age system.

Abducted girls are given to kinsmen to be raised until their marriage and the bridewealth due from such a girl is only likely to mature when the raider's clique is no longer an active group.

When age-peers marry, their clique ceases to function as a group, though they remain affiliated to it for the rest of their lives. As they establish their own households in different settlements, they meet rarely and each member immerses himself in the economic activities of his household. Young married men soon realise that they depend on elders to gain access to resources, such as herding assistance and land for cultivation. Until a young man has established the basis for his social network, which is likely to be ten years after his marriage, co-operation with elders who are his affines, cognates, or bond partners is vital. Men realise that the time they have spent in clique activities and raids has brought virtually no enduring rewards and that marriage is a new start in a totally different sphere. The physical power they wielded as an armed clique, furthermore, means nothing in the hierarchy of the age system, in which each individual must achieve his position by his own co-operative endeavours with persons not necessarily of his own clique or generation-set. Even the charismatic young men who rise to prominence during raids realise that their charisma will have to find expression on a broader front. The talents of a young man who has just

²³ Nowadays, as an outcome of the increase in hostilities since the 1920's, hundreds (if not thousands) of men have scars on their chests.



Photo. 3. A Dassanetch youth

established a household must be invested outside his generation-set and outside the context of the age system.

To sum up, the hairdressing ceremony does not automatically turn teenagers into warriors but only incorporates them into a political system which leaves them some freedom for group activity and a permissible outlet for the use of force. Young men enter the age system with high expectations, enthusiasm, and feelings of group solidarity. The prestige gained from raiding, however, cannot be converted either into strengthened individual status or into a group position in the age system, since social position in adulthood is not dependent on success in raiding.

There is another aspect to the dissolution of the clique. A clique is a group of individuals with more or less the same status, by virtue of their common age which endows them with a certain position in the age system. But cliques of common age cut across generation-sets. Marriage breaks down the potential solidarity and homogeneity of status based on age and gives elders power over the young men who,

by marriage, are obliged to become economically and socially dependent on elders. When cliques cease to operate the elders can prevent a cohesive body of aggrieved young men from threatening their privileged position.

The presence of alternate generation-sets cannot, of itself, check the misuse of force and prevent the escalation of hostilities against neighbouring tribes. But, once such escalation occurs, elders do unite to confront the young men and check the further deterioration of hostilities into warfare. The paradox is that in presenting a united front the elders in fact encourage the young men of all generation-sets to do likewise, which creates the precise confrontation they are seeking to prevent.

During the period I spent in the field there was no escalation of hostilities between Dassanetch and neighbouring tribes. Several serious clashes occurred, however, between young Dassanetch men and border patrols of Kenya Police in October–November 1968.²⁴ These clashes fomented what can only be described as an atmosphere of public hysteria. Long debates were held and young men were mobilised in ways which closely resembled a state of escalation as a result of what was interpreted as a violation of the rules of raiding. I am not so much concerned here with the actual hostilities which, as explained earlier, could either have waxed or waned, but with the disturbance of the public order, the confrontation of generations, and the differences of interest that came to the fore at the gatherings and debates which were held at the time.

When a state of escalation occurs the obvious place for people to gather is the “yard” (*nap*), which is the central place in a settlement where elders usually meet for informal chats or debates. A settlement is composed of people from various clans and generation-sets, and the elders in the *nap* are not representatives of their respective groups nor are they divided according to other affiliations. The *nap* is the seat of the elite of a settlement who are those elders who have retired from direct economic activities. The ordinary debates in the *nap* also reflect the power relations and relative social credit of elders. Prominent men and those with high social credit speak frequently in debates and are listened to carefully. The arguments they put forward stand a better chance of being taken to heart and they have a stronger say in decision-making than elders who have been involved in scandals or who have had social or economic difficulties and whose social credit is therefore dubious.

Ordinarily each generation-set has its own meeting place,²⁵ but in a state of escalation everyone from senior elder to young warrior rushes to the *nap* for a public meeting and debate. Thus, escalation changes both the population of the *nap* and the content of its debates. Anyone who wishes to speak at such a debate can do so regardless of his social standing. Outwardly it seems that such a meeting promotes “social cohesion in that it provides an occasion upon which members of the society unite and submerge their factional differences” [MURPHY 1957: 1034]. But

²⁴ In these clashes seven Dassanetch were killed by a Kenya Patrol near Kokuro and south of Kibish.

²⁵ Such meeting places are called *gatch* (shade), a term sometimes used as a synonym for a generation-set.



Photo. 4. A public meeting of Dassanetch elders and warriors during escalation

this is a partial view that only takes into consideration the blessings and curses in such a debate and ignores the content of the speeches, which, from time to time, call on the men “to defend our land” or “to crush the enemy” and appeal to God to “bless your people”, “give health to our cattle and children”, or villify neighbouring tribesmen as “murderers” and “hyenas”, etc. The crowd in the *nap* responds to these appeals by repeating the last word in chorus.

The arousal of primordial sentiments is no doubt designed to enhance solidarity and cohesion, but nevertheless the speeches which I heard revealed schisms and opposing generational interests. Several typical phrases give us a clue as to the kind of conflict of interest involved. One elder spoke about “the enemy [the Kenyan Police] that has always hated us” and praised the young warriors’ courage, but went on to describe the situation as grave: “We cannot continue like this. Where will our cattle go? Who will take the cattle for grazing?” Another elder spoke of the need “to defend our land which was the land of our ancestors” and had words of praise for the young warriors who defend the cattle and children, but he spoke also about *sariti*, which, it will be recalled, refers to the undisciplined spirit of raiders. He said: “*Sariti* is not good for us. No, it is not good. We are all here, but we cannot go on like this. No. *Sariti* is not good. Who will bless the girls and cattle? Who are the ‘fathers’?” The last two sentences referred to the elected members of the senior generation-set in power whose task it is to bless both the young girls in a ceremony held for their future marriage, and also the bulls. He also made reference

to the alternation of “fathers” in the age system. As the debates proceeded and became more heated, the young men also spoke and referred to enemy cruelty which was “preventing our cattle from grazing on our land”. Young men referred to their name-oxen and some of them metaphorically described their name-oxen as wounded and bleeding, which implied that they themselves had been hurt and thus must take revenge.²⁶ The young men’s speeches carried more than a hint of criticism of the elders’ failure to seek military action. This was most obvious in the following words of one young warrior:—“We all appreciate and honour your wisdom. But what we need is to go and crush them in their posts—not to sit here in the *nap* and talk and do nothing but talk. You were once lions but you are lions no longer. You were once leopards but all of you have gone.” An influential elder then rose and, after the customary opening formula, said: “The fact that you have rifles does not mean that you had to shoot. No. We also fought. We walked fourteen days with no food and returned. Yes, we celebrated and feasted.” I am not entirely clear about the first part of the sentence; he may have intended to place the blame for the deterioration on the young men who had ambushed a Kenyan Land Rover several days earlier, in which incident several Dassanetch herders were killed. But in the second part he was obviously implying that his clique had carried out a successful raid without suffering casualties (see Footnote 9). This claim drew further angry reactions from some young men who shouted to him;—“sit down, sit down, your language is offensive, you know nothing. We, the ‘sons’ [i.e., the alternation of ‘sons’ in the age system] shall not give up, we shall avenge our blood and kill the enemy.” After further exchanges of this nature between elders and young men the debate turned into a shouting match. I noticed that some elders opened their statements with: “Sons of Naobei, sons of Naobei, listen...”, or “Sons of Nyamuru, I am speaking to you...”, in address to a particular group of young men who sat at one side of the *nap*. Naobei and Nyamuru are only two of the many names by which each generation-set is known but they are strictly reserved for ceremonial occasions.²⁷

Some points raised in the debate and the phrases and names which were employed deserve elaboration. Firstly, the elders’ opposition to the deteriorating situation (i.e. escalation) was phrased in terms of the disruption which it caused to the pastoral routine, because the young men did not tend the cattle but went to war and because cattle graze in certain areas due to the danger of hostilities. Secondly, the reference to *sariti* was not meant to apply to the young men’s actual behaviour during that period of escalation²⁸ but rather to underline the chasm between order and chaos. I suggest that the whole notion of *sariti* should be viewed in stratificational terms. In any age system, and especially in those in which the principle of age stresses the division of society into demarcated “sociological ages”, the ethical norms of be-

²⁶ For more details about the identification of a man and his name-ox see Almagor [1972].

²⁷ These ceremonial generation-set names are called *miriti*. Most of them are not Dassanetch in origin and probably derive from one of the languages of the Karimojong cluster.

²⁸ A series of *sariti* eruptions took place about a month later, when Emperor Haile Selassie visited Dassanetchland. I hope to describe this visit elsewhere.

haviour, sometimes referred to as the “appropriate-age behaviour”, also mark the differences between social categories. Among the Dassanetch young men fall between two categories. On the one hand, they no longer belong to the teenage (*nigen*) stage which is typically irresponsible, spontaneous and semi-delinquent, and appropriate for boys who have not yet been incorporated into the age system. On the other hand, they have been so incorporated and are expected to behave according to adult norms of responsibility and moderation. The in-between station occupied by young men means that they share some of the features typical of each adjacent category but feel committed to neither. They share the status of adults with elders but they also have much in common with teenage youths as they have not yet established meaningful personal networks and are thus heavily dependent on elders. *Sariti* is the antithesis of hierarchical order, privilege, and personal power. It is an outburst of anarchy, in which might takes precedence over right and temporarily suspends privilege and personal social standing. Thus, the references to *sariti* were intended to point out that society cannot function on the principles of *sariti*, while the remarks about the role of the alternation of “fathers” in the rituals for fertility stressed the fact that the continued orderly life of the Dassanetch depended on preserving its hierarchy. Elders also feared the dangerous consequences of the abuse of force by youngsters because, in a state of escalation, the elders, as the privileged class in power, can only lose. The reference to a past raid in which there had been no casualties was a case in point.

Thirdly, during the debate, at a time of escalation, the power of the elders, and the overall power structure of Dassanetch society were both ignored. The young men felt free to make their views known in the *nap* and some elders were overshadowed, as is shown by the insults and shouts which were aimed at them.

Fourthly, young men used the term “sons”, thereby stressing the alternation of “sons”, (which cuts across the generation-sets) and also the united front and horizontal solidarity of warriors who were more or less of the same age. On the other hand, elders tended to emphasise the vertical line of continuity, of fathers and sons, authority and submission, patronage and dependence and the ceremonial names for generation-sets which they used was a case in point.

Finally, both sides, besides attacking and criticising each other, invariably resorted to primordial sentiment and common values. This derived not only from the common danger and tension in which the participants were involved, but was also, I suggest, part of a game in which the “battle of words” was designed (among other things) to force the other side into a test of loyalty to the tribe and to its institutions. Similarly, each side praised the other’s courage (or wisdom) but not without some scathing criticism to the effect that such virtue was either not in place or was being misused. It is, however, interesting to note that the reference to sentiments and values becomes almost an institutionalised display of unity as part of a game in which both sides are aware of each other’s interests and arguments.

IV

The two kinds of restrictions on warriors described above (control by elders or diviners, and the neutralisation of raiding rewards) are not necessarily connected with the age system as such. The age system, besides having a built-in control mechanism in the form of alternate sets or grades, imposes an additional limitation in that a man's station as warrior is transitory. The grade of warriorhood remains, but warriors come and go. This simple fact is, I believe, one of the main reasons why the age-grade of warriors did not turn into a professional military class. For every individual, the post-warrior period is a disengagement from a personal past, in the sense that no one can build up his social position on the basis of personal connections with warriors, or use them or their power for his purposes. And, although patronage or affiliation between alternate groups in the age system does exist, the ties between sets of warriors and groups of elders have no military connotations or permanence. It is a form of control by elders over warriors rather than one by which elders derive benefit from the power of warriors. Furthermore, for every individual, the end of warriorhood means marriage, the establishment of a new household and a plunge into economic activity. This is particularly obvious among the Dassanetch, where a newly married man starts building up a personal social network which consists mainly of post-warrior coevals and elders on whom he is (initially at least) dependent. Thus, social ties, economic activities, and the need for resources mediated by others compel a newly married man to become part of the power structure which serves the purposes of elders and leaves no scope in a man's post-warrior period for any practical or emotional collaboration with those who have replaced him.

The term served by any group of warriors among the Dassanetch lasts about ten years. We should therefore ask what is the impact on the social structure in general of the presence of warriors who are able and willing to use force? In the present context we seem to have a paradox. Dassanetch warriors accumulate physical power, monopolise the use of force in inter-tribal feuds, gain prestige, and yet are unable to impose their will on society. Some of the answers to this paradox have been suggested earlier, but there is one more aspect, referred to in passing, that should be reiterated.

The Dassanetch power structure, which includes the age system, is based on the differentiation of investments and resources controlled by individuals. Typically personal assets such as social networks, social credit and credibility, brokerage power, and achievements are not compatible with the collective solidarity of a distinct category based on common age. Military achievement and the solidarity of age-peers might be effective if they were allowed to become permanent, but that could jeopardise the entire structure of differentiated power positions and the control of resources by the elders. Ordinarily, the main means of preventing the emergence of a social and homogenous category which incorporates all the warriors in a tribe are generation-sets which, in turn, are divided into fragmented cliques. But when

hostilities escalate the inherent pressures of the system make possible a united front of young warriors whose solidarity cuts across generation-sets.

Escalation disrupts the balance of power and makes manifest a latent generational split in the system which ultimately could reach full-scale confrontation. There is no doubt that during escalation it is elders who suffer most. The shift from routine pastoral activities to military activity not only endangers the economy of the tribe, but may shake the premises upon which the elders' power of mediation and their control of resources are based. Furthermore, the public debates in the *nap* give the younger generation a unique opportunity to have a say at the centre of power. The importance of young warriors during escalation cannot be ignored. It is in the interest of young raiders to continue the escalation as, according to the rules of the political game, this is the only way for them to strengthen their position. It is in the interests of the elders to reduce the tension and return to normal not only because they want the young men to return to their pastoral activities and continue to be dependent on them, but also because they have every reason to want to prevent the solidarity and power of all the young men from turning into an effective, permanent, or semi-permanent force. One of the purposes of meeting in the *nap* is to try and force the young raiders, through discussion and persuasion, or even through open confrontation, to maintain a low profile and to let the storm pass. At these meetings elders use their senior position in the hierarchy of the age system, and general privileges accorded to age to keep the young warriors in their place.

To sum up, when raiding is underway the control imposed by elders, or diviners, or the alternate generation-sets may not be tight or efficient. But, once the reciprocity of raiding gets out of hand and escalation occurs, the age system as a whole reaches a point of confrontation at which the elders must impose some control over the young warriors, not only to forestall further escalation but also to avoid the possible emergence of a united front of all the young men. The irony of this vicious circle is that such a confrontation is, in a sense, an admission that control through alternate pairs of generation-sets does not necessarily always work and that control can be restored only through the united efforts of all elders.

V

In spite of the fact that during the last fifty years or so the frequency of hostile outbreaks between Dassanetch and neighbouring tribes has increased considerably, Dassanetch society has not become militaristic or acquired a basic orientation towards war. Five decades of constant raids, states of escalation, increasing involvement in warfare, ever greater firepower,²⁹ modern training by Italian forces, and

²⁹ Shackleton [1933: 10–11] estimated their fighting men as 2,140, of whom 80 per cent were armed with rifles. This figure was confirmed by various British Intelligence reports [THORP 1942: 13]. Thorp, on p. 36, also quotes a document captured from the defeated Italian Army which indicated that about 1,000 new rifles were given to the Dassanetch in 1941.

military experience gained through clashes with the British,³⁰ have not encouraged the formation of a military professional class of warriors. In the light of the above argument, this is not surprising, for the age system is not an institution devised mainly to organise membership towards military activity, and its very structure generates activities and attitudes which derive from the differentiation of power and control over resources, all of which function to prevent the institutionalisation of militarism. The image Dassanetch society has acquired as a war machine, and the reputation its warriors have gained as cruel murderers both among neighbouring tribes and with outside observers,³¹ was not merited. Like other anthropologists (e.g. Murphy [1957: 1021] and Jacobs's essay in this issue) who have studied "warlike" tribes in the field, I found that social reality was totally different to report and I shall now briefly note the reasons for this discrepancy.

This image of the Dassanetch as a warlike people makes it difficult to draw a line between military efficiency and sheer aggression. Dassanetch military efficiency, as I have pointed out, derives from the fact that the small raiding parties are composed of cliques which have a high *esprit de corps* and sophisticated hit-and-run tactics. Whether aggression towards outsiders is a latent component in the pastoral way of life³² is an issue that I am not competent to judge, but the fact remains that Dassanetch are not at all aggressive in their internal relations. Aggressive behaviour only occurs during raids. Unnecessary violence has probably been employed only since the introduction of firearms. I have already pointed out that firearms themselves were an invitation to violate the rules of raiding and to provoke excessive violence. The line between an ordinary raid conducted according to rules and one that encountered obstacles and ultimately turned out to be far costlier in terms of casualties was a tenuous one. Furthermore, Dassanetchland is a small country with relatively limited pastures. There was a natural tendency, therefore, to push the zone of hostilities away from its borders, and the strategy followed was consequently attack rather than defence. (The Dassanetch are not well organised for defence.³³) The reputation they acquired as cruel and fanatic killers was a result of the type of warfare

³⁰ Four military expeditions encountered the Dassanetch: The Turkana Patrol (1918), the Merille Patrol (1926), the 1932 Expedition and the 1939 Expedition. For details of these expeditions see Yardley [n.d.], Collins [1961] and Thorp [1942].

³¹ But note the description of the Dassanetch by von Höhnel [1894: Vol. II, 207] who, in 1888, was the first European to reach them: "...the most charming, sociable negro tribe I had ever seen", which stands in contrast to the descriptions found in Thorp [1942: 13-16, 63].

³² Some students attribute aggression among pastoralists to a way of life which requires the handling of animals in such a way that this becomes the *raison d'être* for displays of aggression. Cf. Edgerton [1971], Ekvall [1964], Leeds [1965], Goldschmidt [1971] and Dale and Hart [1977].

³³ Rev. R. Swart of the American Mission told me that during 1972-4, when hostilities escalated between the Dassanetch and their nearby northern neighbours, the Nyangatom, hundreds of people gathered at Kalam Police Station and the Mission compound for protection, because they feared a retaliatory raid. See also Tornay's essay in this issue.

in which they were involved, the weapons they used, and the general deterioration in inter-tribal relations. Although Dassanetch warriors do not perceive themselves in the way they are described, they do not object to the image because it gives them a psychological and strategic advantage: it was highly intimidating (cf. Thorp [1942]) and deterred other tribesmen and soldiers from attacking Dassanetchland. But although this intimidation fended off attacks for several decades, it did not prevent first the British and then the Kenyan Police from establishing a *cordon sanitaire* in the evacuated areas which prevented Dassanetch from using their traditional dry season pasture in the Ilemi Appendix [ALMAGOR 1974] and reduced their grazing areas in much the same way as they are reduced during states of escalation.

There is no telling whether escalation will turn into all-out war or revert to "normal" raiding. Sometimes, as the recent history of the Dassanetch shows, it can lead to such a high rate of casualties and to such a reduction of grazing that a return to a pre-escalation period of reciprocal raiding is not possible.

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