

The Social Organisation of the Mursi: a
pastoral tribe of the Lower Omo Valley,
South West Ethiopia

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Abstract

This Thesis is a study of the specific mechanisms and general underlying principles of social control in a society which has up to now maintained a very high level of political and economic autonomy in relation to central government administration. I also seek to relate to these "underlying principles" a particular institution, ceremonial duelling, which, both to the people themselves and to an outside observer, is highly distinctive of their culture.

In Part I, after describing the rules and procedures involved in ceremonial duelling (Chapter 1), I outline the institutional framework within which public decision-making operates, and which serves to define contestants in duelling. Chapter 2 deals with groups based on territory, and their interrelations; Chapter 3 with groups based on age.

In Part II, I contrast the positive role of affinity in day-to-day relations of economic cooperation and co-residence, and in the settlement of disputed issues between individuals, with the dispersal of patrilineal ties. Chapter 4 deals with the formal rules of bride-wealth distribution and marriage, and shows how these serve to maintain affinal ties over several generations. The significance of affinity in relation to residence pattern (Chapter 5) and dispute settlement (Chapter 6) is then examined.

In Part III, the emphasis shifts from general principles of mediation and reconciliation to the exercise of individual influence

in public decision-making. After a preliminary consideration, in Chapter 7, of the only formal leadership role in the society, that of the priest (komoru), I examine in Chapter 8, the means by which informal, secular leaders (jalaba) come to dominate public decision-making. In Chapter 9, I follow the progress of some important public issues (including the conflict between unmarried men and the representatives of established authority over the holding of duelling contests) over a four-month period, in order to show leaders of both types in action. Finally, in Chapter 10, I attempt to define the formal characteristics of secular and religious leadership in this society.

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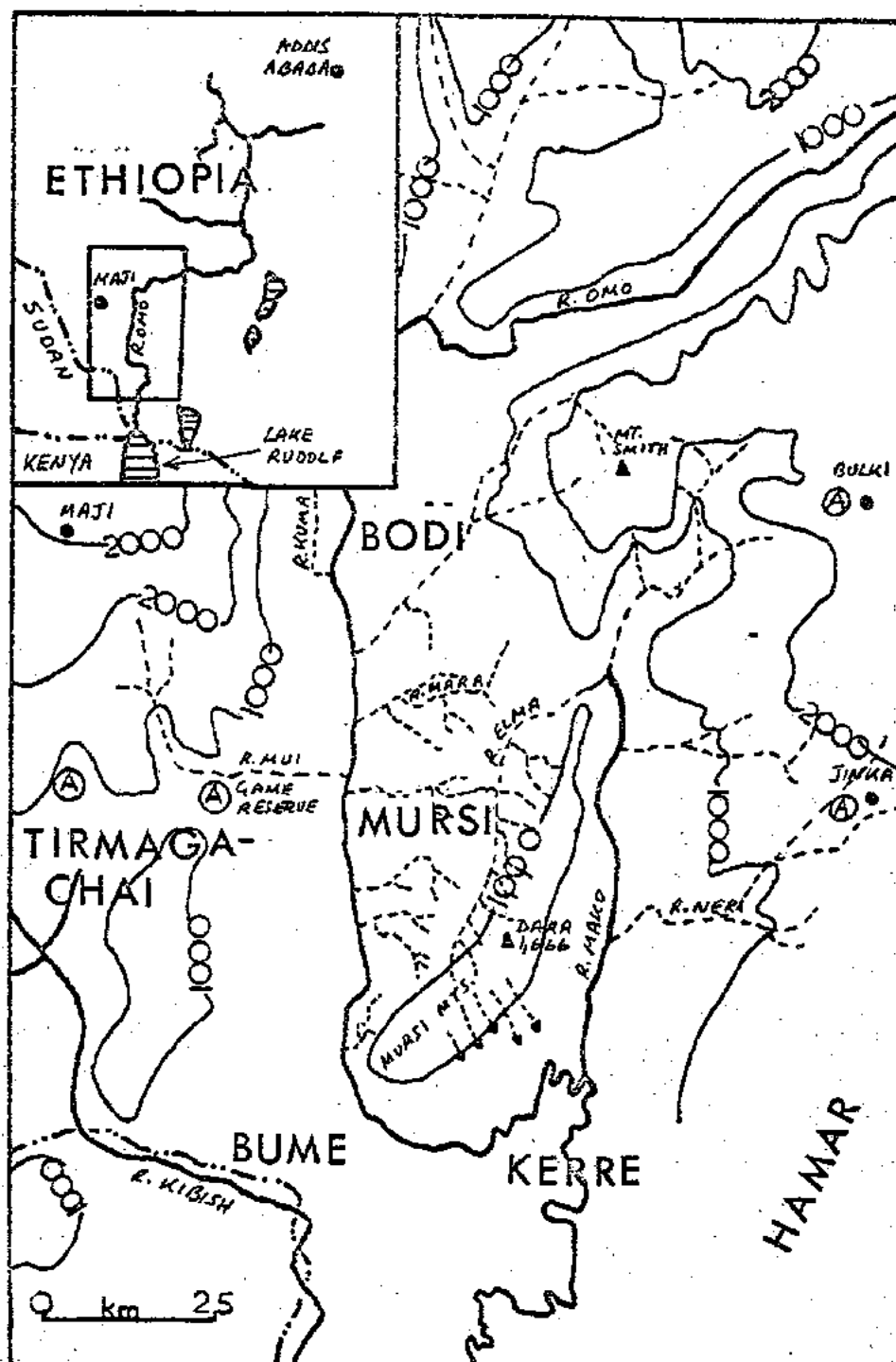
INTRODUCTION

1. Physical Environment

The Mursi, who call themselves Mun (sing. Muni) live in the Omo Valley, South Western Ethiopia, between latitudes $5^{\circ}20'N$ and $5^{\circ}30'N$. They claim that their territory stretches right across the valley from the Maji plateau in the west to the Baco range in the east, but its boundaries are as clear-cut in practice as they are vague in theory. The area lived in and utilized by the tribe lies, apart from a few cultivation sites on the west bank, wholly east of the Omo and west of the watershed dividing it from its tributary the Mako. These two permanent rivers, teeming with crocodiles and presenting extreme obstacles to communications for a large part of the year, form the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the country while another (though seasonal) Omo tributary, the Mara, marks the approximate northern limit of Mursi occupation. The area thus delineated consists essentially of a volcanic peniplane which is being gradually lowered by the action of a large number of seasonal streams, flowing both westwards to the Omo and northwards to the Mako. Dominating this plane is a range of hills called "Ngalibong" on existing maps¹ (after the Turkana name for the Mursi), which lies on a north-eastern/south-

1. The best available map is the 1:250,000 series of the Survey of Kenya, 1961, reproduced by the War Office and Air Ministry, London, the sheets in question being NB-36-16, "Lokitaung", and NB-37-13, "Stefanie".

Map 1: The Mursi and their
neighbours.



- 1000 — Contours at 1000m. intervals
 - - - Seasonal streams
 (A) Air strips

western axis and which forms a continuation of the Omo-Mako watershed. This range, which I prefer to call the Mursi Mountains, reaches its highest point (1,666 metres; 5,463 feet) in a dome-like summit known, both to the Mursi and their neighbours, as Dara (See Photograph /).

It is a semi-arid area with a mean annual rainfall of between 16 and 20 inches (400-500 millimetres). This approximation is based upon figures provided by K.W. Butzer (1970, pp. 23-30) for the Omo delta region, there being no other published climatological figures of any sort available for the Lower Omo Valley. But even if it were possible to give a reliable annual rainfall figure for Mursi country, it would almost certainly be misleading because of the extremely variable and localised nature of rainfall in the area. Most of the year's rainfall is concentrated into two short rainy spells, one between March and April (the primary maximum) and the other between October and November. The period spanning these two rainfall maxima is referred to by the Mursi as oiyoi, which I translate as "wet season", although it should be noted that, apart from the flooding of the Omo (which is controlled by rain falling outside the boundaries of Mursi country), there is no water surplus at any time. During this wet season, however, water can be obtained fairly easily along several stretches of the Omo's westward-flowing tributaries, either with or without the excavation of shallow water holes. Further east, in the Elma Valley, water is also easily available at this time, the Elma being fed by streams which



a) View to the south-east, over the head streams of the River Ngurug, with Dara and the Mursi Mts. behind.



b) View over the Bennakera River, towards the Mursi Mts.

Photograph 1.

flow down the north-western slopes of the Mursi Mts., which appear to be high enough to cause westward-moving rain clouds to discharge over them. None of these streams, however, flow for more than a few hours, immediately after a rainstorm, while the Elma itself flows permanently only in its lower course, for approximately 5 miles before it breaks through the Omo-Mako watershed to join the latter river. By the end of September the water-bearing stretches along the headwaters of the Omo's westward-flowing tributaries have virtually dried up. The small, October-November rains create new, though short-lived, water holes and pools before the onset of drought conditions, which last from December to February. During these months, and apart from the Omo itself, only the Elma can provide an economically viable source of water, exploited, for the most part, through the excavation of shallow pools in its central, sandy course.

The Omo, known to the Mursi as Warr, flows for 625 miles (1000 kilometres) from the Blue Nile and Sobat watersheds to the shores of Lake Rudolf at 4°29'N, and is the largest river of Western Ethiopia. Most of its main catchment area lies at heights of 2000 to 3000 metres so that it responds, in its rise and fall, to the rainfall regime of the Ethiopian highlands. It begins to rise in April or May, depending on the year, and continues to rise, though fluctuating considerably, until the end of August or early September, when the maximum level is reached. Narrow berms

of flood silts are deposited along the banks of the river, while more extensive flooding occurs on gently inclined slip-off slopes on the inner bends of meanders. The extent of this flooding, again, varies considerably from year to year, but really large tracts, comparable, that is, to the "lake flats" of the delta area¹, are never inundated. Having reached its maximum level, the Omo recedes rapidly during September and October, notwithstanding continuing and rapid day-to-day fluctuations, becoming easily fordable at several places by November. During the wet season it may be crossed by dugout canoe (Photograph 2) but between June and August the speed and turbulence of the currents makes this a dangerous undertaking, not lightly attempted. Indeed, many Mursi refuse to make use of a dugout at all, and thus are only able to cross the Omo during the dry season. Even at this time, when made on foot, the crossing is not without its hazards due to the very large number of crocodiles which inhabit the river and which frequently take humans.²

Vegetation cover within the immediate vicinity of the Omo varies between large forest trees (Ficus, Diospyros, Ziziphus, Salvadora, Tamarindus, etc.)³ on the fringing levees, and dwarf

1. cf. Almagor, 1970, and below, p.62

2. I witnessed two such fatal accidents, one in the Omo and one in the Mako.

3. I am very grateful to Dr. Bernard Verdcourt, of the Royal Herbarium, Kew, for his help with the identification of plant specimens.



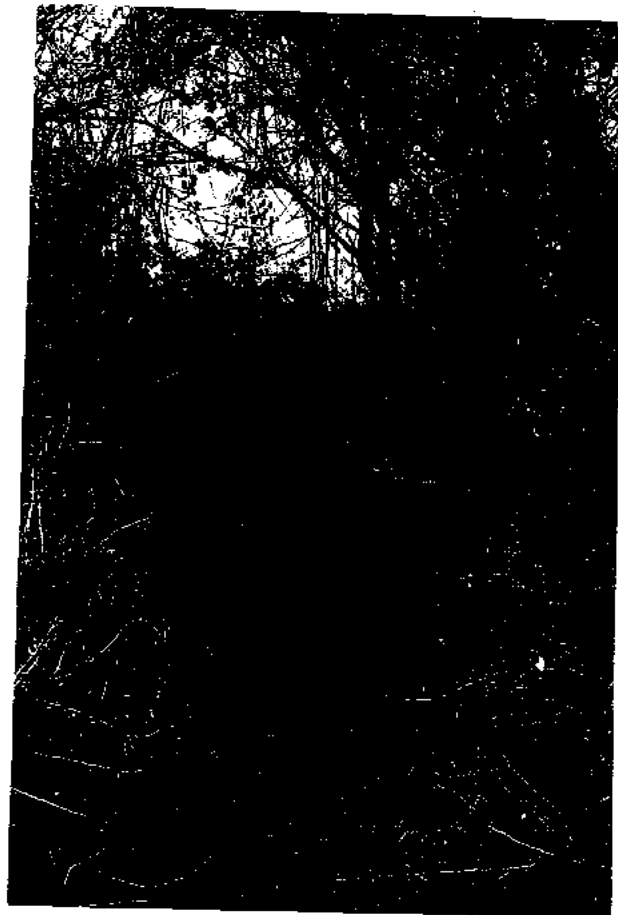
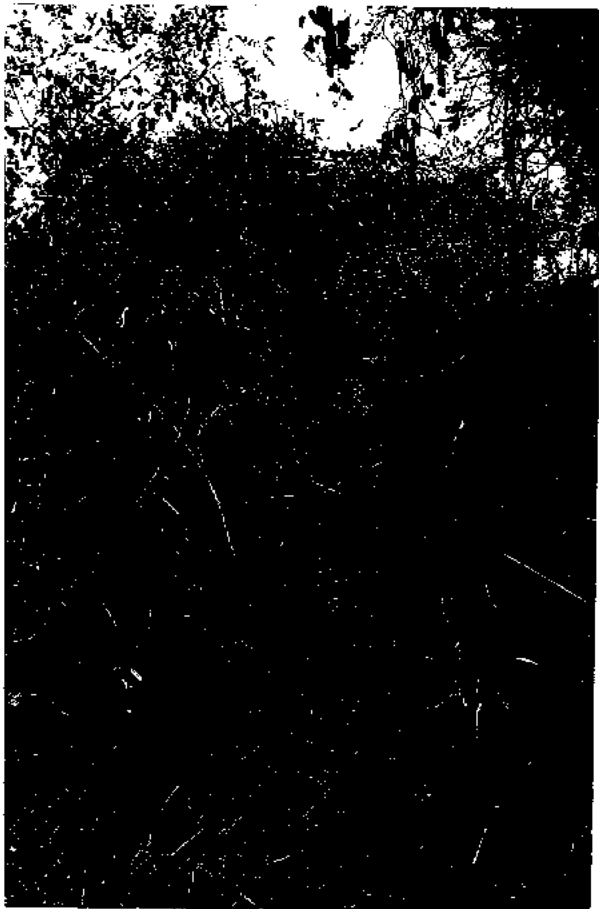
Photograph 2:

Stages in the making of a dugout canoe.

shrub grassland¹ (*Tribulus*, *Solanum*, *Panicum*, *Maerua*, *Sporobolus*, *Ricinus*, etc.) on sandy, rapidly drained open areas which occasionally degenerate into typical "badlands" scenery. Further back from the Omo, and varying in width from seven miles in the north to two miles in the south of the country, there is a belt of bushland thicket, that is, "an extreme form" of bushland "where the woody plants form a closed stand through which man or the larger ungulates can pass only with extreme difficulty and in which the land has no value for grazing" (Pratt, Greenway and Gwynne, 1966, p. 373) (See Photograph 3). I shall refer to this as "the Omo bushbelt". It is dominated by such succulents as *Euphorbia Tirucali* L., *Sarcostemma*, *Cissus Quadrangularis* L., and *Sansevieria*. Also characteristic of the bushbelt are *Acacia Mellifera* (Vahl) Benth., *Adenium Obesum* (Forsk.), *Plectranthus*, and *Dichrostachys Cinerea* (L.) Wight and Arn.

These plants give way abruptly to open wooded grasslands which rise steadily towards the Omo-Mako watershed. Here are found, scattered or in groups, such trees as *Commiphora Africana*, *Commiphora Pendunculata*, *Combretum Fragrans* F. Hoffm., *Sclerocarya*, *Lannea* and *Grewia Villosa* Willd. South and west of the fault scarp of the Mursi Mts., however, where the climate is markedly more arid than in the rest of Mursi country, the rapidly drained sandy soil supports

1. For this description I have adopted the terminological recommendations of the East African Range Classification Committee, reported by Pratt, Greenway and Gwynne (1966, pp. 369-382).



Photograph 3:

The Omo bushbelt

only dwarf shrub grassland. It is thus possible to divide Mursi country into three main zones on the basis of vegetation type, as is illustrated by Map 2 . It should also be noted that there is a marked contrast in soil type corresponding to the contrast between bushland thicket and wooded grassland. The latter covers brown, stoney soil, eroded probably mainly by wind¹, while the bushbelt soils are black, of relatively high organic content, and in process of accumulation. There is little evidence of leaching, however, both soil types giving neutral to slightly alkaline ph. values.²

2. Subsistence Activities

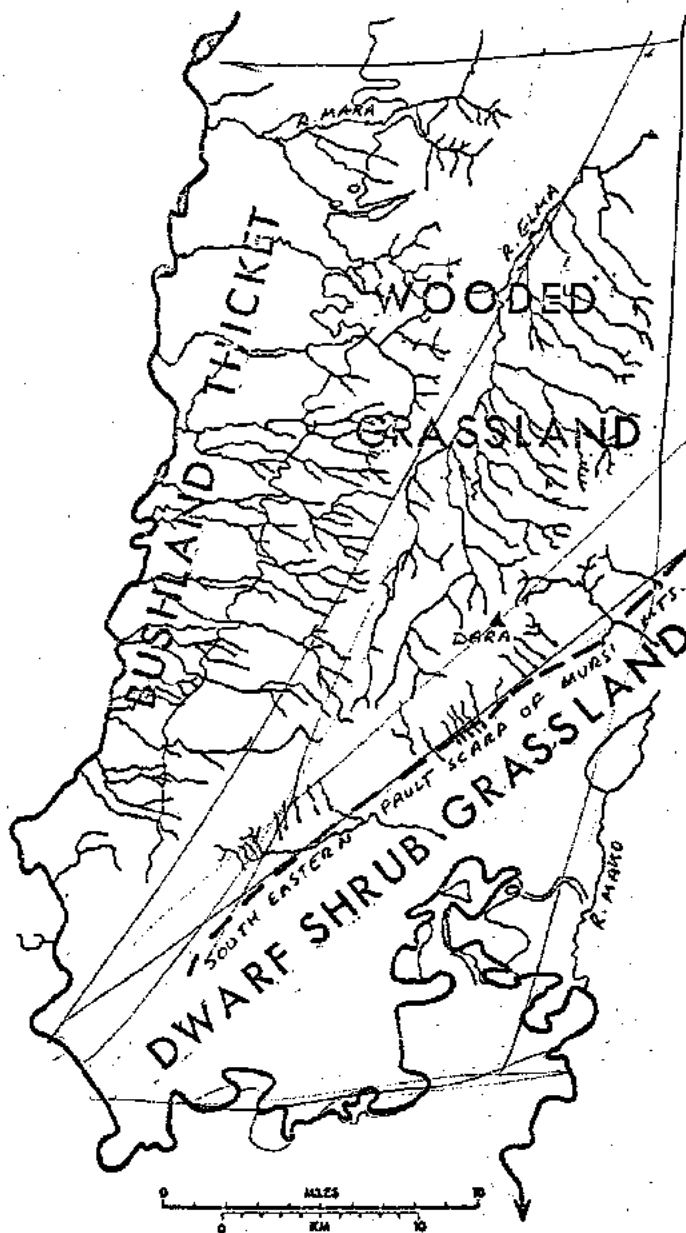
The Mursi number approximately 4,500 men, women and children, and support themselves by means of a combination of pastoralism and agriculture. I call them "pastoralists" not because they are able to provide all, or even the greater part, of their subsistence requirements from their herds, but because they are able to provide a sufficient proportion of them in this way to maintain the values and outlook of a pastoral people. I estimate that the total cattle

1. Butzer's evidence (op. cit., pp. 30-35) suggests that north-easterly and south-easterly airstreams predominate over this part of the Omo Valley and my own experience of violent easterly winds sweeping down from the Omo-Mako divide, several times taking my tent with them, certainly bears this out.

2. I am very grateful to Mr. Brian Kear and Dr. John Lea, of the Geography and Botany Departments, respectively, Manchester University, for their help with the chemical analysis of soil samples.

Map 2: Mursi country,
Drainage and
Vegetation types.

(Note: This and succeeding maps are
photographic reductions of a tracing
made from aerial photographs at a
scale of 1:50,000.)



population numbers somewhere between 4,000 and 4,500¹, so that there is probably a little less than one stock animal per head of population, which makes them slightly worse off, in this respect, than the Nuer, according to Evans-Pritchard's estimate (1940, p.20). The Mursi say that a generation ago they had many more cattle, and that they were then forced to take them much further afield, even beyond the Mako, in the dry season, in order to find adequate grazing and water, than they are accustomed to do today. They attribute the heavy reduction in cattle numbers which has occurred in living memory both to rinderpest (Gunchi) (the last serious epidemic of which was in 1961) and Tripanosomiasis (Dugi). The killing and eating of cattle with chronic sleeping sickness was indeed a frequent occurrence during the time I was in the field. Middle-aged men say that they have "grown up with the fly" - that it has gradually spread from the Omo bushbelt even as far as the Elma Valley - and the Mursi have, as yet, no access to any form of veterinary assistance.

It will be evident from what I have already written that pastoral activities must be confined to that area of the country designated on Map 2 as wooded grassland, since only here can the three basic requirements of cattle for grazing, water and at least relative freedom from disease be met. The bushbelt contains only minute, and isolated pockets of open grassland - mainly on sandy

1. This estimate is based upon counts made, with a tally counter held in the pocket, at ceremonies in which all the adult cattle of a district would be assembled. An economically insignificant number of goats and fat-tailed sheep are also kept.

cliffs close to the Omo - and is infested with tsetse flies. Cattle are taken there only as a last resort when raiders are active in the plain: it is a place to retreat to in time of danger, but not a place at which the cattle can remain for any length of time. On the southern side of the Mursi Mts., conditions are also unsuitable for cattle, though for different reasons. Here the sandy soil quickly dries up, and the streams flowing down the steep south-eastern slopes of the mountains disappear long before they reach the Omo. This is a desiccated, arid landscape, sparsely covered by grasses and dwarf shrubs. Thus, the Mursi's future as a pastoral people lies out between the bushbelt and the mountains, on the wooded grass plain, which they call Mi. This plain is divided into two parts, topographically, by a ridge, known as Gongor by the Mursi, which is virtually unbroken for a distance of over 30 miles and which divides the Elma Valley from the headstreams of the Omo's westward flowing tributaries.

Between November and February, when these headstreams are dry, the Mursi keep their herds east of the Elma, watering them in its central and lower courses. Water is nevertheless scarce, and camps move frequently (See Chapter 2 and Photograph 12). Cattle raiders, coming from the east, are also feared during those months, since the Mako is then at its lowest and easily fordable (the Mako Valley being uninhabited, there is no possibility of crossing it by dugout canoe). Between approximately March and September, however, during the wet season, relatively stable cattle settlements (See Chapter 2

and Photograph /2) are established around the headstreams of the westward flowing tributaries, in what I shall refer to as the central zone, and the Elma Valley is deserted. For, with the coming of the heavy rain in March and/or April, these streams once more provide an adequate water supply for both men and animals. But in order to understand this movement to the central zone at the beginning of the wet season, it is necessary to refer to the other main source of Mursi subsistence, agriculture.

It has been estimated that two to three "standard stock units" per head of human population is the minimum requirement to provide adequately for daily subsistence in a purely pastoral economy¹, under semi-arid conditions, where a "standard stock unit" equals two adult cattle. If this is a correct estimate, one may conclude, as a rough approximation, that the Mursi are able to provide for a quarter of their subsistence needs, at most, from the products of pastoralism. Thus they cannot possibly survive without cultivating, and, this being so, they are fortunate that their environment affords them the opportunity to engage in two distinct and complementary forms of cultivation, neither of which, taken alone, would be adequate for survival, given their present cattle wealth.

Rainfall in Mursi country is both too low and too variable, both as to timing and location, to provide a basis for regular, reliable cropping. But, given a sufficiently heavy fall of rain in

1. By L.H. Brown in an unpublished manuscript entitled The Biology of Pastoral Man as a Factor in Conservation, which is based upon research into range management carried out over several years in Kenya.

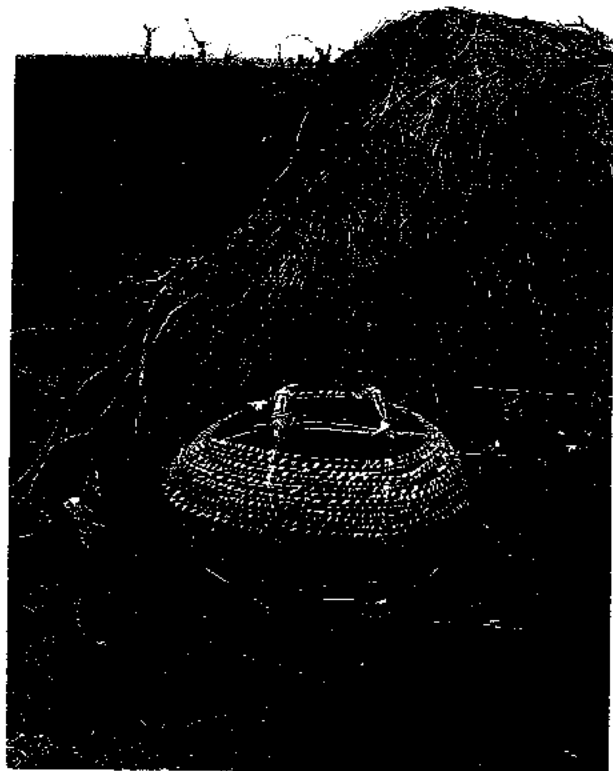
March or early April, sorghum (*Sorghum Bicolor* (Linn.) Moench), planted in the newly moistened black soil of the bushbelt, will reach maturity and provide a good harvest within about ten weeks, hardly requiring any further rainfall. Should the rains be late, however, falling in late April or May, and even if they provide sufficient moisture for the plants to germinate, the crop is almost certain to be destroyed by the very hot July and August weather. Nevertheless an oiyoi, or wet season, planting is attempted every year. Clearings along the eastern fringe of the bushbelt are fired during December and January, and prepared for cultivation during February and March. In this heavy work of clearing men play a prominent part, although all other agricultural activities, such as weeding, bird-scaring and harvesting, are associated with women. Thus, the movement of cattle into the central zone, referred to above, takes place at a time when the labour of the men is required in the bushbelt cultivation areas. Furthermore, the setting up of cattle settlements within no more than an hour's walk of their occupants' cultivation areas enables pastoral and agricultural activities to be carried on by single residential units, a situation which contrasts markedly with the dry season situation, as will be seen.

Other, less important crops planted, ideally, in March, are maize (*Zea Mays* L.), two varieties of bean (*Vigna ^{unguiculata} Unguiculata* (L.) Walp. and *Vigna Radiata* (L.) Wilczek), gourds (*Lagenaria Siceraria* (Molina) Standley) and squash (*Cucurbita Maxima* Lam.). The harvest ideally takes place in mid-June, the grain being stored not in

permanent storehouses, but in basket-like containers (See Photograph 4) called ulmen, which are covered in grass and hidden in trees in the bushbelt. This procedure, which is designed to protect the grain from thieves and raiders, is necessitated by the high degree of residential mobility entailed by the Mursi's pattern of transhumance, and also by their vulnerability to attack from hostile, cattle-keeping neighbours.

Were they to rely on rain cultivation alone to complement their means of pastoral production, Mursi society would probably not be able to remain self-supporting. Fortunately they are able to make use of another agricultural resource which does not depend upon rain falling within the boundaries of their territory and which, although small in extent, provides a vital link in their subsistence chain - namely, flood land along the Omo. I describe the way in which Omo land is utilized in Chapter 2. Here I wish to point out only that flood cultivation is a vital insurance against the failure of the bushbelt crop, and to indicate its implications for transhumance.

For a successful Omo crop virtually all that is necessary is that the seed be planted in those areas of the river bank which were inundated by the flood, before the ground has thoroughly dried out. This means that planting must normally be completed by the end of October. The area inundated, of course, varies with the height of the flood, but unlike bushbelt cultivation, which is of the shifting type, the same pockets of land along the Omo are



Photograph 4:

The construction of an ulma
(plural ulmen) for grain
storage.

cultivated year after year. Clearing and planting must therefore begin at the Omo at about the same time as the headstreams in the central zone start to dry up, thus necessitating a movement of cattle into the Elma Valley. During September, therefore, the cattle settlements in the central zone break up, their occupants moving in different directions, roughly in accordance with the sexual division of labour: men and boys take the cattle to their dry season pastures in the Elma Valley, while women, girls and young children move to the Omo to start clearing. This geographical separation of pastoral and agricultural activities has to be maintained throughout the dry season, until the population again converges, from west and east, on the central zone at the start of the rains.

Thus, the transhumance movements of the Mursi may be thought of as a process of dispersal from and convergence on a central zone, which, by reason of its ecological conditions, makes possible, for part of the year, the spatial integration of pastoral and agricultural activities, and yet can support neither of them for the remainder of the year. This central zone represents the meeting of what might be called the "two worlds" of the Mursi, that of the Omo, the world of cultivation and women, and that of the eastern plain, or Mi, the world of pastoralism and men. The subsistence problems of the Mursi derive from the fact that each of these "worlds" rules out that form of subsistence which the other makes possible. An

indication of the way in which the Mursi themselves see this contrast can be obtained from their frequent use of the term 'bo, meaning "outside", rather than Mi, to refer to the eastern plain and particularly to the Elma Valley. A man having just arrived at the Omo from there is much more likely to reply to the question "where have you come from?" with "I have come from outside" than with "I have come from Mi". The Mursi see themselves as surrounded by enemies, pastoralists like themselves, against whom they must be constantly on their guard. They are well protected, however, to the west and south by the Omo: it is along their eastern boundary that the weak points - namely passes through the Omo-Mako watershed - in their defences exist. Thus they have to stand with their backs, so to speak, to the Omo, facing "outside", this being the condition of their continued survival as a pastoral people. There is a further way in which the Mursi see the contrast between the plain, and its associated pastoral values, and the Omo: namely through their relationship to a small group of river people whom they call "Nyidi" (sing. "Nyidini") and who call themselves Kwegu. The Kwegu are expert hunters and gatherers who also cultivate, and who live along the Omo banks. The Mursi treat them largely as servants, and in particular prohibit them from owning cattle, or rather from occupying the eastern plain. For a Mursi, to have no cattle, and to be forced therefore to live "like a monkey" in the Omo forest and bush, to eat fish "like a wading bird" and never to leave the banks of the Omo, in fact to live like a "Nyidini" - these are the epitome of social degradation

and failure. I will come back to the Kwegu later, when discussing the Mursi's neighbours and linguistic affiliations.

Before ending this section it is necessary to mention an important secondary source of subsistence which is resorted to by the Mursi out of necessity, only, mainly during the hungry weeks before the Omo harvest, between November and January - namely fishing. Two methods of fishing are employed: boys use lines and baited hooks thrown into the water from a shingle beach or bar, while adult men stalk fish with harpoons, standing in shallow water near the bank, and usually throwing their weapon with great accuracy (See Photograph 5). The fish most frequently caught in this way is the chogev (*Citharinus Citharus*), shown in Photograph 5 .

3. Neighbours, Migration and Linguistic Affiliations

The Mursi's cultural and linguistic affiliations lie predominantly with the peoples who inhabit the plains to the south-west of the Ethiopian plateau and whose territories span the border between Ethiopia and Southern Sudan. The Tirmaga (sing. Tirmagi) and Chai (sing. Chachi) known in existing, mainly Italian, literature as Tirma and Tid respectively, live south of Maji, between the Omo and the Sudan border and speak a language which differs from that of the Mursi only as a dialect (See Figure 1). Their economy is more heavily dependent upon



Photograph 5:

Harpoon fishing

<u>Mrs.</u>	<u>Tir.</u>	<u>Bod.</u>	<u>Kwe.</u>	<u>Mrl.</u>	<u>Zil.</u>	<u>Mas.</u>	
	67	53	38	25	22	12	Mursi
		50	36	26	21	12	Tirma
			28	16	16	10	Bodi
				21	24	12	Kwegu
					40	14	Murle
						21	Zilmamu
							Masongo

Fig. 1 : Percentage of basic vocabulary shared by Mursi and 6 other cognate languages (after Bender, 1971, p. 176).

cattle than is that of the Mursi, since they have no access to flood land for cultivation but the tsetse fly is no less of a problem for them than it is for the Mursi. They have therefore had to take more and more to rain cultivation, which has led them to move to the higher, better-watered country on the slopes of the Maji plateau. This, however, has brought them into conflict with the agriculturalists (called Sunya by the Mursi and who call themselves Dizi) who inhabit this plateau, and with the police, operating both from Maji and Jimma.

Further west, and spanning the Ethiopia-Sudan border, are found some people who are referred to in the literature as Zilmam, and whom the Mursi, as far as I could ascertain, call Baletha. The Mursi say that they cannot understand their language, but it can be seen from Fig. 1 that the two languages share a fairly high percentage of basic vocabulary. The same is true of the Mursi and Murle languages, the latter people being occupants of the Pibor district of Southern Sudan (Lewis, 1972, p. 25). The Mursi intermarry freely with the Chai, less so with the Tirmaga and not at all with the other groups mentioned, nor indeed with any other of their neighbours.

Immediately north of the Mursi, and east of the Omo, live some people who have been called Bodi in existing literature (though I am not sure on what grounds), who call themselves Mala or Me'en, and whom the Mursi call Tumura (sing. Tumuri). They are

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closely related, rather as the Mursi are to the Tirmaga and Chai, to some people who live in the higher country north-east of Maji and west of the Omo, who are known either as Me'en or Tishenna and who have made a virtually complete transition from a pastoral to an agricultural way of life. They probably resemble closely the Majangir (or Masongo) who live north of Maji, between the Baro River and the Gurrafarda Range (Stauder, 1971, p.3).

All the groups mentioned so far have been classified as belonging to the "Didinga-Murle Isolated Language Group" by Tucker and Bryan (1956, pp. 87-91). Unlike these authors, Greenberg (1963, pp. 86-87) classifies them with a larger group, which he calls "Eastern Sudanic" and which includes Nuer and Turkana. Bender (1971) follows Greenberg, but uses the term "Surma" to refer to the groups mentioned so far, as well as to the Kwegu. The available material on the Didinga-Murle group was summarised by Tucker and Bryan in their Linguistic Analyses (1966, pp. 370-391), but did not include anything of any significance from the Ethiopian side of the border. The linguistic material I collected for the Mursi, however, establishes beyond any doubt their membership of this group.¹

Other neighbours of the Mursi will be mentioned where necessary later in the thesis (See especially pp. 304-6) but further mention

1. I have contributed, with the assistance and guidance of Professor Tucker, for which I am most grateful, a grammatical summary of the Mursi language to the forthcoming edition of Les Langues du Monde.

should be made here of the Kwegu (or Yidinit), since they will hardly be mentioned again. Although probably numbering less than 300 men, women and children, they have their own language and distinctive culture. They speak Mursi perfectly and use their own language only among themselves, for the Mursi make no attempt to speak it, claiming indeed that it is totally unlearnable.¹

The Kwegu cultivate on flood land, together with both the Mursi and the Bodi, during the dry season, and in the bushbelt, close to the Omo, during the wet season. A very important source of subsistence for them, however, is hunting, at which they are acknowledged by the Mursi to be past masters. They are thus a river people, who use dugout canoes with a skill rare among Mursi, who shoot hippopotamus, elephant and buffalo (they once hunted with spears, but now use rifles) and who are expert fishermen and gatherers of honey. The Mursi exploit these skills of the Kwegu by means of a "patron-client" relationship which has the effect of integrating the Kwegu as a minute "submerged class" within Mursi society. Each male Kwegu has a Mursi bekai (a reciprocal term) whom he supplies periodically with gifts of honey and game meat, and who supplies him with milk. A Kwegu may occasionally visit the cattle settlement of his Mursi bekai "to drink milk", but he should not stay for more than a few days, nor should he sleep inside the cattle compounds. It is

1. I did not obtain sufficient linguistic material to undertake a grammatical analysis of Kwegu, but the vocabulary data I collected has been used by Bender (op. cit.) to show a distinct lexical affinity between Mursi and Kwegu (See Fig. 1).

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believed that close contact between a Kwegu and cattle will be detrimental to the latter, especially if the Kwegu should tread on their dung. This incompatibility between Kwegu and cattle is usually advanced to justify the ban, not only on Mursi-Kwegu intermarriage, but also on sexual relations between members of the two groups.

The most significant economic transaction defining this relationship, however, is connected with marriage. For the Kwegu use goats as bridewealth, and a Mursi is under an obligation to provide his Kwegu bekai with from four to ten goats for this purpose or (and most usually) with a cow to be exchanged, probably in Maji, for the necessary animals. This arrangement appears odd in view of the fact that even goats cannot survive indefinitely at the Omo, due to the tsetse, with the result that the Kwegu do not breed them, but eat them and exchange them with the highland agriculturalists for coffee, tobacco, and ammunition. Sometimes, indeed, the conversion of cow into goats is not made, the Mursi bekai of the Kwegu groom simply handing a cow over to another Mursi - namely the bekai of the groom's prospective brother-in-law or father-in-law. The cow is technically the latter's property, but it cannot, of course, survive at the Omo. The Kwegu "owner" will pay occasional visits to the cattle settlement of his bekai to drink its milk, but will otherwise gain no economic advantage from it. Thus, the Kwegu obtains a wife, but the bridewealth simply passes between two

Mursi. In a reversal of the usual "patron-client" relationship the Mursi theoretically give cattle to the Kwegu but in practice keep virtually the whole of their usufruct (and all of their issue) for themselves.

Although the cultural and linguistic affinities of the Mursi are predominantly with people lying to the west and north of them, they place their traditional homeland, Thalab, to the south-east, in present day Borana country. They say they migrated in a circular, anti-clockwise direction, crossing the Omo from east to west north of present day Bodi country and then back from west to east south of the Omo's junction with the Mui. I cannot estimate the date of this final crossing onto the left bank of the Omo, with which their migration came to an end, and can only say that it took place before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Both the Mursi and Kwegu agree that the latter were in occupation of the Omo at the time, and that many Kwegu were killed by the Mursi. According to Mursi tradition, it was not until they settled on the left bank of the Omo that they started to cultivate, following in this the example of the Kwegu. It is clear that there were agriculturalists living on the Mursi Mts. before the Mursi arrived, since the remains of stone terraces can be seen there. I was also shown a number of circular stone arrangements which the Mursi described as the

foundations of houses formerly occupied by these agriculturalists, at a site approximately in the centre of the country.¹

4. Previous Research and the Development of an Administrative Structure

It was not until fairly late in the history of African exploration that travellers and explorers began to penetrate South Western Ethiopia, which is still one of the least known parts of Africa. There was a fairly rapid succession of visitors to the Lower Omo region for about twenty years, covering approximately the last ten years of the nineteenth and the first ten years of the twentieth centuries. This activity was sparked off by the discovery of Lake Rudolf in 1888 by Teleki and von Hohnel. The main question raised by this expedition, however, was settled in 1896 when an Italian Geographical Society expedition, led by Vittorio Bottego,

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1. Mr. R.C. Soper, Assistant Director of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa, to whom I sent photographs of this site, tells me that neither he nor his colleagues "have seen or heard of anything like them The explanation given by the Mursi seems quite feasible." In an article on the exploration of the Lake Rudolf region, however, von Hohnel notes that two early travellers, Neuman in 1896 and Wellby in 1898, observed what seem to have been similar stone circles on high ground at the south-eastern end of the lake (1938, pp. 37-38). According to von Hohnel these were "merely the windshelters built by passing parties of raiders", but in an editorial footnote V.E. Fuchs, who led the "Lake Rudolf Rift Valley Expedition" in 1934 adds: ". . . . in 1934 we observed these clusters of stone circles. Not only did we see them on the ground but also from the air, and it then seemed certain that they were the sites of old villages. Locally it was said that they were remains left by a tribe that lived in the region before These circles were unlike the arcuate walls found near the lake shore which were undoubtedly built, as von Hohnel says, for windshelters."

followed the left bank of the Omo from about 6°36'N. southwards to where it enters Lake Rudolf. For until this time it had not been known whether the river Teleki and von Hohnel had found flowing into Lake Rudolf and which they called Nianam, was identical with the Omo or not, since this latter river had not been fully explored and was thought by some to flow into the Nile and by others into the Indian Ocean.

Bottego's party therefore traversed present day Mursi country from north to south, keeping to the left bank of the Omo all the way, since the prime object of the expedition was to map its course. The published account of the expedition (Vannutelli and Citerri, 1899) has very little to say about the inhabitants of this part of the Omo Valley. During the first few days of August, however, the Italians made contact with people whom they call variously "Tdama", "Muu" and "Murzu". The first is a name by which the Mursi still refer to their society in a ritual and ceremonial context, the second resembles their normal self-name, Mun, while the third is the Kwegu term for the Mursi. They describe these people as having "detestable tendencies and bestial habits" and as being "the most savage of the races of Africa", an opinion which was probably not a little due to the fact that the Mursi raided the expedition's cattle continuously. Their herds had been much reduced - perhaps almost wiped out - by rinderpest epidemics, which ravaged East Africa in the 1890's, and at the time of Bottego's visit were probably subsisting mainly on cultivation, hunting and fishing. The coming of Bottego is, in

fact, well remembered and I was told that it was after this time that their cattle numbers increased steadily.

Having arrived at the junction of the Omo with the Mako on the 12th August, Bottego's party had to do a further ten days' march up the right bank of the latter river before they could find a suitable crossing. This incident illustrates the extremely isolated geographic position of the Mursi, which caused their territory to be bypassed by every visitor to the Lower Omo except Bottego during this first twenty-year phase of exploration - and indeed, with the exception of an Italian Army patrol in 1939, ever since. For if their route was from the Ethiopian highlands to Lake Rudolf, travellers would keep either east of the Mako, like Leontieff and Bourg de Bozas, or west of the Omo, like Bulatovich, in order not to become hemmed in by these two rivers. Those travellers who, like Donaldson Smith, attempted to work their way north from Lake Rudolf, on the other hand, were also deterred by these rivers and undertook no exploration of the land between them. The same considerations must also have insulated the Mursi from the turmoil caused among the groups to the south of them by the Amhara occupation (military posts of the Emperor Menelik II were reported both at the northern end of Lake Rudolf and among the Kerre between 1900 and 1910) and by the British "pacification" of Turkana, between 1914 and 1926.

In Appendix 4, which should be read in conjunction with Bibliography B, I provide as complete a chronology as I am able of

research and exploration in the Lower Omo area up to the present day. All of it, apart from the Bottego expedition which, although a great achievement, provided very little ethnographic data of any significance, passed the Mursi by. The sum total of published material specifically concerned with the Mursi that existed at the time of my field trip was a short comparative word list of Bodi, Mursi and Yidenic (Kwagu) published by Haberland in 1966. He had reached Bodi country from the north, with the Frobenius Institute expedition, in 1952 but was unable to proceed further south because of his lack of supplies and the death of his mules. His 1966 article is, in fact, of more value as an attempt to summarise existing linguistic knowledge of an area which has been described as "A Linguistic No-Man's Land" (Bryan, 1945), than as a source of new information. (The reader will find a list of linguistic and ethnographic publications relevant to the Mursi in Bibliography C).

The geographic isolation of the Mursi has had the effect of leaving them, even to this day, largely outside the effective control of the Ethiopian administration. Menelik's troops first occupied the Lower Omo, south of Mursi country, in 1897, but it was not until 1954 that a permanent Ethiopian police post was established at Kalam, on the west bank of the Omo, about ten miles north of Lake Rudolf, among the Dassanetch (Geleb). Mursi contact with the authorities, however, remained sporadic and irregular. In 1938 an Ethiopian guerilla force had moved through their country, taking

with them most of the Mursi's cattle, in order to deprive the occupying Italian forces of this source of provisions. In the following year an Italian post, the remains of which can still be seen, had been set up, on the Omo at Kurum (See Map 5), it being supplied from Baco, a town lying in the highlands, about 50 miles due east of the Omo. In October 1941 a force of King's African Rifles¹ had occupied the Lower Omo and moved some distance north, across the uninhabited plain west of the river, before retiring to Kenya in January 1942.

Administratively, Mursi country lies within the Hamar-Baco district (Awraja) of Gemu-Gofa province (Teklai Gazat). The administrative centre of Hamar-Baco is Jinka, a town which was established sixteen years ago at the Baco airstrip, put in by the Italians, about 3000 feet below the latter town, which is now all but deserted. But apart from irregular visits by police to collect taxes in the form of cattle, the Mursi have had no contact with the authorities in Jinka, and no effective attempt has been made to disarm them. Undoubtedly the main problem facing the authorities is the lack of easy communications. There is no road, or tracks^K suitable for motor vehicles, between Jinka and Mursi country, and in order to make the journey on foot, between approximately April and September, when the Mako is high, it is necessary to make a five

1. Although they did not enter their country, these troops gave the Mursi the firm conviction that the "Inglisi", a term they learnt from the Italians, are a black race, like themselves.

to six day detour, travelling north-westwards from Jinka, crossing the Mako well upstream, and then southwards through Bodi country. In the dry season there is the added problem of finding water in the desiccated, unfamiliar and sparsely populated country that lies beyond the Mako. There are no Mursi in the police force, nor any who have attended or are attending Government or Mission schools in Jinka. They put in rare appearances¹ at the market in Jinka, bringing honey to sell, and buying cloth², coffee, hoes, axes and (though less openly, of course) ammunition. It seems, however, that the Mursi will not long continue in this degree of isolation, for towards the end of 1970 a Government post was established in Bodi country, which is intended to serve as the administrative centre of a new Mursi-Bodi sub-district (Wareda), for which the Governor has already been appointed.

The virtually uninhabited plain to the west of the Omo, approximately between the Rivers Kuma and Kibish, has been designated a National Park and Game Reserve, and since 1967 there has been a small game post, with about twenty game guards (from Maji), on the River Mui, twenty miles west of the Omo. By the end of 1968, the

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1. At the time of my fieldwork, it was an occasion worthy of special comment among the inhabitants of Jinka if a Mursi were seen in the town.
 2. A piece of cotton cloth, called jodi (after the Amharic "abujedi") is gradually replacing bark cloth (dobi), which is nevertheless still much in evidence, as the male dress.

then Game Warden, Mr. G.H. Brown¹, had carved a dry season track for motor vehicles through the west-bank bushbelt and had established a permanent outpost, manned by four game guards, at the junction of the Mui and the Omo. At the end of 1970, however, when I left the field, this outpost had been abandoned, whether permanently or not I do not know. No attempt has been made to patrol east of the Omo, and the presence of the game guards appears to have had little effect on the hunting activities of the Mursi and Kwegu.

5. The Circumstances of Fieldwork and Scope of the Thesis

My fieldwork in Mursi country began on the 1st January, 1969 and ended on the 14th November, 1970, during which time I spent about 18 months in the field. My main difficulties were, predictably, to do with transport and communication. I was advised before going that a landrover would be of no use in the area because of the dense bush and the problem of crossing the Omo and the Mako, and on arrival I found this to be an accurate assessment. I obtained my supplies in Addis Ababa or Jimma and flew² them by scheduled Ethiopian

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1. I wish to record here my appreciation for the assistance and hospitality afforded me on many occasions by Mr. Brown.
 2. It takes about 3 weeks to drive from Addis Ababa to Maji, even during the dry season and using the most rugged of army vehicles.

Airlines'¹ flights to the Game Reserve airstrip at the River Mui. From here I was often able to obtain transport in the Game Reserve truck to the Outpost on the right bank of the Omo, crossing to the left bank by dugout canoe. Once in Mursi country all transport was necessarily on foot, and I often found it difficult to get people to carry supplies for me since the Mursi are quite unaccustomed to this sort of work. In October 1969, therefore, I obtained 5 large donkeys, of the type used by the Bume and Dassanetch, from Jinka, and having learnt, by painful experience², how to load them, they eased my transport problem considerably. Despite giving them monthly injections of ethedum bromide, against Tripanosomiasis, however, I lost three of them before the end of my fieldwork - probably due to African horse disease. Another problem was that, because I had no work for them to do for long periods, during which a Mursi friend herded them with his cattle, they virtually had to be broken in again every time I wanted to use them. (As my fieldwork progressed, therefore, I gradually learnt to do without many of the impedimenta with which I had started it - such as tinned food, camp bed, and hurricane lamps.)

The problem was to maintain a sufficient degree of mobility while at the same time avoiding the necessity of frequent trips to

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1. I wish to acknowledge here the efficient and reliable service provided by Ethiopian Airlines, without which my fieldwork would not have been possible. I am especially grateful to Ato Haile Selassie Gebre-Medhin, Station Manager at Jinka, and to Ato Tesfaye Aberra, Station Manager at Jimma, both of whom showed me great kindness.
 2. The Mursi do not use donkeys and most of them, indeed, had never seen one.

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Addis Ababa, Jimma or Jinka to obtain supplies - trips which I could anyway not rely upon being able to make at any time between April and September. My solution was to maintain a relatively large base camp at the Omo, which I kept stocked, at not less than three monthly intervals, with such basic necessities as flour, dried peas and lentils, onions, tea, salt and cooking oil, and to operate from here with the minimum of equipment, spending approximately a month at a time at other Omo sites (during the dry season) and in the eastern plain. The base camp was on the left bank of the Omo, at Alaka, just north of the game outpost and my supply route to Jimma and Addis Ababa (See Photograph 6). I left it totally unattended when not there, and only began to have trouble from pilfering towards the end of my stay (See below, p.250).

Since I had no opportunity to use interpreters or a contact language, I learnt Mursi by means of the so-called "mono-lingual" method and carried out all my work in it. For the first six months of fieldwork, I employed a young Mursi man of about 18 years who acted as guide and general assistant, and who helped me with the language. I dispensed with his services when it appeared to me that he was becoming too much of an interpreter of the Mursi to me and of me to the Mursi, and did not replace him. I had, of course, particular friends and - not necessarily the same people - especially valuable informants. With very few exceptions, I found the Mursi, once their initial suspicions had worn off, to be ready



a) The Omo camp.



b) Camped outside a cattle settlement,
July, 1970.

Photograph 6.

and willing to talk about their customs and social arrangements and to be patient sometimes, it seemed to me, heroically so, in trying to help me understand, although there were inevitably some subjects which it was not polite to discuss. They are an articulate people, used to making public speeches (See Chapter 8), and were not averse to having their words recorded. In general, I found them very pleasant to work among, and, once having accepted me¹, they made every effort to help and assist, without knowing, of course, quite what I was about.

The fact that the Mursi have maintained, by reason of their geographical position, a high degree of political and economic autonomy, has led me to concentrate in this thesis on processes of social control. For it is rarely that one has an opportunity nowadays to study the indigenous methods of dispute settlement and public decision-making in a non-industrial society without having to prescind from an overriding authority structure imposed from outside by central government. As far as the settlement of conflicts between individuals is concerned, however serious, no recourse is had among the Mursi to government courts, while in the making of internal

1. This took about 2 months, during which they at first refused to let me set up camp on the left bank of the Omo, and then to take me to the cattle country, to the east.

policy decisions they are completely independent. As far as their relations with other groups are concerned they have only begun to feel the constraints of an external authority with the setting up, in Bodi country, of the Government post just mentioned.¹

But the thesis has both a narrower and a broader scope than is suggested by the phrase "social control", if this is defined as the various specialized means employed to maintain order. Broader, because I am concerned also with the arrangements which guide and constrain individuals in their everyday relations with other members of their society, which leads me to give more space to such topics as age organisation, local groups, and affinity than would be strictly necessary if I were dealing with social control in its narrow meaning. On the other hand, I have not thought it necessary to describe the ecology of the Mursi in more than a broad outline, nor to give a detailed account of the organisation of the domestic group. As far as kinship and marriage are concerned, I have concentrated more on marriage than on patriliney, despite the fact that the Mursi have a strongly patrilineal kinship ideology. This is because of what I consider to be the overriding positive significance of marriage in the maintenance of social order among the Mursi.

1. Fighting which broke out between the Mursi and the Bodi after I had left the field led to the intervention of the Ethiopian army, in June 1972.

The thesis may be said to have a narrower scope than is summed up by the phrase "social control" because it is also a study of a particular institution, which I call "ceremonial duelling", and to which the Mursi refer as Thagine. For a description of this institution and an explanation of its integrating role in the argument of the thesis, the reader should turn to Chapter 1.

But first, he should perhaps familiarise himself to some extent with the contents of Appendix / , in which I describe the nature of my census and provide a computer printout of its results. I make most use of this census in Chapter 2, but I refer throughout the thesis to individual men by their census index numbers, as well as by name, so that the reader can look up such individuals in the census printout to discover all the information I have concerning them.

PART I: CONTESTANTS

Chapter 1: Duelling

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the formal characteristics of ceremonial¹ duelling among the Mursi, with a minimum of reference to its cultural setting, and to explain why I have chosen to base my account of Mursi social organisation on an analysis of this institution. The first part of the chapter may therefore be regarded as a list of rules for the performance of a single combat game of physical skill, which I call duelling. Not all of these rules are formally enunciated by the participants, but they can be deduced from observation of the procedures involved. In the second part of the chapter, I show how different aspects of Mursi social organisation, and in particular those to do with social control, broadly defined, may be related to duelling and indicate the main line of argument in succeeding chapters.

The weapon used in duelling is a two metre wooden pole, called donga (pl. dongen), which weighs between 700 and 800 grams,

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1. The distinction made by Gluckman (1971, p.251) between ritual and ceremonial will serve well enough to account for my use of the latter term in this context: "We define these highly conventionalised performances as 'ritual' because the people believe that they help - by mystical means outside of sensory observation and control - to protect, purify or enrich the participants and their group. 'Ritual' is here distinguished from 'ceremonial', highly conventionalised performances in which the mystical element is not present."

and which is cut from one or other of two species of tree of the genus *Grewia* (kalochi). It is shaped at the top according to a pattern which distinguishes Mursi dongen from those carried by the Chai and Tirmaga, and is provided at its base with a hand grip which may be covered with animal skin. After being cut and shaped with a knife, it is smoothed off with coarse grass.

The principal rule governing the use of this weapon in combat is that it should not be pointed at an opponent. Blows should be both given and received with the shaft. Thus, in giving a blow, the donga is held firmly at its base in a two-handed grip, the left hand above the right, while in parrying the left hand is held lightly behind the shaft above that point on it at which the blow is received. Success does not depend only, or even mainly, on physical strength, but upon one's ability to interpret correctly the direction of an opponent's blow, and to cause him to misinterpret the direction of one's own. This is illustrated by Photographs 7(a), 7(b), 7(c) and 7(d), in which two conventional blows, to the left shin and to the left rib-cage, are demonstrated. The principle, therefore, is that the right hand remains stationary at the base of the donga while the left hand slides up and down its shaft, depending on whether a blow is being given or received.

In the ceremonial contests with which I am concerned, however, contestants do not depend solely on their skill to protect



7(a) While the head is protected, a blow is landed to the left shin.

7(b) The correct defensive move.



7(c) A blow to the left rib-cage.

7(d) The correct defensive move.



themselves from injury, for they also wear protective clothing. This consists of a basket-work helmet and right hand guard, bark cloth or cotton cloth to protect the neck and shoulders, rings woven from Sansevieria fibres to protect the right arm and right knee and shin guards or greaves of animal skin. Photograph 8 shows a contestant dressed ready for combat and the Mursi names for the various items described are there indicated. These items and accoutrements together are called tumoga, and it is clear from the photograph that they are not all of an entirely protective nature. The leopard skin, the hide skirt cut into strips and the cattle bell are obviously more for display than for protection. Having "dressed up" in this fashion, a contestant ceases to behave "normally" in a way appropriate to ordinary life, but takes on instead a stylised, conventional pattern of behaviour, associated with duelling. While waiting for his bout to begin, he prances around the duelling ground chanting praise songs and war cries, and works himself up into a trance-like state through "shivering", to the apparent unconcern and disinterest of the onlookers. The photograph shows a man who is "shivering" in this way before a bout.



Photograph 8:

Contestant ready for a bout, dressed
in tumoga.

Apart from the conventional method of using the donga, and the tumoga worn by contestants, a further important element of formality and regulation is introduced into the proceedings by the referees (kwethana, sing. kwethani) whose job it is to control the beginnings and ends of bouts. A referee holds his donga between two contestants as they stand glaring at each other ready for the fray (Photograph 9(a)), and as soon as he has removed his donga from between them, they set about each other with the utmost seriousness and determination (Photograph 9(b)). They appear totally bent on causing each other the maximum possible injury in the shortest possible time. If a contestant's helmet falls off, his opponent will immediately attempt to land a blow on his head, and one man I met had an area of bone about 5 cm. in diameter removed from his skull following such an injury. Bouts are normally brought to an end by the intervention of a referee, and in those bouts I timed, this intervention came between 20 and 40 seconds after they had begun. Bouts are therefore short and furious. The contestant who is getting the worst of it shows conventional reluctance to stop, and often has to be restrained by several men who shepherd him off to the fringes of the field and help him out of his tumoga, which another aspirant for glory is impatiently waiting to don. Very occasionally a contestant manages to demonstrate his superiority conclusively by knocking over his opponent before a referee intervenes, and such a victor is carried round the field on the shoulders of his team mates.



a) A kwethani stands between two contestants before a bout.



b) A bout in progress.

I speak of "team mates" because duelling contests take place between the young men of different local groups, so that each contestant represents a particular local community. Complete sets of tumoga are not individually owned, although individuals may own separate items, such as a helmet or hand-guard. Each local team has to put together at least two complete sets from the separate items owned by its members; since, due to the short duration of bouts and to the length of time it takes to don all the accoutrements, the next two contestants have to be ready while a bout is in progress. Thus, each contestant has a group of supporters, who help him in and out of his tumoga and who provide a chorus of praise songs, and a sort of rhythmic growl, which appears to assist him in achieving a high state of nervous tension before his bout. There is no formal system of matching group "champions" against each other, however, and since bouts continue from sunrise to sunset, sometimes on several successive days, any individual who wishes to take part is able to do so. While any two contestants must belong to different local groups, they must belong to the same age-grade. Although married men often told me that they would take part in contests, I never saw them do so except as referees. There is no doubt that duelling is associated, first and foremost, with unmarried men, and it is therefore confined in practice to two particular age grades, which may be described as those of "youths" and "warriors". Members of these grades are highly motivated to take part in ceremonial

duelling because it is the principal culturally valued means by which a young man seeks to attract the attention of unmarried girls. The Mursi themselves draw a contrast between their own customs in relation to the sexual assertiveness of young men, and those of their principal enemies, the Hamar. One explanation they give of what they regard as the particularly ferocious attacks of Hamar cattle raiders is that a Hamar girl may refuse to accept the advances of a would-be lover until he has proved himself by killing a man. Their own girls, however, will taunt a young man for cowardice in not taking part in duelling contests. Thus, from the point of view of individual contestants, the important thing is to take part, and it appears to be just as honourable to sustain injuries as to inflict them. Contestants are proud of their injuries, and will leave the binding on an injured limb long after it has ceased to be strictly necessary.

But although those actively engaged as contestants are unmarried men "playing" to an audience of unmarried girls, duelling contests are social events which attract large numbers of spectators of all ages and which are attended by an atmosphere of carnival and festival. As far as I know, they took place on two occasions only while I was in the field, on both of which I was present. The first of these lasted for only one day (31st October 1969), while on the second the contests continued for eight successive days, at the time of the wet season harvest in 1970 (26th June to 3rd July).

In both cases they "proclaimed" as Huizinger, writing of play in general, puts it, "a standstill to ordinary life" (1970, p.41). The contests were preceded by what can only be described as a mounting "donga fever" among the young men of the areas in question, which was most noticeable in the care and attention they were devoting to the preparation of new dongen. On the second occasion the contests, once under way, considerably affected the daily life of the community, and clearly absorbed the interest and attention of all age groups and of both sexes.¹ This was because they continued for a relatively long time, and because they took place just after the wet-season harvest when almost the total population was concentrated in cattle settlements. They were held at a duelling ground (gul) on the right bank of the River Bannakera in what was, as can be seen from Map 4, a fairly densely settled area. The contests began at sunrise and continued all day. At about midday, women began arriving from the cultivation areas with tilla (sorgham porridge) and shalu (a gruel made from warm water and sorgham flour) which they had spent the morning preparing and which was consumed by contestants and spectators alike. Thus the gul became a focus for the social life of the community for the period during which the contests continued.

1. I describe in Chapter 9 the events leading up to the holding of these contests.

October

The circumstances under which the contests took place on the first occasion I witnessed them were somewhat different. They were held a few weeks after the cattle settlements had broken up, in 1969, when most married men were at the Omo, helping their wives with clearing and planting. The unmarried men, left in charge of the cattle in the Elma Valley, appear to experience at this time a sense of liberation from the social and physical constraints associated with age, marriage and cultivation. Living "outside", in make-shift cattle camps, and moving frequently in order to extract the maximum possible advantage for their cattle from the environment, they are, so to speak, in their element. Their high spirits and enthusiasm are also related to the sudden increase in the milk supply which results from the improved grazing conditions in the Elma Valley and which comes at a time when the demands made upon it are greatly reduced by the movement of women and married men to the Omo. At this time also, the cattle of different local communities graze indiscriminately over a wide area of the eastern plain, so that their herders come into more frequent daily contact than they do during the wet season. These appear to be the factors which contribute to the holding of duelling contests in the Elma Valley between October and November.

On the occasion when I witnessed them, in October 1969, the contestants were from two local communities, one from the north and one from the centre of the country, and were of the age grade

referred to above (p. 48) as "warriors". The contests took place in the vicinity of the southern group's cattle camps, on the 31st of October, the northern "team" having to travel for about three hours to reach the duelling ground. I was told that there would be a "return match" in the north a day or two later, but this never took place. The reason given was that one of the contestants had received a serious knee injury on the 31st, and that such an event always causes the cancellation of further duelling.

It is difficult, from my limited experience, to make a general statement about the frequency with which duelling contests are held. The existence of a relatively abundant food supply, however, does seem to be a necessary condition, and my impression is that contests are expected to occur at least once annually, at the time of the wet-season harvest. They may also take place regularly on a smaller scale, in terms of the number of spectators present and the number of days they continue, after the cattle settlements have broken up in October and November. They are not ritual occasions, in the sense that their regular occurrence is not considered to be a necessary condition of the continued well-being of the community. Indeed, in certain circumstances they are considered to be a positive threat to such well-being. This brings me to my second objective in this chapter, which is to explain why I have chosen to base my account of Mursi social organisation on an analysis of ceremonial duelling.

The donga is highly distinctive of Mursi culture, both from the point of view of an observer, and from that of the people themselves. The Mursi see their duelling poles, and also the clay lip-plates¹ which women wear in their lower lips, as distinguishing them from their cattle-keeping neighbours to the north, east and south, and as linking them to other members of the Didinga-Murle language group who live west of the Omo and across the Ethiopia-Sudan border.² The donga is therefore a symbol of "sentiment and identification", part of the "miranda" (~~things to be admired~~) of the Mursi "political myth".³ But it is at the same time a symbol of opposition between spatially and temporally defined segments of the population. The next two chapters are devoted to a description of the organising principles of territory and age which serve to define the contestants in ceremonial duelling.

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1. A girl's lip is pierced when she reaches puberty, and gradually stretched by the insertion of wooden discs, until large enough to take a clay lip-plate, which may be as much as 14 cm. in diameter.
 2. cf. Lewis, 1972, p.93, where he describes "stick-fighting" among the Murle, whose word for such a "stick" is "dongka".
 3. The terminology is that of Lasswell and Kaplan: "The miranda are the symbols of sentiment and identification in the political myth. They are those whose function is to arouse admiration and enthusiasm, setting forth and strengthening faiths and loyalties. They not only arouse emotions indulgent to the social structure, but also heighten awareness of the sharing of these emotions by others, thereby promoting mutual identification and providing a basis for solidarity." (1952, p.119).

The statement I made above that ceremonial duelling takes place between members of different local groups was something of a tautology, since an essential part of what makes any two of such groups "different" is that the members of one may oppose the members of the other in duelling contests. It will be evident from Chapter 2 that the duelling relationship between local groups is not simply a reflection of the geographical separation of the population into different local units, but that it enters itself into the definition of these units. Thus, what I later call "sections" (an order of local grouping for which the Mursi have no special term) cannot be defined except in relation to ceremonial duelling.

I have said that while contestants come from different local groups, they belong to the same age-grade, and that duelling is associated, first and foremost, with unmarried men. At certain times of the year hardly any unmarried male over the age of 16 is without a donga, while married men carry them only occasionally. Duelling is seen as an activity of immature youth, which married men attempt to control both by acting as referees and even by trying to prevent the contests from taking place at all (See Chapter 9). The following sentences, which were written about the early history of sport in English public schools, suggest some similarities between it and duelling among the Mursi:

"Sport united the boys in a particular pattern of behaviour but

from the point of view of the teachers and governors of the schools it was dysfunctional. The boys were in frequent rebellion against their teachers and on at least two occasions the army had to be summoned to suppress them. Sport which was organised entirely by the boys for the boys was the focus for the opposition of pupils to the established authority" (McIntosh, 1971, pp. 5-6). This writer goes on to note that sport was eventually recognised as "a principal mechanism of social control" in schools, and that an 1864 Royal Commission reported that "the importance which boys themselves attach to games is somewhat greater, perhaps than might reasonably be desired, but within moderate limits it is highly useful". The same might also be the considered judgement of a group of Mursi elders.

Duelling is an activity of young men which older men attempt to control. Thus is sustained the "political doctrine"¹ that the maintenance of ordered social relations depends upon the control of turbulent youth. In Chapter 3, I set out the formal principles of the Mursi age organisation, since these represent an indigenous model of social control, and show how they relate to the territorial model. It will be seen how the state of being

1. "The political doctrine consists of the basic expectations and demands concerning power relations and practices in the society." Lasswell and Kaplan, 1952, p.117.

unmarried is associated, through ceremonial duelling, with the permitted expression of hostility between local groups, and how marriage therefore represents the ultimate means of controlling such hostility. This leads, in Part II, to a consideration of the institution of marriage, and of the role of affinal ties in relation to local residence (Chapter 5) and dispute settlement (Chapter 6).

The appropriateness of using local ties to recruit individual contestants in ceremonial duelling contests follows from the fact that, in "real life", such ties are not a significant factor in the mobilisation of conflicting interest groups. Real conflict of interest, in relation, that is, to human and non-human resources, takes place between individuals who are supported by close patrilineal kinsmen, while local residents who are not so related to the principals play the part of neutral onlookers. In the public settlement of disputes the principals, dressed in tumoga, and supported by their kinsmen, fight each other with duelling poles until they are pulled apart by the onlookers. The dispute is finally settled through the mediation of one or more kwethana who are typically related, through women, to one or both of the principals. In particularly difficult disputes, and in all cases of homicide, a settlement is reached through the creation of an affinal link between the principals. Thus, just as being married is incompatible with active participation in ceremonial

duelling, except in the capacity of kwethani, so the existence of an affinal tie between two individuals is incompatible with a continuing state of hostility between them. Women therefore are, in a sense, the "real life" referees in Mursi society.

In Part III the emphasis shifts from referees to leaders, from mediation and reconciliation to the exercise of influence in public decision-making, but the two themes of the control of turbulent youth and the significance of affinity continue to predominate. In Chapter 7 the meaning of the term kemoru is explained, a term which I translate as "priest". The priest's is an hereditary religious role which symbolises an ideal state of perfect social harmony and the perfect satisfaction of material needs. A priest therefore remains aloof from those activities which, by their very necessity, demonstrate that these goals are unobtainable - the practical everyday business of reconciling conflicting interests, of organising collective action and of formulating public policy in the face of the inescapable constraints of the natural and human environment. These activities are in the hands of a class of influential men, called jalaba, who exercise their influence within the arena of public debates. In Chapter 8 I describe the processes involved in public decision-making and consider how individuals achieve positions of influence in public affairs.

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In Chapter 9, I show how these two types of leadership, religious and secular, work in practice, by describing some of the events which made up the public life of the Mursi during the 1970 wet season. The theme of this chapter is the efforts made by secular leaders in the north and south of the country to see that a religiously sanctioned ban on the spilling of human blood within the society was observed. This involved them in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to prevent the 1970 duelling contests, which I referred to above, from taking place. In Chapter 10, I show how the two roles of priest and influential man differ from and complement each other, and make the point that, through their priests, the Mursi place ultimate responsibility for public misfortune on bad social relations and in particular on the asocial behaviour of unmarried men. I also suggest that the existence of links, through women, to one or more priestly descent groups, may be a significant factor in allowing certain individuals to achieve positions of outstanding influence in public affairs.

I began the second part of this chapter by saying that duelling poles and lip-plates are, from the point of view of the people themselves, the two most distinctive items of Mursi material culture. They are both especially associated with the unmarried, for, although every female has her lip pierced at puberty, it is unmarried though marriageable girls who wear

lip-plates most frequently. The Mursi say that they will only marry into those non-Mursi groups (Chai and Tirmaga) whose women have their lips pierced in the same way as their own. The donga is a weapon that is appropriately used only against one's "brothers" (i.e. fellow clansmen) or against the "brothers" of marriageable women.¹ In contrast to the lip-plate, therefore, it represents the active male principle of competitiveness, aggression and sexual assertiveness, but it also draws attention to the role of marriage and affinity in the maintenance of ordered social relations. These are the reasons why I have chosen to begin this account of Mursi social organisation with a description of ceremonial duelling.

1. Against people who do not fall within these categories, the appropriate weapon is the rifle, of which the most common type carried in Mursi country is the 8MM Austrian Mannlicher (1895). The Mursi and their neighbours obtain arms and ammunition from Ethiopian traders in exchange for leopard skins, ivory and cattle.

Chapter 2: Territory

In the first part of this chapter, I am concerned with the way in which the constraints of the natural and human environments interact with those of technology to produce a certain pattern of settlement in Mursi country. I then relate this settlement pattern to the division of the population into named local segments. I am concerned principally with the spatial arrangements of the population, and not with the "cultural directives" which explain why particular people are found living together at a certain time.¹ This latter question is dealt with in Chapter 5.

The Mursi were shown in the Introduction to depend on three different types of subsistence activity, each one insufficient and precarious in itself but, when taken together with the other two, making a vital contribution to subsistence, namely flood cultivation along the banks of the Omo, rain cultivation in its bushbelt, and cattle herding in the grass plain. The problem of

1. See Helm (1969), p. 213, where, quoting Chang (1962), she distinguishes between "settlement pattern" and "community pattern".

Mursi subsistence is to span these geographically separate natural resources with the human resources necessary to exploit them successfully. The pattern of transhumance to which the solution of this problem gives rise having already been outlined in the Introduction, I now wish to focus upon the ways in which the population arranges itself spatially at the points where these movements terminate. It is clear that this will involve the consideration of three separate zones of settlement, associated with cultivation at the Omo, with herding in the Elma Valley, and with the two combined in the central area between the edge of the bushbelt and the Elma. I begin with the first of these zones because it is at the Omo that the ecological limits within which settlement pattern may vary are narrowest, and it will be seen as the discussion proceeds that there is a sense in which the Omo may be regarded as the territorial "base line" of Mursi society.

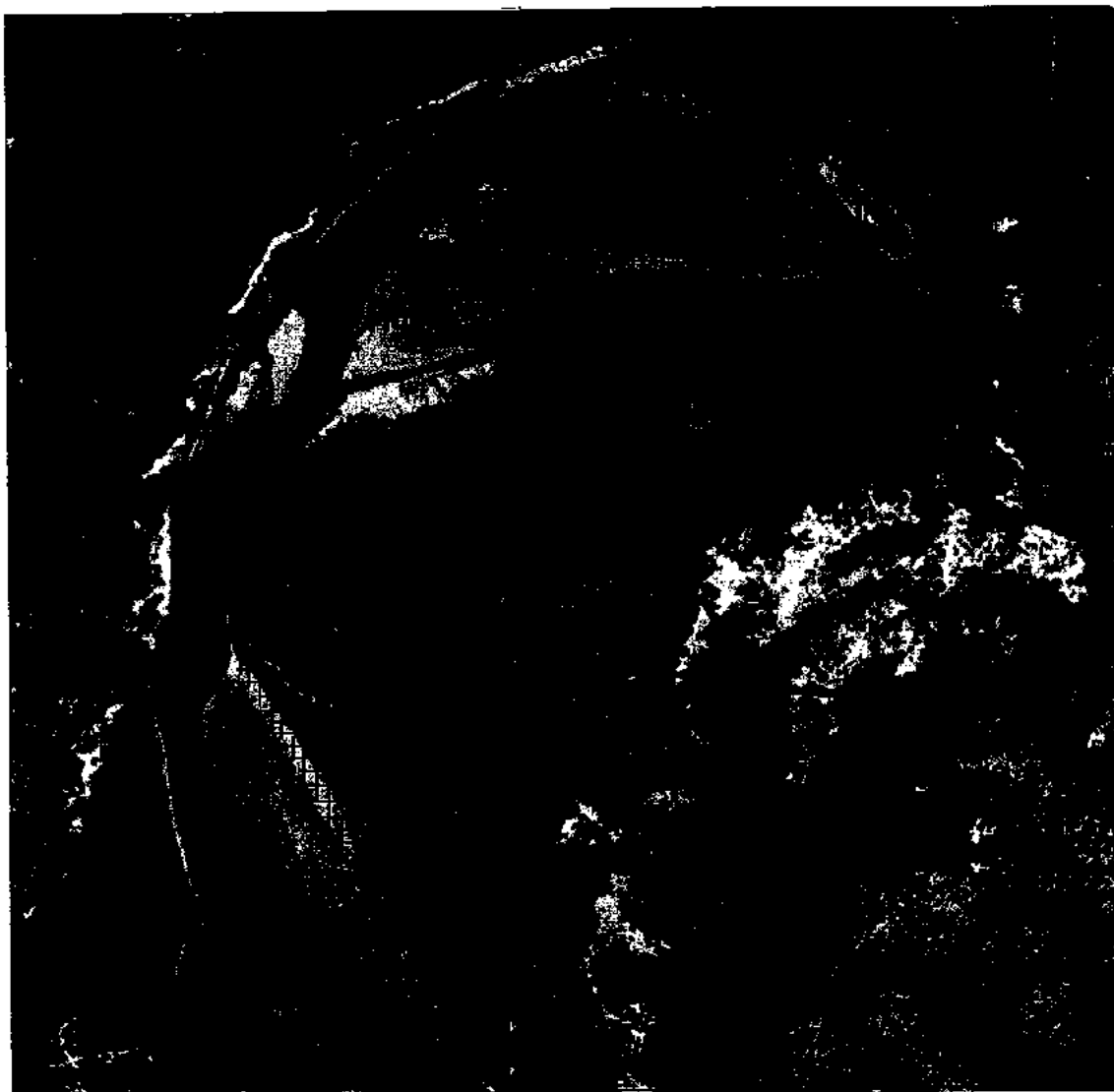
The essential features of flood cultivation from the point of view of the present discussion are as follows: it is a necessary insurance against the vicissitudes of rain cultivation; it takes place on land, the extent and location of which are determined solely by factors beyond effective human control; and the amount of land flooded, even in a good year, is never such as to create a surplus. Since the Mursi do not practice any system of irrigation, they are only able to cultivate, during the dry season, land which has actually been inundated by the flood. For

most of its course in Mursi country (that is, north of approximately Lat. $5^{\circ}30'$ N.) the Omo has the characteristics of a river in maturity rather than in old age and cannot, strictly speaking, be said to meander (Butzer, 1971, pp. 44-49). Flooding therefore occurs only along the banks of the river itself, where, as a result of this flooding, silt embankments a few metres in width have been built up. Isolated meanders do however occur, even north of Lat. $5^{\circ}30'$ N., and these are typically associated with shingle bars and river islands and with relatively extensive deposits of fluvial materials on both the convex and concave meander bends. It follows that the most intensive settlement at the Omo is found at such places, but it must be emphasised that Mursi flood cultivation is confined, even in the most favoured spots available to them, to what can be accurately described as "pockets" of land along the Omo. They do not have access to the "flooded flats" which the Dassanetch (or Geleba) cultivate on the delta plain of the Omo further south, and "of which there is a greater area available than is needed" (Almagor, 1971, p.126). Butzer (1970 and 1971) has provided ample evidence that the Omo flood plain is "largely non-functional today" due to a fall in the level of Lake Rudolf by 17 metres between 1899 and the 1930's. While this development led to the emergence of "approximately 280 square kilometres of new land in the immediate delta" (Butzer, 1971, p.143), it must have seriously reduced the crop potential of the river-bank zone further upstream.

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Thus it is broadly true to say that what rain cultivation is for the Mursi, "lake flats" cultivation is for the Dassanetch. The latter therefore have a more reliable complement to river-bank cultivation than do the Mursi, since the flooding of "lake flats" does not depend upon the unpredictable localised rainfall of the Lower Omo area itself. In order to help the reader visualise the conditions under which the Mursi practise flood cultivation and to understand the bearing of this on settlement pattern, I propose now to describe briefly the way in which two relatively extensive areas of Omo cultivation were utilized following the 1969 flood, which was generally regarded as of medium size.

Fig. 2 , which is superimposed upon an aerial photograph taken 12th February 1965, gives a rough indication of the area inundated, and therefore cultivated, in 1969 at Makaro (See Map 5), where I was in continuous residence from 23rd September to 25th October and which I visited frequently up to the end of January 1970. On the 29th September, I counted 38 huts (doren, sing. dori) standing on sandy, grass-covered hillocks about 50 metres above the level of the river bank. Some of these huts had been newly built, while others had been occupied the year before. Such is the flimsy nature of Mursi huts, however, that they cannot be reoccupied from one year to the next without extensive repairs



← 1 1/2 km. →
(= 90 y. miles)

■ Land cultivated, 1969-70

•• Position of huts, September 1969

Area of photograph, approximately 1 sq. mile.

Figure 2:

Land cultivated at Makaro,
1969-70.

Photograph reproduced by permission of the Imperial
Ethiopian Government Mapping and Geography Institute.

being done to them, which amount almost to rebuilding.¹ These huts had been gradually occupied over the previous two to three weeks as women, children and married men arrived at Makaro to start clearing the growth of vegetation, which had re-established itself since the previous Omo harvest, from the areas that had been flooded in August.

By the end of September clearing had been all but accomplished along the left bank (as opposed, that is, to the Island) and the first sorgham["] had been planted. Photograph 10 , which was taken on the 28th September, shows a newly planted area of cultivation, with sticks serving as boundaries between the plots belonging to individual women. Clearing began on the Island on the 29th September, when it became possible to ford the river. By the time the sorgham["] was six inches to one foot in height, and the weaker plants had been thinned out, the women began constructing huts and shelters down at their cultivation sites and

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1. Working without undue exertion, a woman can complete the construction of a hut in two days, allowing one day for the collection of the necessary materials. Photographs 11(a) 11(b) 11(c) and 11(d) show stages in the construction of a hut on the cliff overlooking Alaka (Map 5) from the left bank. This particular hut, which was typical of those found both along the Omo and in the central zone, was 8 ft. in diameter at its base and 5 ft. tall. The framework consisted of branches of *Ziziphus Mauritiana* Lam, to which the grass was tied with *Sansevieria*, which is a common plant in the Omo bushbelt.



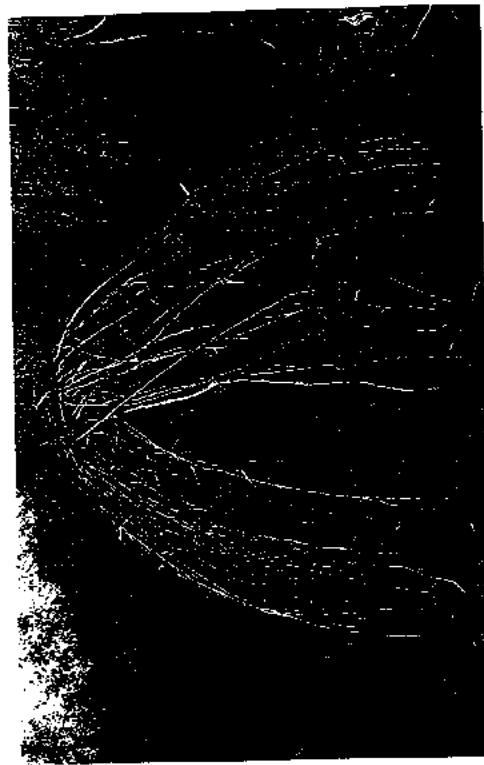
Photograph 10:

Planting in progress at Makaro, September
1969.

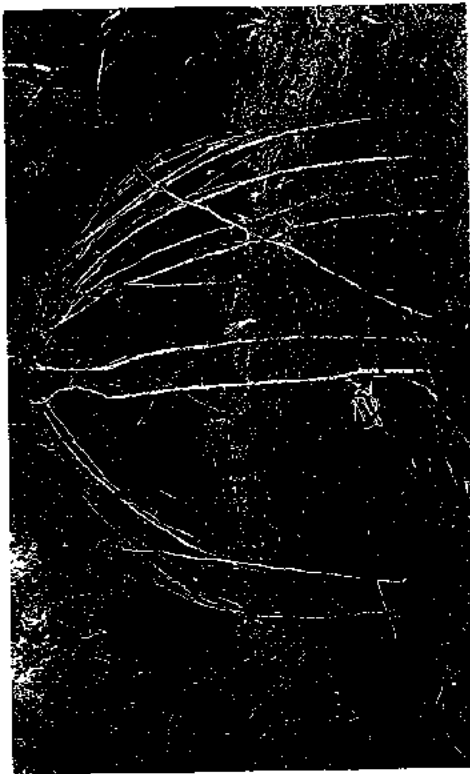
to spend most of their time there, both day and night, to protect the growing crops from game animals and Egyptian geese. The married men, meanwhile, having helped their wives with the heavy tasks of clearing and planting, returned to their cattle. Women and children also returned to the cattle camps for short spells in order to avail themselves of the improved milk supply, following the October rains. This period before the Omo harvest is always one of hunger, but it was especially so in 1969, due to the virtual failure of the March-April rains and the consequently very poor harvest that had been taken from the bushbelt cultivation areas in July. It is in conditions such as these that the milk supply, improving when it is needed most, makes its most important contribution to survival. Towards the end of November, however, all available labour was required in the cultivation areas for bird-scaring duties and the population at Makaro began to build up to a peak which it reached at the time of the harvest, during the last two weeks of December. From about the first of December inroads began to be made into the as yet unripe sorgham^u, the more advanced heads being cut and held for a few seconds in a flame so that the grains could be rubbed out between the palms and eaten. The hungry cultivators fell upon this tishu, as it is called, and were themselves descended upon by guests whose crop was not so advanced, and by visitors from the cattle camps. Young men came to "call the girls", and nightly dances were held on the high ground above the cultivation sites.



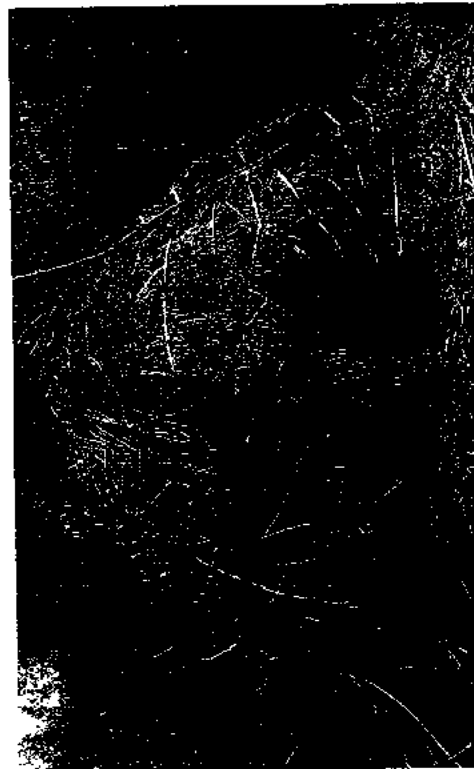
(4) 2



(4) 3



(4) 1



(4) 4


Photograph 11:

Hut construction

Between 60 and 70 married women were cultivating at Makaro in 1969, and the crop each of them was able to take was clearly more in the nature of a stop-gap than of a long-term staple. It was clearly insufficient to last until the next harvest, in six months' time. By the end of January, the huts and cultivation areas at Makaro had been largely deserted. Some of its inhabitants had moved north to stay with relatives at Kuduma, where the harvest was later than at Makaro, and others had begun preparing their bushbelt cultivation areas in readiness for the March-April planting.

My second example of an Omo cultivation area is Alaka, which is situated about two miles upstream from Makaro and which is shown in Fig. 4, also superimposed on an aerial photograph taken in February 1965. Since the pattern of occupation and cultivation here parallels that at Makaro, it is unnecessary to do much more than draw the reader's attention to the physical disposition of huts and cultivable land. The harvest here was a little later than at Makaro, due to the fact that most of the cultivable land in 1969 was situated on the Island, and the main channel did not become fordable until the beginning of October. (It should be pointed out here that there was one canoe at Alaka, but it was so rotten that few people were willing to use it, and it in fact capsized on the 5th October with the



 Land cultivated, 1969-70

.. Position of huts, November 1969

Area of photograph, approximately 1 sq. mile

Figure 3:

Land cultivated at Alaka,
1969-70.

Photograph reproduced by permission of the Imperial
Ethiopian Government Mapping and Geography Institute.

loss of two men and a girl). Between 30 and 40 married women cultivated at Alaka in 1969.

I recorded a total of 75 separate named cultivation areas along the course of the Omo^{*}- areas, that is, which are annually flooded and which are cultivated year after year. It follows that the settlement pattern associated with Omo cultivation is one of small clusters of huts strung out along the whole length of the river, principally on its left bank. Such a pattern is obviously necessary if the maximum advantage is to be gained by the maximum number of individuals from this vital and scarce resource of cultivable Omo land. It also follows from the fact that such land is found in "pockets" along the river, that, to the extent that people cultivate at the same sites year after year, they will be brought into enduring associations with small and clearly defined pieces of territory. Although there is no year-round settlement at the Omo, and although men spend little of their time there even during the dry season, it is the division of the Omo into separate, small cultivable areas which provides a framework for the division of the population, on a territorial basis, and which therefore provides an individual with the ultimate source of his territorial identity in relation to other Mursi. This can be seen clearly by comparing the settlement pattern just described with that which is found in the central zone during the wet season, and which reflects the spatial convergence of pastoral and agricultural activities.

There is no shortage of cultivable - or potentially cultivable - land in the bushbelt, the only limits to the area an individual may cultivate being set by his or her willingness and ability to clear it. (I am speaking here of purely environmental and not of social constraints on cultivation: the differing significance of land rights at the Omo and in the bushbelt will be dealt with later in this chapter). But while at the Omo one clears land which one knows is cultivable, since it has already been flooded, in the bushbelt one clears only in the (by no means certain) expectation of a fall of rain adequate to make cultivation possible. And, of course, cultivation in the bushbelt is of the shifting type, while the fertility of land at the Omo is annually renewed by the flood. Thus, natural restraints on the location of bushbelt cultivation sites are less rigid than those which determine the location of Omo sites. Rain cultivation must be confined to bushbelt soils, and it must take place within fairly easy reach of a water supply for human needs, but these two factors alone do not explain why wet season cultivation takes place along the eastern fringes of the bushbelt. This is clearly due to the "pull" of cattle - to the desire to carry on pastoral and agricultural activities from a single residential base. Otherwise, there would be many advantages in clearing sites for rain cultivation a short distance back from the Omo's banks. In this way the distance which grain had to be transported from the Omo harvest would be reduced and water for human consumption could be

obtained from the Omo. The shortage of water in the Omo's westward flowing tributaries before the March-April rains appears to be a perennial problem for those engaged in clearing and preparing cultivation sites on the eastern fringes of the bushbelt in February and March.

It was explained in the Introduction, by means of an admittedly over-simplified formulation, that the eastward movement of women from the Omo in January and February is accompanied by a westward movement of men and cattle from the Elma Valley. The two movements meet, as it were, in the central zone, where cattle settlements are established. This term is a literal translation of the Mursi or a bion and is opposed to sorgham^u settlement (or a libain) which would be applied to a cluster of units at the Omo. A cattle settlement is distinguished from a sorgham^u settlement by the fact that its huts are contained within a number of contiguous thorn and brush-wood cattle compounds (twinya, sing. tui). It is distinguished from a cattle camp, on the other hand, by the fact that its compounds contain huts rather than rough shelters. The huts in question are those which women alone construct, and which have already been described (p. 65). The physical appearance of a cattle settlement therefore expresses the coming together of women and cattle as well as the union, through marriage, of men and women, since a man needs a wife to

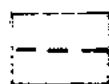
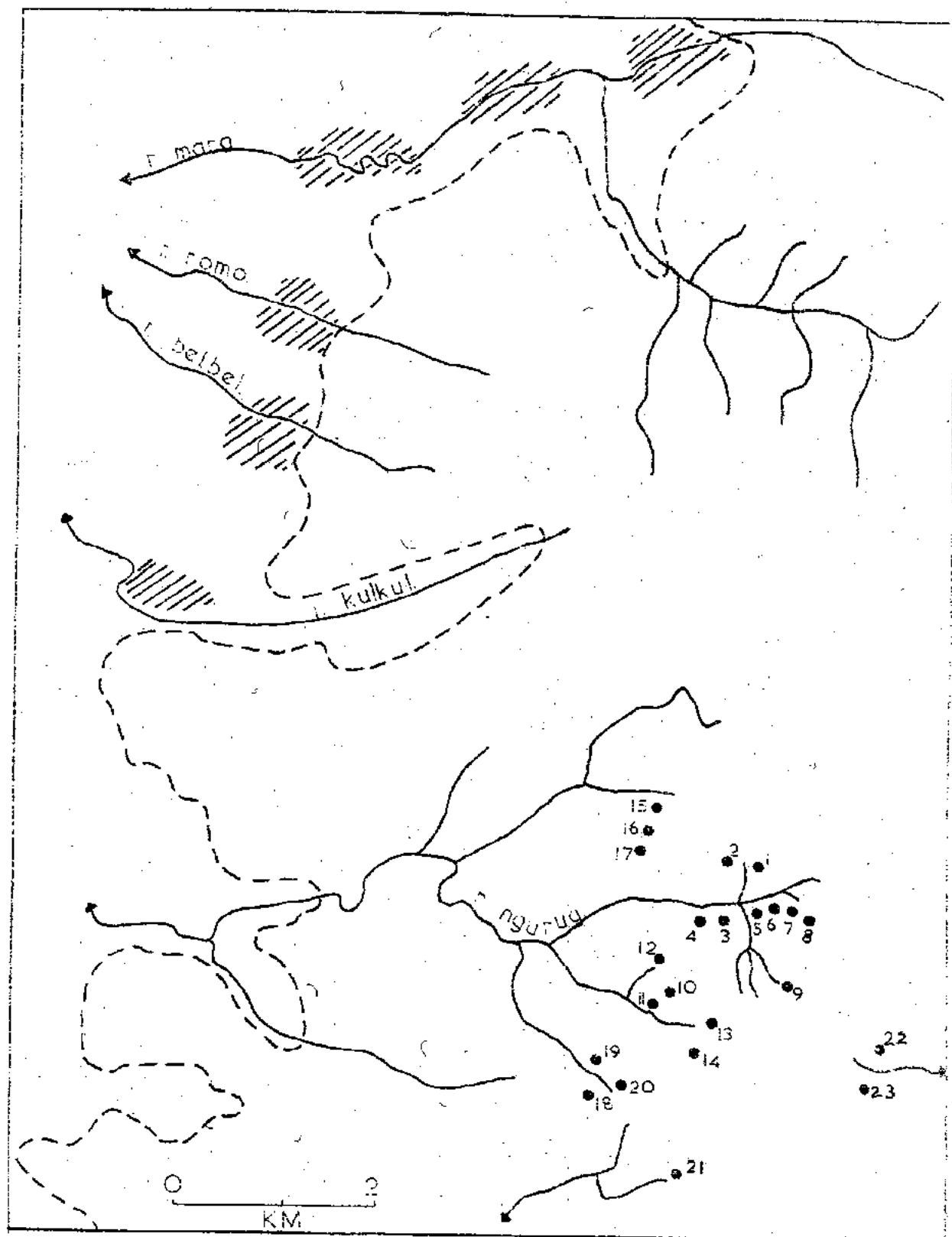
build a hut in his compound. An example of the plan and composition of an actual settlement in 1970 is given later in this chapter (Fig. 4). The point I wish to emphasise here is that they are of an essentially simple construction. They are built for temporary occupation and rapidly deteriorate when left empty. Indeed, the site of a deserted settlement can barely be recognised after a year or two. While people return to approximately the same areas of the central zone every year to build their cattle settlements, they do not necessarily reoccupy the same sites - as far as my experience goes it can be said that they rarely do so. Thus, the exact distribution of settlements in the central zone cannot be predicted from one year to the next, as it can, with reasonable certainty, at the Omo. Here, huts are built every year on the same sandy ridges and cliffs overlooking the Omo since these are the only suitable sites. Omo settlement, furthermore, is tied to the exploitation of a fixed resource - cultivable land - while in the central zone settlement is associated with cattle herding which clearly allows greater flexibility in the location of settlements.

I carried out a total count of cattle settlements during June and July 1970, and found that there were 51, with an average of seven married men per settlement. These settlements were concentrated into two main areas, round the headstreams of the

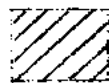
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River Ngurug to the north (Map 3) and round the headstreams of the Rivers Dungwi and Bennakora to the south (Map 4). This was a more concentrated pattern than occurred in the previous year, although I have not the detailed information necessary to draw a map of the distribution of cattle settlements in 1969. In that year, however, in the north of the country, settlements were dispersed between the Rivers Ngurug and Mara, some of them north of the latter, this dispersal being due largely to the desire of individuals to live as close to their cultivation sites in the bushbelt as the needs of their cattle for water, grazing and a (relatively) tsetse-free environment would allow. Thus, the occupants of settlements 1 to 9 and 15 to 17 on Map 3 were living further north in 1969, closer that is to the River Mara where the majority of them had cultivation sites.

The 1970 distribution of cattle settlements was brought about by considerations of security which are never far, it seems, from the minds of the Mursi. The Hamar had launched a number of cattle raids between December 1969 and March 1970, the last of which developed into a daylight battle in which 24 Hamar and 4 Mursi were killed. Apart from taking their cattle to the Omo, which, due to the lack of grazing and the tsetse flies can only be a short-term strategy, the Mursi's response to a sustained threat from cattle raiders is to group their camps or settlements close together, so as both to deter prospective raiders by superior numbers and to

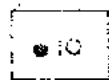
Map 5: The northern settlements



Eastern edge of the bushbelt

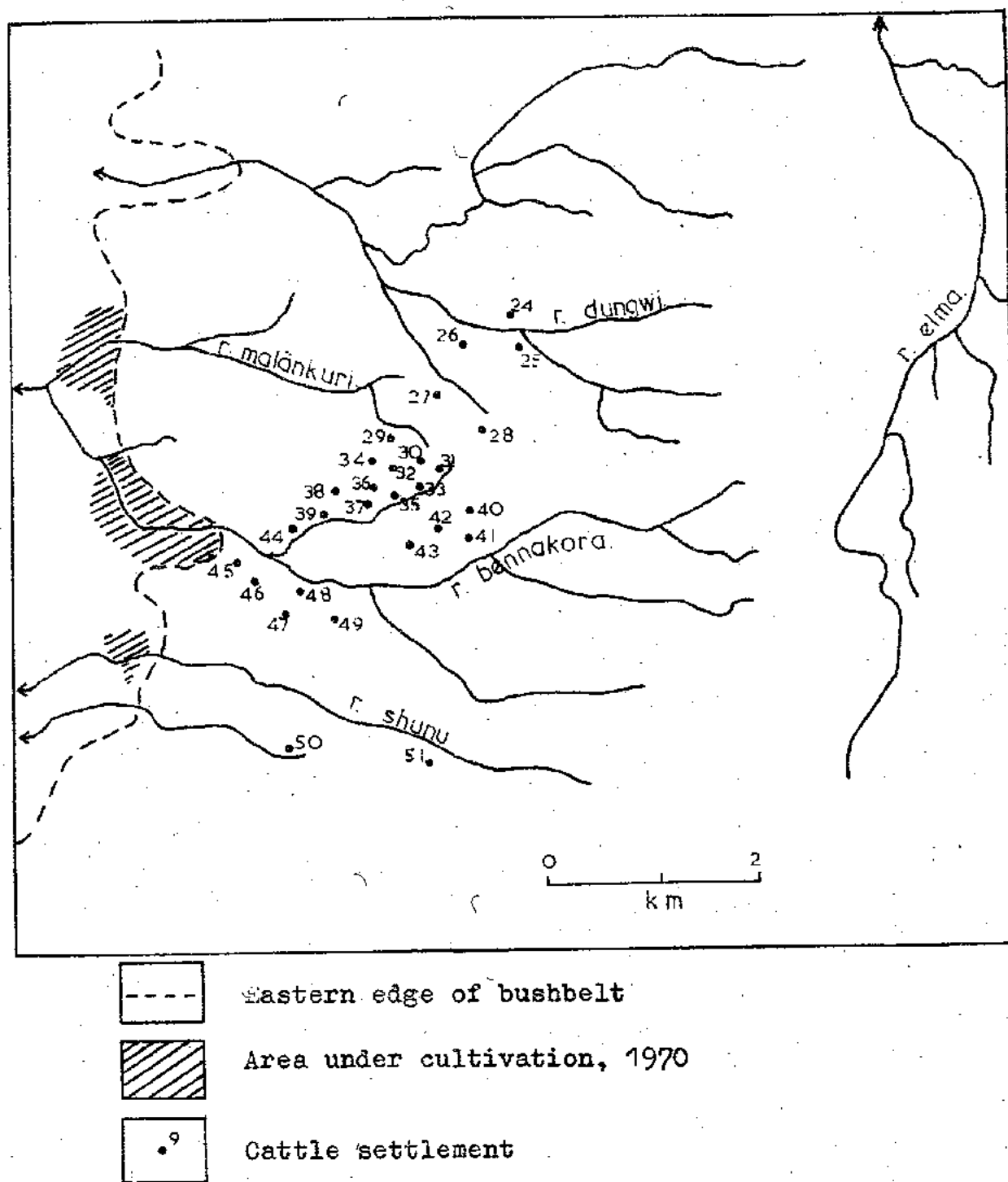


Areas under cultivation, 1970



Cattle settlement

Map 4: The southern settlements



(Note: The areas covered by this and the preceding Map are shown in relation to the rest of Mursi country on Map 5.)

enable a pursuit party to be raised as quickly as possible after a raid. The big Hamar raid of March 1970 had been directed at the Bennakora area, and it was this which brought about the particularly dense settlement pattern there during the succeeding months. The main factor in bringing about the concentration of cattle settlements around the River Ngurug was a deterioration in Mursi-Bodi relations.¹ While those people who were cultivating along the River Mara had to remain active in their cultivation areas until after the harvest in June, they kept their cattle an hour's walk to the south, as some protection against a sudden raid or counter-raid from the Bodi. The pattern of cattle settlements shown on Map 3 did not emerge finally until after the harvest, since up to that time many people, both men and women, had been living at their cultivation sites and cattle settlements had been built close up against the edge of the bushbelt in February and March, following the Hamar raids.²

In the absence of such external pressures as I have just described, cattle settlements are dispersed more thinly about the central zone. (I was told, however, that the area approximately midway between the two 1970 concentrations of settlements is not used because of its proximity to the pass over

1. See below, pp. 308-9

2. See below, pp. 306-8

the Mursi Mts. which provides the Hamar with their shortest route into Mursi country). Apart from the question of proximity to cultivation sites, there are other factors which help to bring about a more dispersed settlement pattern, under "normal" conditions. In the first place, it is clear that while dense settlement may have its advantages from the point of view of security, it brings with it difficulties from the point of view of the exploitation of resources. The availability of water, for both human and pastoral needs, of grazing and of firewood, is reduced within the immediate vicinity of any particular settlement. Water supply is particularly difficult in the central zone during the dry period between June and September, and in 1970 the water available in the headstreams of the Ngurug proved insufficient to meet the heavy demands made upon it by the cattle (approximately 2000) of these northern settlements, many of which had to be driven daily to the Elma Valley to be watered. The Mursi also express a distaste for close settlement in general, and in particular for living bunched up together in bush country - "like Nyidi" - as most of the occupants of the northern settlements were during February and March 1970.¹ They like to build their cattle settlements where the country is "clean" - away, that is, from trees and bush - and in places

1. See pp. 93-95 below, and Photograph 13.

20

from which a good view of the surrounding country may be obtained. It is obviously difficult for me to estimate the extent to which the same sites are reoccupied from one year to the next, since the contrast in settlement pattern between 1969 and 1970 was brought about by "abnormal" factors. Not altogether abnormal, however: as far as I could gather, cattle raids (mainly from the Hamar) are an annual hazard which make necessary frequent movements of men and cattle. The Mursi also express a dislike of reoccupying the same sites from one year to the next - they have an ideology of movement for its own sake.

People move into cattle settlements at different times, depending upon the relative strengths of their commitments to cultivation and pastoralism, and upon the stage of development of their domestic groups. A married man with few or no cattle will either remain at his cultivation site in the bushbelt until clearing begins again at the Omo, or move to stay at the cattle settlement of a relative after the harvest has been taken in, in June or July. An old man, with several grown-up sons, to whom he can entrust the care of his cattle may also prefer the relative ease, comfort and security of life at his cultivation site, perhaps moving after the harvest to a cattle settlement established earlier by one of his sons. A young married man, on the other hand, who has, by current Mursi standards, a sizeable herd (15 to 20 head) and several young children, is likely to establish a cattle settlement early

(in February or March), thus enabling him to provide his children with milk and to look after his cattle while at the same time helping his wife or wives with the heavy tasks of clearing and planting. The membership of a settlement therefore does not normally stabilise until after the harvest in June or July when it has only three months of continued existence before clearing begins at the Omo and the cattle are taken to the Elma Valley.

Cattle settlements are impermanent not only in relation to their physical structures and locations, but also in relation to their inhabitants. The composition of a settlement, expressed in terms of co-resident married males, is not likely to be repeated exactly from one year to the next. I have not sufficient information to support this statement other than by "apt illustration", which I will do shortly. Meanwhile, I wish to point out that individual cattle settlements do not represent physical loci of enduring social groups: the mobility I am talking about is not that of individuals between permanent localised units of the population. The composition of these "localised units" is, at the level of individual cattle settlements, changing all the time, both from one year to the next and during the course of a single wet season. Thus, the occupants of a particular cattle settlement must be regarded as forming an impermanent and unique grouping.

From what I have said about the distribution of cattle settlements in the central zone, it is clear that there is less of a basis here for the development of an enduring association between men and territory than there is at the Omo, despite the fact that it is only in the central zone that the life of the Mursi may be said, both individually and socially, to "come into its own". The integration of pastoral and agricultural activities makes possible the physical union of family groups - the coming together of men and cattle with women - which is the condition of the "full life". But it is now clear that wet-season settlement is not a question of the reoccupation of permanent village sites in the central zone. Such an expression would be more appropriately employed of settlement along the Omo. The greater flexibility and mobility of settlement in the central zone is clearly related to the fact that there is no shortage of cultivable land in the bushbelt and that access to pastoral resources is free and egalitarian. Thus, both settlement pattern (the spatial relations between settlements) and residence pattern (the social relations between co-residents) may vary in a way which the exigencies of flood cultivation at the Omo make impossible. The question of the allocation of land rights will be considered later. All that needs to be said for the moment is that it is only along the Omo that land rights can be inherited. We might therefore compare the three principal types of natural resource utilized by the

Mursi - Omo land, bushbelt land and grazing land - according to their accessibility, such a comparison showing that Omo land is the least and grazing land the most accessible. The settlement patterns associated with these natural resources show a corresponding variation in flexibility and mobility. Thus, at the Omo huts are built on the same sites every year and precisely the same plots of land are cultivated. In the central zone, where cattle settlements are not tied to cultivation sites, and where these sites are not themselves permanently cultivated, there is greater scope for individual movement, for mixing of the population and for the settlement pattern to vary according to factors in the natural and human environment. It is in the third zone of settlement, that associated with herding, in the Elma Valley, that individual mobility is at its greatest, and settlements most transitory.

In the Elma Valley, between October and March, men live in rough cattle camps (Photograph 12(6)) and, by comparison with the other two zones of settlement, are constantly on the move. It is at this time that the "two worlds" of the Mursi become visible, both in the geographical separation of the population into two parts, one predominantly male and one predominantly female, and in the living conditions and subsistence activities of each. The women are at the Omo, living in well-built huts on permanent sites,



a) A cattle settlement, with women making baskets.



b) A cattle camp towards the end of the dry season.

Photograph 12.

subsisting on a grain diet, supplemented by fish and occasional gourds of sour milk brought from the cattle camps, and in safety from raiders. The men are "outside", living in rough camps, subsisting on a diet of milk and blood, frequently on the move and constantly alert for cattle raiders. Access to pastoral resources being open and egalitarian, there takes place in the Elma Valley a greater "mixing" of the population than occurs during the wet season in the central zone, where cattle settlements provide also a base for agricultural activities. In the Elma Valley, in the dry season, the Mursi are territorially one people in a way that they are not in the central zone during the wet season. As they look westwards towards the Omo from "outside", they become divided into progressively smaller and more discrete units on the basis of local contiguity until at the Omo they reach the territorial "base line" of their society.

So far in this chapter I have been describing the geographical location of physical units rather than what might be called the structural location of social groups. It is therefore necessary to show how the spatial arrangements of the population which I have been describing relate to the division of the society into a number of named local groups. As a preliminary to this, I want now to change from a bird's eye view of a large number of anonymous individuals arranging themselves over a given territory, and follow the movements of a few of these

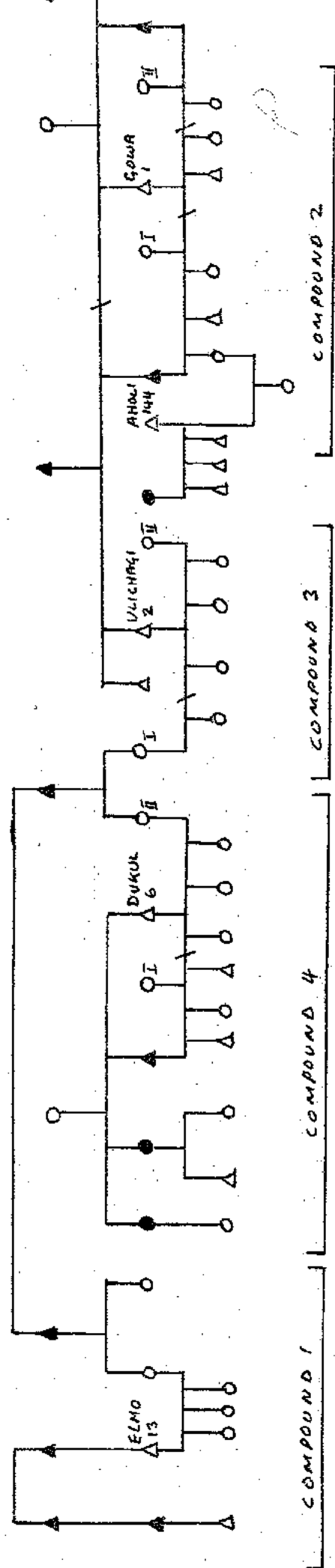
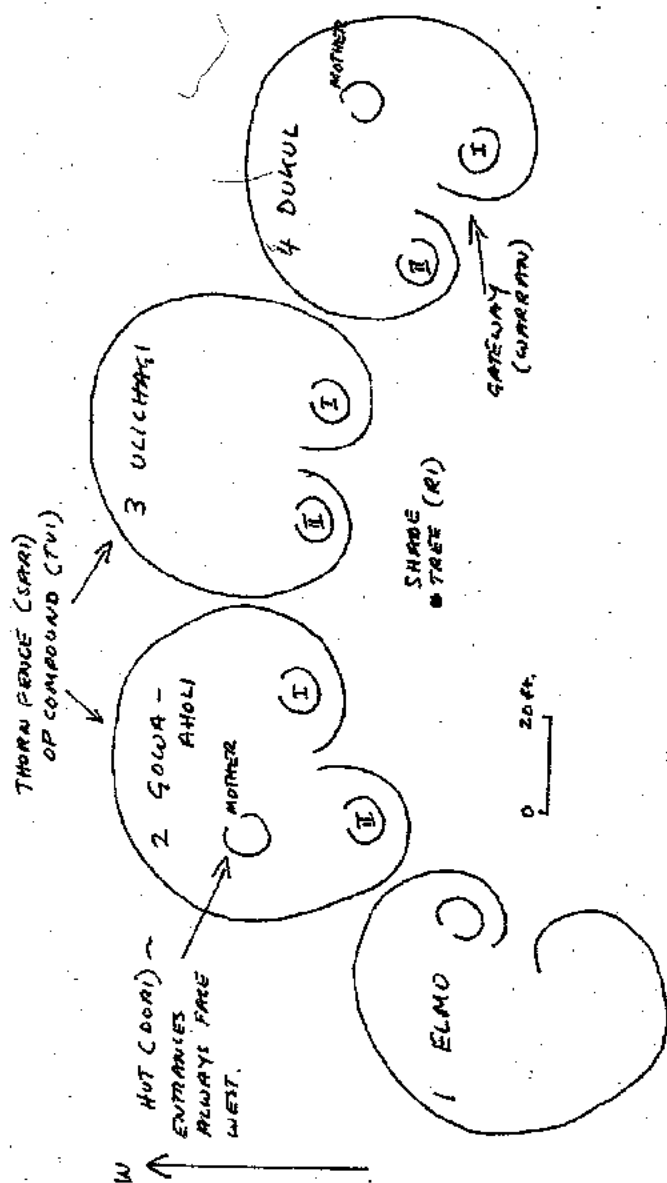
individuals over a complete cycle of subsistence activities. I have chosen five married men who shared a cattle settlement in 1969, and my account will run from the time this settlement broke up in September of that year to the following wet-season harvest, in June 1970. Fig. 4 shows the plan and composition of the settlement occupied by these five men in 1969. It was situated about midway between the Rivers Ngurug and Kulkul, and about a mile from the edge of the bushbelt.

Dukul is about 35 years old and has two wives, one of whom he has inherited from an elder brother. His inherited wife occupied the hut to the right of his compound entrance, his own wife that to the left. Also living with him was his mother, who occupied the third hut, with two infant children of two of her dead daughters - she has had ten children, of whom Dukul is the only survivor. Dukul's herd boy was a son, about 12 years old, of one of his dead sisters. Ulichagi, also about 35 years old, and also with two wives, occupied the compound next to Dukul's. He had inherited his senior wife, who occupied the hut to the right of his compound entrance, from a dead elder brother, and this woman was a full sister of Dukul's junior wife. Also living with him at the time was a younger, unmarried full brother, about 18 years old. Gowa is about 40 years old and has inherited both his wives. The senior of these, who is about ten years older than Gowa, occupied the hut to the right of the compound entrance with her married daughter and the latter's husband, Aholi, who is about

Composition and sketch-plan of
cattle settlement of Elmo, Gowa,
Ulichagi and Dukul (1969).

- Arabic numbers shown against married men on this and succeeding figures are their census index numbers.
- Roman numbers refer to the rank of wives.

— Inherited wife



50 years old. Aholi is a widower with three sons by his dead wife, and, at the time in question, a nine-months old baby by his current wife. This child died in December 1969. He has very few cattle - certainly less than 5 - a situation which he attributes to rinderpest and to the bride-price payment involved in his second marriage in 1967. (It will be noted that this payment was made to Gowa, with whom Aholi was now living). Gowa also had his aged mother living with him. Elmo, who is between 35 and 40 years old, has one wife and three daughters, the eldest about 8 years old. He had living with him his wife's unmarried sister, and his herd boy was a close patrilineal relative about 13 years old. It can be seen from Fig. 4 that Gowa and Ulichagi are members of the same descent group, being the biological offspring of one man, and Elmo's wife is of the same descent group as Dukul's junior wife and Ulichagi's senior wife.

Dukul's wives cultivated in 1969 along the River Belbel, while Gowa's, Aholi's, Ulichagi's and Elmo's cultivated along the River Kulkul. The harvest had been a very poor one, due to the failure, or virtual failure, of the March-April rains in 1969, and this was one reason why by the beginning of September people were eager to begin clearing at the Omo and to get the next crop of sorgham^u planted as soon as possible. During the second and third weeks of September the married women of the settlement began moving to their respective Omo cultivation areas. Six of them were

cultivating at Makaro (Dukul's wives and mother, Aholi's wife, Gowa's junior wife and mother) and 4 at Kuduma (Ulichagi's wives, Gowa's senior wife, and Elmo's wife). On the 23rd September Elmo, Gowa, and Ulichagi took the settlement herd across to the right bank of the Elma and set up a cattle camp there. The principal cause of this move was the lack of water and generally desiccated condition of the central zone. In the Elma Valley new grass was growing up after the burning off of the old in August. Aholi and Dukul had accompanied the women to the Omo, and while the latter returned to the cattle after a few days, Aholi remained at Makaro until after the Omo harvest in January. His youngest son (aged about 13) accompanied the settlement herd but Aholi's lack of cattle meant that he, his wife and child had to subsist on grain and fish at the Omo.

Towards the end of October, with the sorgham^u planted and some of it standing 1 to 2 feet high (at Makaro), there was a movement of women back to the Elma cattle camps (See above, p. 67). On the 27th October, I visited the cattle camp which had been established a month earlier by Elmo, Gowa and Ulichagi beyond the main stream of the Elma.

The camp consisted only of a few make-shift shelters. There being no compound fences, the cattle were able to graze in the vicinity of the camp overnight, the grass having become lush and green after the October rain. Dukul had his junior wife and

her children with him, his senior (inherited) wife being at Makaro. Ulichagi's two wives were at Kuduma with the senior wife of Gowa, who had his junior wife with him. Aholi was at Makaro with his wife and the latter's grandmother, Gowa's mother. At the time I visited the camp Elmo, his wife and children had just returned from a visit to Bodi country where they had stayed for about two weeks as guests of a married sister of his wife.

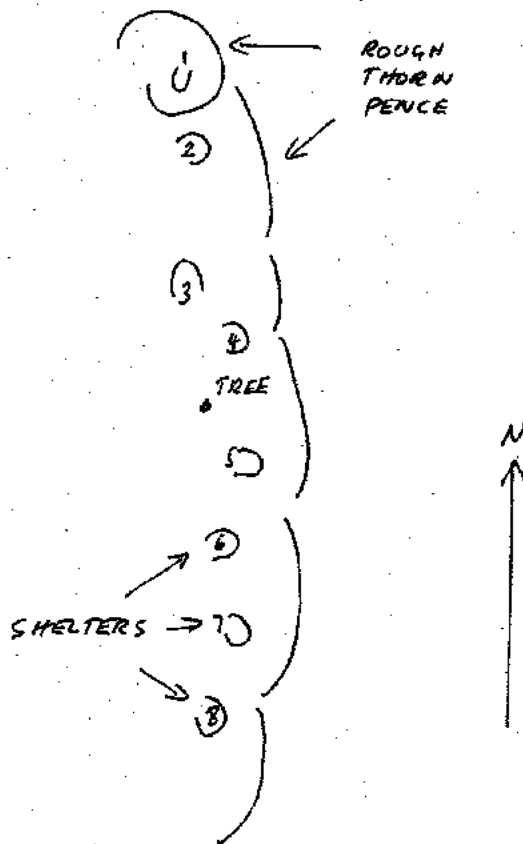
On the 29th October these people moved camp and occupied an old cattle settlement about a mile to the west of the Elma. The purpose of this move was to bring them within easier reach of a water supply for human needs, and it also brought them closer to the Omo at a time when the women were beginning to return to the cattle camps. At the new site the water was close enough, but it was judged unlikely to last for long, and on the 30th they moved again and started to construct a new camp another mile to the west, and only about four miles from the settlement they had abandoned in September. The October rain had improved both the water supply and the grazing in this region.

On the 1st November, as the camp was beginning to take shape (Fig. 5), Ulichagi's two wives and Gowa's senior wife arrived from Kuduma, and on the 2nd Aholi's wife and her grandmother arrived from Makaro. The camp had taken its final form by the 3rd November, and the shelters had been well-covered with grass against the rain which continued to fall. This camp

Figure 5:

Sketch-plan of cattle camp occupied
by Elmo, Gowa, Ulichagi and Dukul,
October-November, 1969.

1. ULICHAGI'S BROTHER;
SON OF GOWA'S SENIOR WIFE
2. GOWA'S MOTHER, AND HER
GRAND DAUGHTER, AMOLI'S WIFE
3. DUKUL'S CALVES
4. DUKUL'S JUNIOR WIFE
5. ULICHAGI'S SENIOR WIFE
6. ULICHAGI'S JUNIOR WIFE
7. GOWA'S JUNIOR WIFE
8. ELMO'S WIFE



remained in being for three weeks, during which the women made occasional trips back to their cultivation sites, and sour milk was carried to the Omo by the boys for Aholi, and Dukul's mother and senior wife. By the end of November, it had become necessary for the women, and indeed all available labour that could be supported at the Omo, to reside there continuously in order to take part in bird-scaring, since the sorgham^u was now being attacked by weaver birds and doves. At this time also the country was drying out after the "small" rains and the cattle were taken east again, this time well down the Elma Valley, as far north as, and well into, Bodi country. By the end of December, Dukul had separated from the others, and was sharing a cattle camp with a married age-mate whose Omo cultivation site was at Alaka.

During the last week of December, there were three night-time cattle raids, presumably by Hamar, and on the 30th, the Mursi started to evacuate the Lower Elma Valley. Dukul, Elmo and Gowa took their cattle to Alaka, in company with many others - so many that it was estimated that the grazing there would be exhausted after two weeks. Apart from the lack of grazing, this was, of course, a somewhat desperate move, since the cattle would now become subject to the constant attentions of tsetse flies. Ulichagi did not go as far as the Omo but kept his cattle, almost equally dangerously, on the edge of the bushbelt, watering them in the bed of the Mara. On the 7th January, Dukul, Elmo and Gowa

took their cattle south to utilize what grass there was available at Makaro, and stayed there about 10 days.

Tishu was now becoming available at Kuduma, and since the harvest had already been taken in at Makaro and Alaka, there began a movement of people northwards from these two places to Kuduma, where they became the perhaps not too welcome guests of relatives. By the 9th January, Dukul's senior wife, and Gowa's mother had arrived at Kuduma, where Ulichagi and his two wives were already present. On the 17th came Aholi and his wife, who made themselves the guests of the latter's mother. Dukul's junior wife came to stay with her sister, Ulichagi's senior wife. While this movement of people was taking place, the cattle were being moved northwards along the Omo bank to Kuduma, whence they would be taken back along the bed of the Mara to the eastern pastures. On the 20th January, the cutting of the sorgham^u started at Kuduma and by the 25th, all the cattle had left the Omo.

They were only taken literally to the edge of the bushbelt, however, where what amounted to a large communal settlement was established between the Rivers Mara and Romo (Photograph 13). In this huge settlement were concentrated about half the 160-odd married men who later built their cattle settlements about the headstreams of the River Ngurug. This arrangement was entirely a response to the fear of more cattle raids, and was uncomfortable for cattle and people alike. The cattle had to be watered in the



Photograph 13:

The "communal" settlement on the
edge of the bushbelt, March, 1970.

bed of the Mara and therefore came into daily contact with tsetse, and because it was considered too dangerous to take them to the Elma Valley, they were grazed in the vicinity of the bushbelt. The people continually reiterated their dislike of being couped up in such large numbers in the bushbelt.

Dukul's two wives and mother again cultivated at Belbel in 1970, but Gowa and Ulichagi, whose wives had cultivated at Kulkul in 1969 decided to move to sites along the Mara in 1970 because of the exposed position of the Kulkul area in relation to possible Hamar attacks. Both Gowa and Ulichagi had fired prospective cultivation sites at Kulkul in the previous December, and so had Aholi. The latter, having virtually no cattle to "pull" him out to the fringe of the bushbelt, cultivated in 1970 at a site a short distance back from the Omo at Makaro. Elmo's wife cultivated at Belbel. The first heavy rain of 1970 fell on the 9th March, and planting began on the 11th.

A month later huts had been constructed in the cultivation areas, and the large communal settlement had broken up into a number of smaller units, still located on the edge of the bushbelt, and the membership and location of which continued to be related to cultivation. Dukul was sharing a settlement with 15 other married men, including Elmo, all of whose wives were cultivating along either the Kulkul or Belbel. The settlement was situated

on the edge of the Belbel cultivation area. Gowa and Ulichagi were not members of this settlement because their wives were cultivating along the Mara and their settlement was therefore situated north of the Romo.

This arrangement continued until the end of May, when tishu had started to become available and was attracting visitors in large numbers to the cultivation areas. Partly because of this (fears of the evil eye make people nervous at having many visitors in the vicinity of their cattle compounds), partly because the River Mako had risen sufficiently to make attack from the Hamar less likely, and partly because they were anyway eager to leave the immediate vicinity of the tsetse-infested bushbelt, these settlements began to break up about this time. By the end of June, when the harvest had been taken in, the pattern of cattle settlements which was to remain until clearing began again at the Omo, had appeared (Map 3). In July 1970 the five men with whom I began this account in September 1969, and who were then living in the same cattle settlement, were to be found in four separate settlements, shown on Map 3 as 10 (Gowa and Ulichagi), 11 (Aholi), 12 (Elmo) and 19 (Dukul).

Although this account has inevitably been sketchy and incomplete, it does at least illustrate various points which are highly relevant to the permanent division of the society into a

number of named local groups. Firstly, the five men were highly mobile over a relatively small area of approximately 150 sq. miles. It is true that their movements could have followed a different pattern had it not been for their preoccupation with the threat of cattle raids - they would not, for example, have taken their cattle to the Omo in January, thereby evacuating the Elma Valley in the middle of the dry season, and the eventual pattern of wet-season settlement would have emerged earlier and would have been more dispersed than that shown on Map 3 . It would be unrealistic, however, to ignore the influence of this external factor or to treat the movements to which it gives rise as "abnormal". On the contrary, they constitute a familiar and, as far as I could ascertain, a frequently adopted strategy for dealing with a constraint on behaviour which is no less real because it comes from the human rather than from the natural environment.

Secondly, this account illustrates that people who are found living together in a cattle settlement for anything from three to six months during one wet season may well be living apart during the next. Cattle settlements neither reflect, nor provide a basis for the division of the society into enduring groups. On the other hand, they must be regarded as the minimal herding units of the society, since individual family heads are

rarely in a position to maintain strict economic independence. The need for cooperation between individual herd owners does not arise simply from the difficulty of maintaining an exact balance between the number of people necessary to tend the cattle properly and the provision of an adequate milk supply for both men and calves. It arises also from the need to span pastoral and agricultural activities simultaneously under conditions which never allow their complete spatial integration. Thus, it may be necessary for a man to absent himself frequently from his cattle in order to help his wife with agricultural tasks - not only clearing and planting but also bird-scaring - and at such times he may have to rely on another herd owner to look after his cattle. Economic cooperation between the members of a settlement is essential in order to allow as many individuals as possible to keep a foothold in each of the "two worlds" I described in the Introduction. The separate compounds of a settlement represent only an ideal autonomy of individual family heads. Although each compound is associated with a separate consumption unit - the cattle of each married man of the settlement are milked as a unit in his compound - it is possible to speak of "the settlement herd" because the cattle of each compound are not herded separately, common decisions as to grazing movements and watering being made by means of discussion among the individual herd owners of the settlement. Thus, economically, it is the settlement which emerges as a self-contained unit.

Thirdly, in all the movements of the five men I have been concerned with, the only fixed points were provided by cultivation areas, and in particular by those along the Omo. These points are "fixed", firstly, in the sense that cultivation demands a relatively continuous and prolonged investment of labour in one spot, and, secondly - this applies only to the Omo - in the sense that the same sites have to be cultivated year after year. Thus it is that the territorial "base" which serves to identify a man with the smallest number of others, and therefore to distinguish him from the greatest number, will be found at the Omo - a slightly paradoxical situation. For resource exploitation at the Omo must be confined to agriculture and fishing - except in such moments of crisis mentioned above, and which serve only to underline the fundamental antithesis which exists between the Omo bushbelt and pastoralism. Thus, the more successful a man is in conforming to the predominantly pastoral values of his society, the less time he will spend at the Omo. Omo cultivation is associated with women: the division of labour being reflected in the spatial distribution and seasonal movements of the population. Thus, cultivation sites, associated with women, are "foci" of territorial differentiation rather as women themselves may be "foci" of genealogical differentiation within a patrilineal kinship system.

This brings me to my second purpose in this chapter, which is to consider the social groupings to which the spatial arrangements I have been describing give rise. I am concerned here, therefore, with what the people themselves make of these spatial arrangements, and I begin by analysing some of the terminology to do with occupation and settlement.

I have already explained that the word or refers to a cluster of huts (at the Omo or in the bushbelt cultivation areas) or to a unit made up of a number of huts set within thorn and brush-wood compounds (in the central zone). It refers, therefore, to an inhabited place, and its antonym is gai, the primary meaning of which is therefore "uninhabited" (it may be used of any type of country, forest, bush or grass plain, for each of which there also exists a special term). A man goes gasho (the locative form) to look for honey; when the cattle are not within the settlement compounds, they are gasho; young men should not hang around the settlements, but should remain gasho. Thus, whenever the word gai is used, what it denotes is being contrasted, implicitly at least, with an inhabited place.

A word which is neutral both as to human occupation and vegetation cover, is ba, which may be translated, according to context, as "earth" or "land": Mursi country is ba munoin. But the word or may also be used to refer to the whole country, in

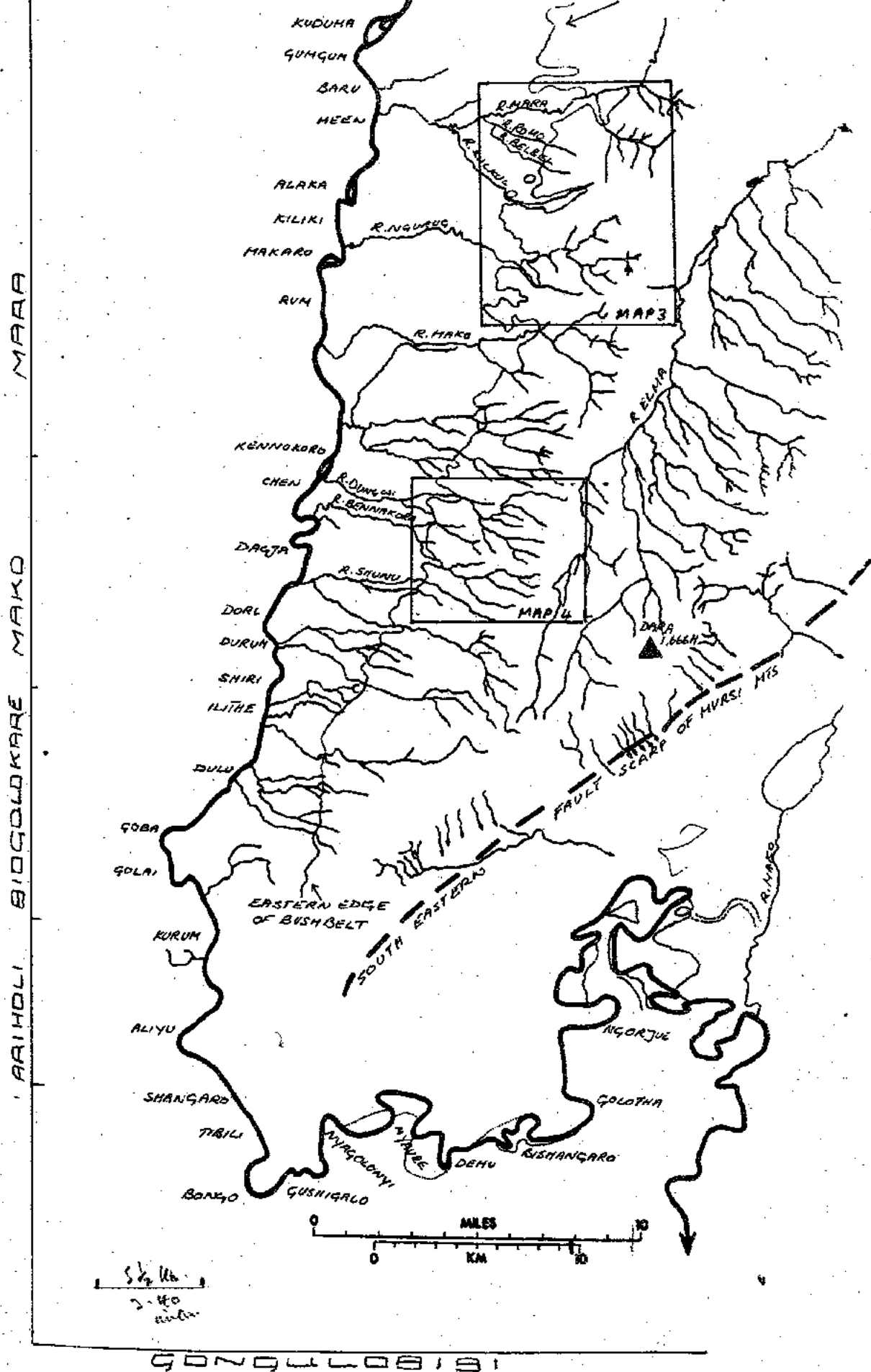
a figurative sense, as when certain age grade ceremonies are said to be held or kiango, meaning at the centre (literally the "stomach") of the country (literally the "settlement"). This phrase refers to the approximate geographical centre of the present inhabited area, corresponding roughly to that point on the Omo (Dorl) where the Mursi first crossed from the right bank. In all its uses, however, or refers to a physical structure or location, and never to the social unit formed by the people who live in a particular place or within a particular structure. It is therefore not such a word as the Nuer cieng (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p.130), or the Turkana awi (Gulliver, 1955, p.124) which have a primary physical and a secondary social meaning. The Mursi therefore have another term to refer to a group of people who are considered to form a group on the basis of local contiguity, namely, 'buran (pl. 'buranyoga)¹.

This term refers exclusively to people and not to territory. Since it is used of any unit comprised of people who live in and exploit a common territory, it may refer to the whole Mursi population or to the occupants of a single settlement. 'Buran a minoin is "the Mursi people", 'buran a chachoin, "the Chachi people", and so on. Any group which can be seen as forming a spatially distinct unit is a 'buran. There is an obvious difference, apart from that of mere numbers, between the local

1. An apostrophe before a letter signifies an implosive sound.

group which consists of the whole Mursi population and that which consists of the occupants of a single settlement. This is that the latter is an essentially unstable group: it does not represent an enduring division of the population, and it consequently is not recognised by the Mursi's own model of their society. The 'buran a manoin is divided into named local segments, or 'buranyoga, which represent a permanent division of the population and which stop short of individual settlements. Although there is a territorial basis for this division, it is the population and not the territory which is divided - except, as will be seen, at the Omo.

There are five structurally (though by no means numerically) equivalent named local segments of the Mursi population, which I will from now on call sections. The only way in which a section can be identified territorially is by reference to the Omo cultivation sites used by the majority of its members. The five sections are named as follows, from north to south along the Omo: Mara (after the river), Mako (after the river), Biogolokare ("red-eyed cows"), Ariholi ("white ox") and Gongulobibi ("big canoes"). Map 5 shows how the Omo can be divided up into stretches on this basis, and also indicates the relationship between section membership and area of wet-season settlement.



Map 5: Territorial sections, Omo cultivation areas and areas of wet season settlement (1970)

This division of the Omo is one which the people themselves recognise, but they do not make it by means of physical features - they do not, in other words, point to physical boundaries between the Omo land of the various sections. They merely say that Mara people cultivate in the north, that Mako people cultivate further downstream, and so on. For ease of exposition, therefore, I have, by means of Map 5, imposed a more rigid demarcation of Omo land than the people themselves could contemplate. My justification for this is contained in Table / , in which I have arranged the 645 married women in the census according to their Omo cultivation areas and the section membership of their husbands. This shows, for example, that of the 225 women in the census who were married to Mara men and whose Omo cultivation area is known, only 10 cultivated on the Omo south of Rum. Of the 83 women in the census who were married to Gongulobibi men and whose Omo cultivation area is known, only 9 cultivated north of Shangaro.

The relationship between section membership and area of wet-season settlement shown on the map is borne out by Tables 2 and 3. The first of these shows that 125 (78%) of the 161 married male occupants of the northern group of settlements gave their section as Mara, and that only 5 of these settlements (Nos. 5, 8, 10, 22 and 23) were not occupied predominantly by Mara men. Put another way, over 98% of all the Mara men in

Table 1 : Omo cultivation areas of 645 married women,
by sections of husbands

Husband's Section Wife's Omo Cultivation	Mara	Mako	Biogol.	Ariholi	Congul.	Not Known	Totals
Kuduma	86	8	3			5	102
Gungum	5						5
Baru	3						3
Meen	9						9
Alaka	36	1					37
Kiliki	2						2
Makaro	70	9	2				81
Rum	4	3					7
Kenno.	2	37			3		42
Chen		25			1		26
Dagja	1			1			2
Durum		1					1
Shiri		10	5				15
Ilithey		1	34		1		36
Dulu		6	28				34
Goba	1	3	38		1		43
Golai		5	9	1	2		17
Kurum			2	28			30
Aliyu				6	1		7
Shangaro					3		3
Tibili		2			3		5
Bongo				2	26		28
Gushigalo					11		11
Nyagol.					6		6
Nyaure	1			2	3		6
Dehu					2		2
Bishang.		2	2				4
Colotha		2		1	11		14
Ngorjue	5	10			9		24
Not known	14	15	8		4	2	43
TOTALS	239	140	131	41	87	7	645

Note: The Omo cultivation sites are shown on Map 5 .
In the interests of simplicity I have reduced 75
named cultivation sites at which the women in the
census cultivated to the 30 shown in the table by
retaining one name only to refer to contiguous or
very near-by areas of bank, even if the Mursi dis-
tinguish between them. Thus, for example, the left
bank at Alaka is called Koibatha, the area just down-
stream from the island at Makaro is called Golati, while
Kennokoro is strictly the name only of the island at the
spot marked as, such on the map, there being four other
names to refer to different, close by areas of bank.

Sections Settlements	Mara	Mako	Biogolokare	Ariholi	Congulobibi	Not known	TOTAL
1	6		1	2	1		10
2	3	1				1	5
3	5	3					8
4	2						2
5		2					2
6	7	3					10
7	3	2					5
8	2	2					4
9	16						16
10	1		1				2
11	10						10
12			1			1	2
13	7						7
14	15			1			16
15	7				1	1	9
16	2						2
17	5				1		6
18	12					1	13
19	7		1				8
20	4						4
21	9						9
22	1	7			1		9
23	1	1					2
TOTAL	125	21	4	3	4	4	161
TOTAL, ALL SETTLEMENTS	127	82	72	28	56	4	369

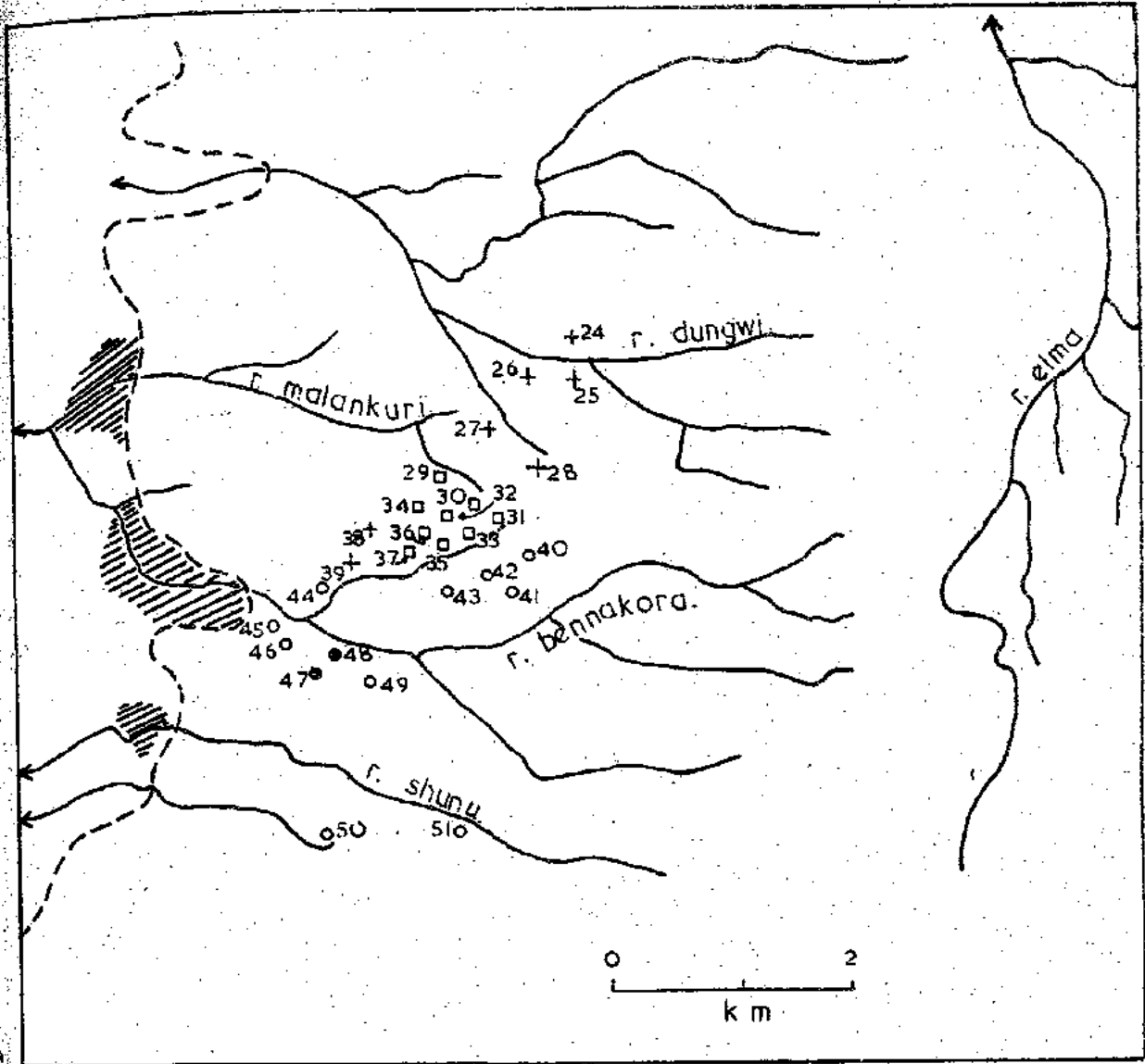
Table 2 : Territorial Sections of
married men of northern
settlements

Sections Settlements	Mara	Mako	Biopolokare	Ariholi	Conqulobibi	Not known	TOTAL
24	1	22			1		23
25		5					6
26		1					1
27		2					2
28		8					8
29					4		4
30					7		7
31					7		7
32					5		5
33				1	3		4
34					5		5
35					2		2
36					7		7
37			1	2	6		9
38		2	1				3
39		15					15
40			3		1		4
41			1				1
42			1				1
43		1	4		1		6
44		4	28	3			35
45			6				6
46			9				9
47				12			12
48				3			3
49			7	3	1		11
50		1	2				3
51	1		5	1	2		9
TOTAL	2	61	68	25	52		208
TOTAL, ALL SETTLEMENTS	127	82	72	28	56	4	369

Table 3 : Territorial Sections of
married men of southern settlements

the Census who were living in cattle settlements in 1970 were to be found in these northern settlements. This table also shows that members of the other four sections were to be found predominantly in the southern group of settlements - Nos. 24-51. The only section which had a fair proportion of its members in both areas of wet-season settlement was (predictably, in view of the location of its territorial "base" on the Omo) Mako. Of the total number of Mako men who were living in cattle settlements in 1970, approximately 25% were occupying settlements in the north and approximately 75% in the south of the country. Comparison of Map 6 with Table 3 shows the clear tendency for people who cultivate at neighbouring sites along the Omo to live in nearby cattle settlements during the wet season, notwithstanding the relatively high concentration of settlements which occurred in 1970.

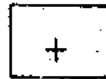
These figures therefore simply bear out the Mursi's own model of their territorial organisation. The question that has to be asked now, of course, is what areas of social life does this model organise? ^{or?} What difference does it make? And here, unfortunately, it is easier to say what sections are not, than to say what they are. For although there is a clear basis in local contiguity and therefore in economic cooperation (compare, for example, the movement of people, following the harvest northwards, from Makaro to Kuduma, reported on p. 93 above), for the permanent



Eastern edge of bushbelt



Area under cultivation, 1970



Mako



Gongulobibi



Biogolokare



Ariholi

Map 6: The distribution of southern settlements according to territorial section.

division of the population into named sections, membership of a section does not entail rights to the exploitation of particular natural resources. A section consists of an aggregate of people who are brought into relatively frequent contact by reason of their exploitation of certain tracts of land but it does not incorporate such land. Section membership is inherited, but by going to live permanently in a different part of the country an individual may become a member of a different section. The most frequent explanation given by individuals of such a permanent change in their section membership is that they have moved "by a girl" - that, in other words, they have moved to a part of the country which is associated with the section of their wives' close patrilineal kinsmen. On the other hand, a man may make such a change of residence and yet continue to describe himself as a member of his natal section, stressing his intention to return to that part of the country associated with it in due course. Why should a man wish to keep open such an option? Clearly because he intends to utilise rights which he possesses to immovable property - namely land - at a later date. But he does not gain such rights by reason of his section membership - it is simply that by the very fact of utilizing them he will be brought into a relationship of economic cooperation and relatively frequent daily intercourse with a particular aggregate of people. Before continuing with this account of territorial organisation, it is

clearly necessary to explain how rights to cultivable land are allocated, and this requires a discussion of the relation between groups based on local contiguity and those based on real or putative kinship. For rights to property are vested in groups defined by patrilineal descent - kabinya (sing. kabi).

From what has been said about the differential availability of natural resources - especially as between land for flood and land for rain cultivation - it would be expected that the greatest emphasis on land rights would occur at the Omo. It is only at the Omo, in fact, that it is possible to speak of land being "owned". If a man is asked how he came to be cultivating at a particular spot in the bushbelt, he may reply that his father cultivated thereabouts before him, or that he was allocated a plot that had already been cleared by another - probably a wife's kinsman - or he may say "I just cleared it - it was bush here before". Where Omo cultivation is concerned, however, the same question will receive either the first or the second answer, but never the third - a man never goes and "just clears" a plot at the Omo.

Each Omo cultivation site is associated with a particular clan. Only five of the eighteen clans whose names I recorded (Bumai, Juhai, Komorte, Kagisi and Garakuli) are thought of as

having made the original migration from Thaleb. It was the predecessors of the present day members of these clans who laid claims to various stretches of the Omo, as they crossed it from the right bank. But it is not possible to divide the Omo up into contiguous clan stretches, as it is possible to divide it according to 'buranyoga. Although a small clan, such as Kagisi, may have only one area of Omo land associated with it (in this case at Ilithey), larger clans, such as Komorte and Bumai, are associated with land at different points all along the river. In Table 4 I have arranged the married men of the census according to their clans and territorial sections, in order to give some idea of the geographical dispersal of clans.

I speak of an "association" between clans and Omo land because it cannot be described as ownership. Clan names are used as labels, recording the fact that particular pockets of Omo land were first occupied and used by members of particular clans whose descendants now have prior claims to its use. The effective group from the point of view of control and allocation, consists of a number of close patrilineal kinsmen of the clan in question, for an adult Mursi rarely remembers beyond his grandfather in genealogical reckoning. A clan name used in association with an Omo cultivation site is nothing more than a label which allows flexibility in the control and allocation of land, while upholding the prior rights of particular individuals.

Table 4 : Clans and sections of
389 census respondents

Section Clan	Mara	Mako	Biogol.	Ariholi	Gongul.	Not Known	Totals	
Berneshe	2	1	<u>7</u>			1	11	2.8
Bongo			<u>1</u>		<u>10</u>		11	2.8
Bumai	<u>47</u>	8	14	3	<u>1</u>		73	18.8
Changuli	<u>2</u>	2			<u>1</u>		5	1.3
Chermani		<u>2</u>					2	0.5
Galnai	1				<u>5</u>		6	1.5
Garakuli	3	3	1		<u>12</u>		19	4.9
Gongwi	3	<u>13</u>			<u>1</u>		17	4.4
Gummai	2		<u>3</u>				5	1.3
Gushumi			<u>1</u>	1			2	0.5
Isai		1		1	1		3	0.8
Juhai	<u>30</u>	20	18	1	4	1	74	19.0
Kagisi	5		<u>14</u>				19	4.9
Komorte	11	3	4	15	<u>20</u>	1	54	13.9
Kulgisai		1					1	0.3
Maiyai	1	<u>3</u>					4	1.0
Mangwi	<u>17</u>	5	6				28	7.2
Ngeriai	8	<u>25</u>	5		2		40	10.3
Chachi	1	1		1	1	2	12	3.0
Bodi	3						3	0.8
TOTALS	136	88	74	28	58	5	389	
	35.0	22.6	19.0	7.2	14.9	1.3		100

Most Mursi cultivate Omo land that has been allocated to them rather than land of which they themselves are in control. But it seems that land is normally demanded as of right (especially, as will be seen later, between affines) rather than requested as a great favour. Land is always allocated by married men - whether to other married men or to their own wives. Although it is women who carry out most of the tasks of cultivation and who utilize the crop according to their own discretion, they do not own Omo land. It seems that while owners have strong jural rights over the land they inherit, they have fairly weak rights of beneficial enjoyment - there would, of course, be no special advantage in keeping a particularly large or otherwise favourable area of Omo land for one's own use, since any surplus that one had would immediately be dissipated, through sharing and hospitality, among the less well off. The advantage of a system in which a few people allocate land to many is, in this context, that it helps to maintain a balance between supply and demand. For the vicissitudes of flood cultivation are such that there has to be some means of bringing about an adjustment between the extent and location of land available for cultivation in any one year and the number of potential cultivators. For while it is true that a poor flood, for example, will be uniformly poor along the whole length of the river, its seriousness will not be equally felt at all cultivation sites. A silt embankment site along a straight reach

of the Omo might provide sufficient cultivable land for three women during one dry season, and none the next, while a gentle slip-off slope on the convex bend of a meander might continue to provide a certain amount of cultivable land, even following the poorest flood. But apart from such considerations as these, there is the simple fact that the amount of land available for cultivation at the Omo from one year to the next, on the one hand cannot be controlled, and on the other hand never exceeds demand.

The system of land allocation at the Omo should be seen in relation to the consequent need for flexibility to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from Omo cultivation in any one year by the maximum number of individuals. Thus, while it is possible for a plot of Omo land to be alienated in perpetuity, such that the person to whom it is allocated may then alienate it again, plots are normally allocated for one or two dry seasons only. It is therefore necessary, from the point of view of those who seek to have land allocated to them, that they should be able to call at short notice on a number of different individuals who would find it morally difficult to refuse them. They must be in possession, so to speak, of a number of blank cheques, in the form of social relationships, readily convertible into Omo land. By far the most important type of relationship in this context is that of affinity, a subject to which Part II of this thesis is largely devoted.

It is now clear that a section is not a corporate group in the sense implied by the "intergenerational transmission of property" (Goody, 1962, pp. 311-12). Nor is it corporate in the Weberian sense which emphasises the presence of "a person or persons in authority" (Weber, 1947, p.146). The only characteristics it possesses which have anything to do with "corporateness" are its continuity in time and the fact that its members think of themselves as forming a unit in opposition to other sections. This unity is based on local contiguity and on the economic cooperation and social intercourse this entails. It can be seen from Map 6 that the cattle settlements of a section tend to form discrete clusters in the central zone. Perhaps the most characteristic - certainly the most frequent - social activity which takes place between the occupants of neighbouring settlements is the killing and eating of a sick cow or name ox of one of the neighbours. Such meat eatings often give rise to, or are made the occasion of public discussions, which I call "debates" and which are described in full in Chapter 8. At these debates policy decisions are made on matters which affect all the residents of the local settlements. A cluster of neighbouring settlements also forms the typical "catchment area" for the onlookers at the public settling of a dispute (Chapter 6). But such activities are not necessarily exclusive to one particular section - especially not when the settlement pattern is as concentrated as it was in 1970. The same applies to religious ceremonial: it will be explained in Chapter 5 that sections form religious congregations in relation to one or more priests but that because there are more sections

than priests, these congregations cut across section boundaries. Thus, at every turn, there appear to be as many factors tending to blur the distinctions between sections as serve to emphasise them. All that we are left with is the mere fact of local contiguity, unsupported by any corporate rights to property.

There is, however, one form of ceremonial activity in which sections engage and which is by definition sectionally exclusive - duelling. The "teams" which take part in ceremonial duelling contests are always drawn from different sections. Indeed, so characteristic an activity is this of sections that they cannot be defined without reference to it. The five-fold division of the population I have been describing, to the units of which I have given the name "sections", is a model which can only be maintained by means of ceremonial duelling. For at least two of these sections (Mara and Mako) are divided into smaller, named 'buranyoga, while Mara, Mako and Biogelokare form a single, larger 'buran called Dola. The Mara section is capable of division into four smaller named 'buranyoga - namely, Mara proper, Ambio, Makaro and Rim. Three of these names, it will be noticed, refer to physical features or locations, and they indicate well enough the areas with which the members of these constituent 'buranyoga are associated. Those men who call themselves Ambio - and they would only do so in a context which made it inappropriate to describe themselves as of the Mara section - had, or rather their wives had,

Ono cultivation sites at Alaka. The term Ambio literally means "they eat cattle", and it is also used as the name of one of the three constituent 'buranyoga of the Mako section. The appropriateness of this as a 'buran name is clear from what I said earlier about the characteristic social activity that takes place between the occupants of neighbouring cattle settlements: those who eat meat among themselves form a 'buran.

It is possible to describe these smaller 'buranyoga as being "contained within" the sections because of the function of ceremonial duelling in defining different levels of territorial segmentation. The five units I have termed "sections" are structurally equivalent because ceremonial duelling takes place between them but not within them. The constituent 'buranyoga of, for example, the Mara section are identified, when it comes to ceremonial duelling, through their common opposition to the other sections: they are "one" because they do not duel between themselves, but only with Mako, Biogolokare, Ariholi or Gongulobibi. Thus, what might be called the "duelling relationship" is a means of distinguishing different levels of segmentation, and must enter into the definition of a "section". The same principle has to be used in order to explain the distinction between ~~any~~one of the three northern sections and the unit called Dola, which they form together.

It can be seen from Map 6 that the members of the Biogolokare section must have more frequent daily contacts with members of the Ariholi and even Gongulobibi sections, at least during the wet season, than they do with the Mara section. And yet Biogolokare, Mako and Mara form a single 'buran in opposition to the other two, the members of which are often referred to by those of the Dola as "downstream people". Just as the constituent 'buranyoga of a section never provide rival teams in ceremonial duelling, so the constituent sections of Dola only provide rival teams at contests in which the two southern sections are not represented. Thus, the contests I observed in October 1969 were between two Dola teams - Mara and Biogolokare. In July 1970, however, at Bennakora, although contestants from both of these sections took part in the duelling, they did not fight each other. Contestants on that occasion were aligned as follows: Ariholi and Gongulobibi vs. Dola (the latter being represented mainly by Biogolokare and Mako). Thus, I have based my account of territorial organisation on the five-fold division into "sections" because it is only at this level that it is possible to make an exhaustive division of the population into structurally equivalent units, on a territorial basis.

There is both an individualistic and a social aspect to duelling. Since it is a single-combat game, it depends upon and expresses the individual competitiveness of contestants. Since

it is especially associated with unmarried men, and since it is explicitly treated as a vehicle for sexual assertiveness, the competitiveness in question may clearly be characterised as that in which men engage in order to acquire access to women. The unmarried, furthermore, are, by that very fact, less than completely socialised: they are turbulent, irresponsible and therefore a potential source of disharmony in social life, and in nature itself (Chapter 10). Duelling may therefore be seen as a means of regulating and controlling the explosive sexual competitiveness of individuals, as well as providing a public expression of the need for control to be exercised by the married (referees) of the unmarried (contestants). Duelling may become, as Chapter 9 will show, a "focus" both for the opposition of the young towards "established authority" (See above, p. 55) and for the efforts of that authority to maintain harmonious social relations in general.

But ceremonial duelling also brings into a relationship of conflict with each other two local segments of the population. While it is possible to see the individual combat as a result and expression of competitiveness and sexual aggression, it is not possible to extend the same sort of argument to the relationship between duelling sections. It has been amply demonstrated that property rights are not vested in sections. There is thus no basis for antagonism to develop between sections on the basis of defence.

of common interests. It is not local groups, but groups defined by patrilineal descent which are thus mobilised and which therefore provide the principals in dispute settlement. It will be seen in Chapter 7 that the public settlement of disputes (called a yaiye) also involves duelling, between the two principals and their close patrilineal kinsmen, but that in this case the fighting is forcibly ended after a certain period by the intervention of neutral onlookers, when one or more individuals attempt to bring the parties to a settlement. Here there are real "stakes" involved in the duelling - the disputed property - and it is for this reason that the principals have to be forcibly pulled apart: they are serious in a way in which the contestants in ceremonial duelling are not.

The antagonism which duelling manifests between sections is largely manufactured for the occasion. I do not mean by this that contestants feel no solidarity with their team mates, or that they are not antagonistic towards the sections of their opponents. I do mean that this solidarity and antagonism is as much a result as a cause of the duelling. So far from it being possible to say, for example, that duelling helps to prevent local groups from being torn apart by "fissiparous tendencies", a more likely conclusion is that without duelling there would be far less antagonism shown between sections than there is. This is illustrated by a comment made to me by a young man of the Mara section by way of explanation

of the impending duelling contests with Biogolokare in 1969. He said, laughing, "They are letting their cattle eat our grass" - that is, in the Elma Valley. This was intended as a joke. In the first place, access to pastoral resources is open and egalitarian, and cattle always fan out during the dry season in the Elma Valley, in search of grazing and water. In the second place, a ceremonial duelling contest (thagine) is not an occasion for the claiming and defending of rights, as is a yaiye. Comments like this were simply part of the build-up to a duelling match between the two sections: it was necessary to create antagonism as a prelude to duelling.¹

I therefore consider ceremonial duelling to be more in the nature of sport than of a "ritual of rebellion" between opposed interest groups. To the extent that sport "has no contact with anything outside itself" and is therefore "its own end" (Huizinger, 1970, p.230), it is not surprising that duelling should take place between segments of the population which are not brought into competitive relations by the exigencies of everyday life. Indeed, I would argue that it is just because such competition is absent that it is possible for a form of institutionalised conflict to exist in which it is hardly less satisfying and advantageous for a contestant to lose than it is for him to win, and in which the superiority of particular individuals and groups can only very rarely be conclusively demonstrated.

1. The same point is illustrated by the account given below (pp.329-35) of the build-up to the duelling in June-July 1970.

The existence of the sections is as necessary to ceremonial duelling as the latter is to the persistence of this five-fold division of the population. It would obviously be vain to attempt to give either of these logical or historical priority. It could be argued, for example, that the local divisions are necessary, given the level of technology and communications, in order to allow for the decentralization of political activity, and that duelling is a way of keeping these divisions visible, in the absence of common interests in property. On the other hand, priority might be given to duelling, as a means of social control (control, that is, of the young), and the division of the society into sections be seen as a useful way of "picking sides". My intention has been to take neither of these courses, but simply to point out the complementarity between ceremonial duelling and the territorial organisation.

I wrote in Chapter 1 that any two contestants come from different sections but are members of the same age grade. I have also said several times that duelling is associated with the young and the unmarried. It serves to support the political doctrine¹ that men become wise, tolerant and less excitable as they grow older, and that marriage is essential for the complete social integration of the individual. It is not possible therefore to gain a full understanding of ceremonial duelling without relating it to this second defining characteristic of contestants - age.

1. "The political doctrine consists of the basic expectations and demands concerning power relations and practices in the society" (Lasswell et. al., 1965, p. 10).

Chapter 3: Age

Every male member of the population occupies one or other of seven named age grades. An age grade is a stage through which each male passes at some period of his life. When I was in the field, men over the age of approximately 20 years not only occupied an age grade but they were also members of a named age set (tan). An age set consists of all the men who have been through an initiation ceremony during a specific period of time. The last time such a ceremony was held was in 1961, and before that in 1936. In 1970, living men over the age of 25 belonged to four age sets. Members of the most junior set, called Benna ("stones"), were occupying the rora grade, while the set immediately above them, called Yoiya ("jackals"), consisted of all those men who were occupying the bara grade. There is only one grade, karo, senior to the latter, and this was occupied by both the remaining age sets, Kera and Gurtu. Members of the three seniormost sets were further grouped together, under the name Gamal, into a generation set. A generation set is made up of four age sets, spanning approximately 60 years - by 1970 the seniormost age set, called Galeba, of the Gamal generation set had become defunct. Alternate generation sets have the same name (either Gamal or Kirin) and therefore replace each other. Age set names also recur, but not in any fixed order. These facts are summarised in Fig. 6 .

AGE GRADE NAMES
WITH APPROXIMATE
AGE SPAN IN 1970

Rumunyi	0 - 7
Changala	7 - 10
'Donga	10 - 16
Teru	16 - 20
Rora	20 - 40
Bara	40 - 60
Karo	60+

AGE SET NAMES WITH
DATE OF FORMATION
IF KNOWN

Benna	1961
Yoiya	1936
Kera	c. 1925
Gurtu	c. 1910
Geleba	(all dead)
Benna	"
Chorelulumi	"
Tabai Ma	"
Shoshelemu	"

COMPLETED
GENERATION
SETS

Gamal
Kirin

Fig. 6 : The Age Organisation

Occupants of the grades numbered one to four on the diagram are jural minors (lusa). That is to say, they do not have the right to take an active part in public decision-making. A group of teru may hold a debate among themselves, but at those debates in which matters affecting the whole community are discussed, their role is to listen, and when, as is usual, the speeches follow a public meat-eating, to cook the meat and serve it to their elders. There is no rule, however, that a man cannot marry until he has reached grade five and become a member of an age set. It is said that even a boy in the 'donga grade could marry if he had sufficient cattle for bride-price. A 'donga, however, is still herding his father's cattle and living at his father's settlement. When he becomes a teri (the singular form of teru) he is expected to live in a cattle camp with his age mates, away from the settlements of the married men. The animals then under his care consist of a few that will form the nucleus of his own herd plus others from the herds of his father or paternal uncles which are not required at their settlements or cattle camps. At about the age of 16, therefore, a boy ideally begins an independent existence, building up his own herd, and it is the size of this herd, and the extent to which he can raise bridewealth animals from relatives and associates, which determines his ability to marry. When I asked whether teru could marry, I always received the same answer: "Why not - they have cattle, haven't they?"

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Of the 389 married men in the census, only seven were teru, and two of these had inherited their wives from elder brothers. But this finding was obviously a function of the point in time at which I made my observations - 9 years, that is, from the formation of the last age set, in 1961. The set before this had been formed 25 years earlier, in 1936, so that the senior members of the present Benna set were about 35 years old, and many of them married, before they became rora. Although there is no rule that teru should remain unmarried, it is safe to say that a married teri is an exception. Presumably one of the forces which keep the age grade system in motion is the need to reduce such an anomaly, when it occurs, as that of married teru with growing families being unable to play an active part in public discussions.

A man does not have to gain rora status in order to marry but it is nevertheless true that it is not until he has reached this grade that he is expected seriously to set about the business of marrying. Immediately a new age set is formed, most of its members will be unmarried, and they continue to live, as they did as teru, in cattle camps of age mates apart from the homesteads of the married men. Having no wives, and thus no responsibilities for cultivation, they are able to spend all their time with the cattle. If not exactly constituting a standing army, they are nevertheless a highly mobile defence force and provide scouts and messengers when needed. Herding their cattle out in the Elma Valley, they form, so to speak, a first line of defence for the rest of the population,

living closer in to the bushbelt or at the Omo itself. Since married men have frequently to absorb themselves in agricultural tasks which take them, at least for short periods, away from their cattle, it can be seen that the existence of a class of unmarried men, physically in their prime, must make a vital contribution, both to the security and the economic viability of the society.

The number of unmarried rora, however, is constantly declining, and their cattle camps are therefore being run down all the time. When a man marries, he ceases to live with his age mates and starts to form herding partnerships with affines and kinsmen. He may well have used all his cattle as bridewealth and be forced to subsist entirely on the products of his, and his wife's cultivation areas (men with few or no cattle have their own plots). The transition from the unmarried to the married state brings with it therefore a far more significant change in individual behaviour and life style than the change from teru to rora age status. Becoming a rori (the sing. form of rora) does give a man the right to take part in public discussions but in my experience unmarried rora do so more to contribute information at the request of the older men, than to offer opinions. Thus, as far as actual behaviour is concerned, the transition from teru to rora status, accomplished collectively through the mechanisms of the age organisation, is less important than the transition from the unmarried to the married state, which is accomplished individually and which is not controlled by these mechanisms.

Thus, those men who are occupying the rora grade can, at any one time, be divided into two distinct "sub-grades" - those who are married, whom I shall call "junior elders" and those who are unmarried and who, for want of a better term, might be called "warriors". This is a distinction, however, which is not recognised as such in the nomenclature of the age organisation, although it is clearly evident in behaviour. Married rora play a full part in public discussion of issues affecting the community as a whole and their everyday lives are much affected, as has been indicated, by the interests and responsibilities connected with marriage. This is especially true immediately following marriage. A man who is married after say, the July harvest, will accompany his new wife to the Omo in September to help with clearing and planting, while his unmarried age mates, with whom he had up to now been living in close companionship, move in the opposite direction, with the cattle, into the Elma Valley. A newly married man is unlikely to have sufficient cattle, after having provided his affines with bridewealth, to constitute a viable herd, and will therefore have to satisfy his subsistence needs primarily, if not exclusively, through cultivation until he has built up his herd again. By marrying, therefore, a man exchanges cattle not only for the sexual services and procreative capacity of his wife, but also for her productive labour in the cultivation areas.

While those men who are occupying, at any one time, the rora grade are also members of an age set and are thereby fully adult members of the society, they are not members of a generation set. It is not until a set moves into the bara grade that it is entitled to take a generation set name by which it is ultimately linked to three other sets. When the present day Banna move into the bara grade they will become the first constituent set of a new generation set, taking the name Kirin. This transition is considered to set the seal on jural adulthood - making the individual into a "real" adult (hiri, pl. zuo). Some adults, in other words, are more "adult" than others. Men who occupy the bara grade may be described as "senior elders". They not only take part in discussions and debate, but are expected to make the most eloquent and influential speeches, and since a man's ability to make such a speech depends to a large extent upon his audience's willingness to take him seriously, this expectation is necessarily fulfilled (See Chapter 8). Men who have gained a reputation for eloquence and moderation in debate, and who have thereby become particularly influential in public decision-making, are referred to as jalaba. The conditions under which such influence is exercised and achieved are discussed in Part III, but it is necessary to point out here that the role of jalabai (the singular form) is considered to be a characteristic of the bara grade and that individual rora who show the necessary qualities will be described only as "future jalaba".

It is also necessary to emphasise that while occupants of the bara grade are expected to be, and indeed are, the most influential speakers in public discussion, their ability to exercise influence is not based upon their control of supernatural sanctions. Apart from the Mother's Brother's Curse, which is available to men of all ages, and which is only used in the context of bridewealth distribution (See p. 165 below), there is no Mursi equivalent of the curse wielded by, for example, Samburu elders, to which Spencer attributes "the ultimate power which the elders have over the total community" (1965, p. 184). It is not believed that increasing age brings with it an increased receptivity to, or control over, absolute power, such as Karimojong elders use "to back their decisions" (Dyson-Hudson, 1966, p. 181). The influence which men of the bara grade are assumed to exercise in public decision-making is considered to follow from their possession, because of their age and experience, of certain personal characteristics, which may be summed up as knowledge of, and public conformity to, the traditional norms and practices of the tribe, and the ability to speak well in public.

The seventh and seniormost age grade, called karo, is occupied by the surviving members of sets senior to that which is occupying the bara grade at any one time. It can be seen from the diagram that in 1970 there were two such sets extant, the

senior of which, Gurtu, had very few members indeed. By the time they reach the karo grade, men rarely have the physical stamina necessary to play an active part in public life. But this biological generalisation is, of course, culturally defined by the age grade system. When it moves into the karo grade, a set formally and publicly hands over responsibility for the education of the adolescent members of the society, both male and female, to the set immediately below it. Thus, the karo grade may be described as that of "retired elders". This introduces the important question of the relationships between individuals and groups as defined by the age organisation, and which I intend to approach through a consideration of the ceremonial activity involved. This activity may be classified according to whether it effects the transition of individuals from one grade to the next, or whether it serves only to emphasise the distinct identity of grades and the rights and obligations of seniority and juniority.

The principal transition ceremony of the Mursi age grade system is, predictably, that by means of which a new age set is formed. It is possible to speak of the "formation" rather than of the "opening" of a set, because it gains virtually all its members during a single wet season. It includes all the men in the population who went through a set formation, or "initiation" ceremony during the same wet season. The last time such ceremonies were held was in 1961, so the following description is based upon the accounts of informants and not upon first-hand observation.

The last sentence indicates that a set is not formed by means of a single ceremony. In 1961, the three sections which make up the larger unit called Dola held a common ceremony, while each of the other two sections, Ariholi and Gongulobibi, held their own. The Ariholi section was the first to hold its ceremony, then Gongulobibi and then Dola. This order was said to be observed always, but I was unable to obtain a satisfactory explanation of it. Just after the Omo harvest in January 1961, however, four days of ceremonial duelling took place at Kurum (See Map 5) in which the teru from all sections who were to become rora later in the year participated. This was again said to be normal practice, and the gul at Kurum, which is in the form of a natural amphitheatre and which could clearly accommodate many hundreds of spectators, appears to have a special ritual significance. The three set formation ceremonies took place after the wet-season harvest and I provide now a brief account of the procedures involved, abstracted from my informants' descriptions of the Dola ceremony.

The ceremony takes place over two days and may be divided into four main parts. On the morning of the first day, the initiands construct an enclosure of branches around the base of a large shade tree, similar to a cattle compound, but with two openings. They then leave the scene, and the enclosure gradually fills up with rora and bara, carrying withies. The initiands return in mid-afternoon and are severely beaten with withies

by the rora and bara, outside the enclosure. This concludes the first part of the ceremony. During the beating, the bara take the lead in taunting the initiands with their imperfect behaviour and unworthiness to become "men" (zuo).

The next morning the initiands return to the enclosure, headed by one of their number, chosen by reason of his clan affiliation, who drives an ox and a cow from his own herd. In the Dola ceremony the initiand in question is always of the Juhai clan, while in the Ariholi and Gongulobibi ceremonies, he is of the Komorte and Garakuli clans respectively. The animals are driven to the opening of the enclosure and here the ox is killed by its owner by means of a heavy blow to its head with a stone. This act gives its name, nitha, to the whole set formation ceremony, and is performed on behalf of all the initiands. A man will describe himself as having "killed an ox" in such and such a year, meaning simply that his set was formed then. The cow, the neck of which is hung with several cattle bells, is not killed but allowed to wander off to graze after the killing of the ox. This completes the second part of the ceremony.

The initiands then enter the enclosure and, standing one behind the other, they form a line, stretching through the other gate of the enclosure. They hold over their right shoulders sticks which are lashed together to form a continuous line. One

of the senior bara present then takes a stick and walks down the line of initiands, hitting with his the sticks they hold over their shoulders and repeating as he does so the name of the new set. As he addresses them with their new set name, the initiands reply in unison with his "adult" name - the personal name he took when he became a rori and which should only be used by fellow adults. This completes the third part of the ceremony: the new age set has been formed.

The new rora then cut up and roast the ox for the older men, but do not eat any of it themselves. They go off in small groups and cut strips of bark (joni) from the kalochi (*Grewia*) tree which they bind round their arms, necks, legs and waists in such profusion that they rub together and make a rustling noise when they walk. They then tour the local settlements, showing themselves to the women, girls and boys, and telling them to hide in burrows because the rora, the "lions", are roaming the country.

As soon as a new age set has been formed, the 'donga of each section hold a ceremony known as "cleaning the settlement", in which a sheep is killed and its chyme sprinkled about the settlements and the water holes of the area. The boys thereby become teru. Later they are approached by younger boys of their section who ask to become teru also. The request is at first refused and later acceded to after the 'donga have presented the teru with small gifts (such as necklaces and bracelets) and have

been beaten with withies. Each 'dongai (the singular form) is invested with the new status by an individual teri who ties a plaited cord of sheep or calf skin round the younger boy's waist - this being the only adornment distinctive of the teru grade. This ceremony establishes a permanent relationship between the senior boys and those they have invested with teru status. The senior teru, those who, so to speak, let themselves in to the teru grade by "cleaning the settlement", are referred to as teru juge (teru "mothers") while those they have promoted are teru wheya (teru "children"). This is not just a collective relationship but one between individuals bringing about an important addition to the range of links a man has with non-kin. A man expects his teri "mother" to make a contribution towards his first bridewealth payment and this is eventually returned by means of a cow from the bridewealth payment of a daughter of this first marriage. While there is a prohibition on marriage with the daughter of any age mate, this appears to be stringently observed only in the case of marriage with the daughter of the man who personally admitted one to the teru grade.

Later, another batch of boys will be admitted to the teru grade, by the same process, and become teru "children". The previous teru wheya are then lumped together with the senior teru and become teru "mothers". Then, a day or two before a new age set is to be formed, and all the teru moved into the rora grade,

the oldest among the 'donga (boys of about 16 years) are "scooped up" to spend no more than two days as teru before becoming rora almost literally overnight. The teru grade is therefore built up gradually over the years intervening between the formation of successive sets, and then moved "en masse" into the grade of rora. The order of seniority which is thus set up within the teru grade is the basis of a threefold division of all age sets. Thus, the senior members of the present Benna set are the men who "cleaned the settlement" in 1936 when the Yoiya set was formed, and they are still referred to as teru juge. Included with them are those men who became teru next, by means of the cord (mossai) tying ceremony about 1941. The second subdivision of the Benna set consists of those who became teru next, in 1956, while the third group, called rora wheya (rora "children") are those who were pushed straight from 'donga to rora status in 1961.

The relatively wide age span of sets makes some temporal subdivisions of its members predictable, and in other East African societies where age sets are of sufficient span to produce subdivisions, these are usually based upon the fact that their members have joined them in small groups at different times. The Mursi, however, do not see their age sets as being constituted gradually over a period of years by means of separate small additions to their membership, but as being made up of men who become members

of their set together, during the course of a single wet season. The temporal subdivisions of an age set are therefore a reflection of the differential transition of its members, not into the set itself, but into the grade immediately below that at which a set comes into existence - the teru grade.

It is possible, however, for new members to be added to a set in the years after it has been formed, until such time as a "cutting" ceremony is performed. This last is said to take place "normally" two to four years after the main promotion of teru to rora status and the conferring on them of an age set name. Thus, the present Yoiya became rora in 1936 and their set was "cut" in 1938. It should be noted that the Mursi do not speak of a set (ten) but of a 'buran being "cut". The newly created rora of each section are thought of as forming a local group, since they live together, normally it seems in one cattle camp. It is these local groups of unmarried age mates who take part in duelling contests. As I have said, these groups are constantly on the wane from the time a new set is formed, since their members are marrying and taking up residence with kinsmen and affines. They are therefore temporary groups and for this reason I do not use the term "age group" of them, since it is probably most useful to confine this to permanent local groups of age mates such as Gulliver describes among the Arusha (1963; also 1968, p.159). While a 'buran a roroin, as it is called, loses members as they marry, it may also gain

members who join it individually, or at most in groups of three to five at a time, until it is "cut". While this cutting ceremony took place for the Yoiya set two years after it was formed, it has not yet been performed for the Benna and in the 1969 wet season to my knowledge three young Dola men, aged between 20 and 25, became members of this set.

We thus have the first indication of a discrepancy between norm and practice such has become by now a well documented feature of East African age organisations. And the explanation given by the people is also a familiar one. The Benna say that they have wanted to carry out the ceremony for several years, but that it has constantly proved impossible to do so, due to some public misfortune or other, beginning just after the set was formed, in the latter part of 1961, with a disastrous rinderpest epidemic. As the reader has perhaps begun to suspect by now, what with crop failures due to the highly unreliable rainfall, cattle disease and hostile neighbours, the Mursi are unlikely to be wanting, for long, some more or less serious public misfortune. The last "cutting" ceremony, furthermore, is reported to have taken place during the Italian occupation, just after many of the Mursi's cattle had been rounded up by Amhara partisans in order that the occupying forces should not be able to use them to augment their supplies. Thus, the Mursi's explanation for the delay in "cutting" the Benna set cannot easily be accepted.

This question needs to be considered in the light of two other apparent discrepancies between norm and practice in the age organisation.

One of these concerns the number of years which elapsed between the formation of the Yoiya and Benna sets. There is no rule fixing the ideal interval between the formation of successive sets, but all the current members of the Kera set I asked agreed that they were in the rora grade for ten years, which would place their set formation ceremony about 1925. There are still living some members of the Gurtu set, and if these are assumed to be the youngest members of their set, having become rora at the earliest possible age of about 16, the Gurtu ceremony can be placed roughly in 1910. This is as far back as it is possible to go without ^grelapsing into pure guesswork. What does seem to be clear, and what all my informants were agreed upon, is that the senior members of the present Benna set occupied the teru grade for an "unusually" long time, unusual, that is, by comparison with the three other extant sets. The same explanation is given for this as is offered to account for the delay in holding a "cutting" ceremony for the Benna.

The third "discrepancy" to be noted concerns a ceremony known as "cutting the cow's neck", held to mark the completion of a generation set. It should be held soon after the fourth and

last set of a generation set joins it, by reaching the bara grade. It can be seen from Fig. 6 that the Yoiya set joined and completed the Gamal generation set in 1961. But the ceremony to mark this fact has not yet been carried out. Indeed, it is now considered unlikely that it ever will, since it is about 60 years since it was last performed and there is no one alive who has sufficient knowledge of the procedures involved. Since no one I spoke to had witnessed the ceremony, I am only able to give the barest of outline descriptions of it. It takes place within a specially constructed enclosure of branches at a place called Ten, at the Omo, which is in the "stomach" of the country, about eight miles north of the point where the Mursi say they first forded the river from the right bank. All the bara in the population attend. The cow is killed in the enclosure, and its head severed completely from its body. Unmarried girls, whose lips have been pierced and fully stretched, so that they are able to be married (the Mursi say that 17 is the minimum age at which a girl marries) also enter the enclosure with the bara, and provide them with bunna¹. The significance of this is that members of the now completed generation set may, in the future, marry only those girls who have entered the enclosure with them, and their age mates. Younger girls are, in other words, reserved for the rora. Thus, if this ceremony had been carried out in 1962, after the Yoiya had joined and completed the Gamal generation set, the present day bara

1. See below, p. 182

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would be unable to marry girls below the age of approximately 27.

The only further piece of information that is required to account for these three apparent divergences from the norm - to show, in fact, that they are built in to the system - concerns the nature of the relationship between the occupants of adjacent and alternate age grades: between alternate grades there exists a father-son ideology, while between adjacent grades there exists a relationship of openly expressed hostility. I will show how these relationships are expressed in ceremonial later. For the moment, I merely wish to point out that the bara are described as the "fathers" of the teru, and that the giving of adult status to a new group of adolescents is their prerogative: "Hirimwe aje bara song" ("only the bara give adulthood"). The teru therefore have to obtain permission to become rora from their "fathers", the bara.

To return now to the 25-year interval between the formation of the Yoiya and Benna sets, which I take to be approximately twice as long as the average interval between the formation of the three previous sets, it can be seen that to obtain this result a kind of "alliance" must have occurred between the Kera and Yoiya sets. This is so because, by holding up the promotion to rora status of the present Benna set, the Kera also prolonged, at the expense of the Yoiya, the period during which they occupied the grade of

publicly influential "senior elders". But, on the assumption that a "cutting of the cow's neck" ceremony would be held as soon as the Yoiya became bara, it was clearly in the interests of the Yoiya, as far as their marriage opportunities were concerned, to remain in the rora grade for as long as possible, thereby also prolonging the period during which the Kera could enjoy the status of "senior elders". The only losers were the present Benna: they were prevented from moving forward earlier to the rora grade because this was in the interests neither of the Kera nor of the Yoiya. The implication is, therefore, that the regular progression of the teru to rora status depends not so much upon the pressure they are able to exert on their "fathers", the bara, as upon the relationship between the latter and the intervening grade of rora. There is clearly institutionalised hostility between the members of adjacent age grades, as will be shown below, but it is suggested that in the case of the last two age sets of a generation set this hostility is offset by other factors which lead the two sets in question to institute an "unholy alliance" against the teru. If this is so, one would expect a longer interval to occur between the formation of the last two sets of a generation set than would occur between the formation of the first and second and between the second and third.

As for the failure to carry out a cutting ceremony for the Benna, this can also be seen as advantageous to the present

bara. This cutting ceremony requires the cooperation of the bara, since duelling contests between the rora and the bara appear to form an important part of the proceedings. (Here ceremonial duelling takes place between members of different grades, and of the same section, which is the opposite of what I have so far described in Chapters 1 and 2. I was concerned there, however, with annually recurring contests. This age grade ceremony also provides an instance of duelling by married men. Since I did not witness the ceremony in question, I am not clear in what other ways it might differ from the contests I described in Chapter 1 and with which I am principally concerned in this thesis). Until a cutting ceremony has been performed, an age set is not formally constituted. I use this rather vague expression because while there is a definite sense in which an "uncut" set has not fully "arrived", it is difficult to attach much significance to this in terms of actual behaviour. In a purely technical sense, the members of the present Benna set are still "lusa" and they are occasionally taunted with this by the bara, at public meat eatings, for example, when they may attempt to use this as an excuse for keeping various pieces of the rora's meat for themselves. But this is no more than a joke.

Finally, the Yoiya have not carried out their own cutting ceremony, notwithstanding the relatively long time they spent as rora. They have therefore been able to acquire the advantages of

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a senior grade without losing those of a junior one: they have become bara, but the rora remain technically lusa. They have become members of a completed generation set, but the number of unmarried girls available to them as potential wives has not been limited. Table 5 shows the incidence of polygamy among the 389 married men in the census, and it is clearly comparable to figures given for other East African pastoralists who have been described as maintaining high rates of polygamy. Gulliver finds an average number of wives per man in his total Turkana sample of 1.8 and, for men over the age of 40, of 2.9, while for the Jie his figures are 1.6 for all men and 2.3 for those over 45 (1955, pp. 242-243). Spencer's settlement census among the Samburu shows 1.47 wives per elder, while his clan census and tax-book census show 1.64 and 1.49 wives per elder respectively, (1965, p.321). The Mursi figure, however, is probably too high, by comparison with those given for these other groups. In the first place, my census consisted of a total enumeration of a particular population and was in no way a random sample. In the second place, it only contains married men while both Spencer's and Gulliver's figures are based on a sample which included unmarried males. In the third place, the 645 married women in my census included 42 who had been inherited by their current husbands.

Bearing these qualifications in mind, I think it can still be seen that the Mursi have a fairly high rate of polygamy,

Table 5 : Incidence of Polygamy

Approximate Age	Number of Wives							Total Men	Total Wives	Wives/Men
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
20 - 30	21	1	-	-	-	-	-	22	23	1.05
30 - 40	142	48	4	2	1	-	-	197	263	1.33
40 - 50	26	39	7	3	1	-	-	76	142	1.89
50 - 60	10	25	16	3	1	-	-	55	125	2.27
60 - 70	6	9	7	3	2	1	-	28	73	2.60
70+	6	2	3	-	-	-	-	11	19	1.72
TOTAL	211	124	37	11	5	1	-	389	645	1.66

notwithstanding the fact that restrictions are not imposed by the age organisation on the marriages of younger men. The restrictions that are imposed apply to older men, which gives them, in certain circumstances, an interest in delaying the rate at which their juniors move through the system. But such delays do not, of themselves, prevent these younger men from marrying. Table 5 suggests, however, that men continue to take new wives after they have become bara at a fairly high rate. Some explanation for this must obviously be found outside the mechanisms of the age organisation. Demographic factors, namely a higher death rate among male children and young men, may go some of the way towards explaining the figures, especially in a population where cattle raiding and war, famine and disease are totally unchecked and uncontrolled by external administrative agencies. But I was not able to collect the sort of statistics which could test such a hypothesis and none are available from any other source.

The simple fact that the age of marriage is later for men than for women is probably highly significant. Paul Spencer and Monica Wilson have both pointed out that such an expedient can enable older men to practise polygamy on a wide scale (Spencer, 1965, p.96; Wilson, 1951, p.14). The only figures I have to bear out my impression that Mursi men marry considerably later than do Mursi women is that only 22 of the 389 married men in the census

were under the approximate age of 30. But there are fairly obvious logical grounds to suggest that this impression is correct. In the first place, a girl is considered to have reached marriageable age when she is 17 years old, and the Mursi assume that most girls are married soon after puberty. In the second place, there are good reasons to believe that this assumption is correct. For, while the need to collect bridewealth may clearly delay the time at which a man is able to marry, he gains no particular advantage by delaying the marriage of his daughter or sister. On the contrary, her bridewealth cattle will swell his herd and make it easier for him to obtain a wife of his own. The longer a girl remains unmarried after puberty, furthermore, the greater are the chances that she will be impregnated, possibly by a man with few or no cattle. Although the Mursi place no value on pre-marital chastity, the chance impregnation of a girl (no system of birth control is practised) for whom bridewealth has not been paid is considered by her close patrilineal kinsmen as an injury which has to be compensated for. Illegitimate offspring belong legally to their genitors, on payment of a certain number of cattle,¹ but they have to remain with their mothers until weaned.

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1. For a male child of three years, the payment is three head of cattle, while for an eleven to twelve year old boy, it is six head.

girls?

In general, it may be said that such eventualities reduce the extent to which a girl's marriage can be controlled by those patrilineal kinsmen who have an interest in it, and are consequently looked upon as highly undesirable. From the point of view of these kinsmen, a girl can be married to most advantage soon after puberty.

It seems to me that these factors alone may account for the observed rate of polygamy. It is clearly necessary, for such an explanation to be convincing, that, whatever the ideal bridewealth payment may be, it should in practice amount to as much as an individual can afford, and that it should be a once-and-for-all payment. As will be explained in the next chapter, these conditions hold for the Mursi. In such pastoral societies as the Samburu, where they do not hold, it may be necessary for a certain segment of the male population to be prohibited from marrying on the basis of age. Necessary for what? Not only in order to allow older men to practice polygamy, but also to ensure that there will, at any one time, be sufficient unmarried, but physically mature, men available to provide for the security and economic viability of the society. (Not only, in the case of the Mursi, physically but also socially mature, in the sense of being able to take part in public decision-making, even if only to contribute information, and in the sense of being treated as responsible executors of the community's decisions).

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Thus, as far as the Mursi are concerned, the rate at which age sets are formed is probably related to the development of two different types of anomaly. The first of these results from the fact that as more and more rora marry, their important economic and security roles are being necessarily assumed by the teru, who, as jural minors, are ^{not allowed} ~~unable~~ to open their mouths at public debates. The second anomaly results from the fact that, there being no age restriction on marriage, the longer the interval between the formation of succeeding age sets, the more teru will have married and assumed the responsibilities and preoccupations consequent upon marriage, while being debarred from participation in public decision-making. It is certainly not the demands of younger men to be allowed to marry which bring about the formation of a new set.

I come now to those age grade ceremonies which, I said earlier, serve to "emphasise the distinct identity of grades and the rights and obligations of seniority and juniority". I am concerned here with just one type of ceremony, which consists in the giving of gifts by the occupants of a junior to the occupants of a senior grade, and in the beating of the juniors by the seniors. The grades in question are those of 'donga and rora and teru and bara. Just as the bara are described as the "fathers" of the teru, so the rora are described as the "fathers" of the 'donga. There is no rule stating that one set should intervene between those

of father and son, but with a 10-15 year interval between the formation of successive sets, this is clearly a likely result. There is certainly no rule, for example, that at any one time the actual fathers of the teru should not be occupying the bara grade.

Immediately following the harvest, in both December-January and June-July, the 'donga go in large groups into the cultivation areas and collect the decapitated sorgham^u stalks, which are called ulsho. They carry back bundles of these stalks to the settlements and deposit them under a convenient shade tree. These ulsho are for the rora who will assemble at the tree in the evenings and during the day to chew the stalks for the sake of their sugar content. The supply is replenished by the 'donga over the next few days until the fields are cleared. For two or three evenings running the 'donga of the local settlements, who collected the stalks, kneel in a compact group at the tree, facing the rora, who accuse them, sometimes mildly and sarcastically, sometimes heatedly and angrily, of failing to carry out the duties of their state, and especially of not showing sufficient respect to their "fathers", the rora. One or two boys, among the oldest of the group of 'donga, are singled out for special attention. They are made to kneel at the front of their age mates, and while they are being harangued, their companions are subjected to hard cuts from the withies with which the rora have armed themselves. Each boy carries a duelling pole with which he defends himself as best he can, but he neither moves from his kneeling position nor retaliates.



a) Boys of the Gongulobibi section
carrying sorghum stalks back to the
cattle settlements, July 1970.



b) Sorghum stalks stacked outside
a cattle settlement.

Photograph 14.

The attitudes of the two sides to this encounter are, as might be expected, in sharp contrast. For the 'donga, who may receive blows hard enough to leave permanent scars, the experience is not an enjoyable one and their facial expressions show a smouldering resentment and indignation which belies the outwardly submissive position they are forced to adopt. The rora, on the other hand, derive great amusement from ridiculing the boys, tripping them up in what amounts to cross-examination, and landing blows when they are least expected. Apart from this giving of ulsho by the 'donga to the rora immediately after the dry- and wet-season harvests, other occasions for carrying out the ceremony (described as "the kneeling of the boys") may be found. The 'donga may be told by the rora to go out on honey collecting expeditions, and to bring them so many gourds of honey. Or, if honey is in short supply, the 'donga may kill a sheep or a goat to provide the rora with meat. Photograph 15 shows a "kneeling" ceremony which took place at Ngurug on the 31st August 1970. The 'donga on this occasion provided the rora with a sheep.

The same ceremonies take place between the bara and the teru, although the gifts are different. The teru, since they live with the cattle, to the care of which all their time is devoted, are not associated with cultivation, as are the younger boys. Sorgham stalks are therefore not an appropriate gift for them to present to the bara, and instead they provide honey or meat - a



Photograph 15:

A group of 'donga kneeling before
the rora, Mara section, September
1970.

large stock animal, though, rather than a sheep or goat. The most characteristic gift of the teru to the bara, however, is girari. This is tape-worm medicine, made by crushing in water the bark of a tree (*Olea Africana*) of the same name. In order to obtain this bark, the teru have to go on an arduous expedition to uninhabited mountain areas outside the boundaries of Mursi country. The tree does not grow below an altitude of 4000 feet, and the passion of the Mursi for inner cleanliness, coupled with the violence done to the tree to obtain this particular remedy, has insured its virtual disappearance from the Mursi Mountains - the only part of their country high enough for it to grow. These expeditions of the teru are made at least twice a year, just before the harvest. All the bark is presented to the bara, who distribute some to the women and some to the rora. All these presentations - of honey, meat and girari - are made the occasions for kneeling ceremonies such as I have described above, but I was only able to witness the rora-'donga ceremonies.

It is said that without these ceremonies, expressing the submission of the occupants of a junior to the occupants of a senior grade, the young would become disobedient and disrespectful. They would not carry out such irksome duties as going to fetch water for a guest who arrives late at night, giving milk to an old woman, or collecting firewood and doing the cooking at a meat-eating. The occupants of the senior grade, therefore, see themselves as charged

with responsibilities for the socialization of the occupants of the junior grade, responsibilities which are expressed in terms of the father-son ideology. The violence involved is "paternal", in the sense that it represents the restraints imposed by society on the individual, and the realization that acceptance of these restraints cannot be taken for granted but has to be learnt. It will be remembered that supernatural sanctions are not involved in the maintenance of social control in general, nor in the maintenance of a respectful attitude to their elders among the young.

The bara are seen as being responsible not only for the socialization of the teru but also for that of the unmarried girls, of whom they are also said to be the "fathers". Just as the 'donga take sorgham stalks to the rora following the harvest, so the girls take them to the bara, and are similarly harangued and beaten with withies. At weddings also, the bara harangue and beat the unmarried girls present at a certain stage in the proceedings (See page 198 below). This, together with the meaning of the "cutting of the cow's neck" ceremony explained earlier, indicates an ideal expectation that, having reached the bara grade, a man will take no further wives. In theory, a man should not marry the daughter of an age mate, although in practice this appears to be observed only in the case of an age mate who admitted one into the teru grade (See page 136 above). Thus, if the bara are the "fathers" of the unmarried girls,

they cannot, ideally, marry them. The haranguing and beating of these girls by the bara at weddings appears to underline this fact. The occupants of the bara grade are therefore charged with responsibility for the satisfactory behaviour of those members of the population, both male and female, who are, so to speak, poised on the brink of full adulthood.

The relationship between adjacent grades is characterised, I have said, by "openly expressed hostility", the means by which such hostility is expressed being the duelling pole. An example of this has already been provided in the duelling that takes place between rora and bara as part of the ceremony by which an age set is "cut" (See page 144 above). Hostility between the occupants of adjacent grades is most clearly evident, however in the relationship between rora and teru, this hostility being institutionalised by means of an annual "raid" made by the rora on the teru cattle camps.

The rora, carrying duelling poles, and some of them dressed in tumoga, descend on the teru camps in force (they are said to resemble a stream in spate, which accounts for the use of the word taan to describe this procedure) and carry off such of their personal belongings - milking utensils, bark-cloth, cattle bells - as they can lay their hands on. The last time such a raid took place was in January 1969, and people told me that it would indeed

be the last. This was because, on that occasion, the institution proved unable to contain the hostility it expressed and generated: the teru replied not with duelling poles but with rifles, and one teri and rori were killed, and two rora wounded.

Thus, duelling, the territorial organisation and the age organisation are clearly interrelated institutions. Both duelling, and the division of the population on the basis of local contiguity hold their greatest significance for the unmarried. As men marry, they cease to live with their section agemates and to take part in inter-section duelling contests. They gain wider interests and preoccupations which transcend the spatial divisions of the population described earlier. As a man grows older, he becomes a member of groupings of age mates of ever wider temporal span. Several successive "entries" of 'donga' make up the occupants of the teru grade who are advanced to the rora grade by means of a single ceremony, while on becoming a bara a man also becomes a member of a generation set, with a span of 60 years. Although a set continues to be known, after it has reached the bara grade, by its sara nithain, its age set name, it can also now be referred to by its sara idoin - its "joint", or generation set name. The ceremony by which a generation set is formally closed, it will be remembered, is the only tribe-wide ceremony of the age organisation - all the bara in the population attend it. Thus, a generation set, the most inclusive grouping based on time produced by the age grade

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system, also corresponds to the most inclusive spatial grouping of the population - the 'buran a munoin'. Age set formation ceremonies, on the other hand, emphasise the division of the society into sections - although the three northern sections hold a common ceremony.

It is through marriage, which most men achieve while occupying the rora grade, that the transition to these "wider horizons" is achieved. A man may indeed marry a girl of a different section and take up residence with her close patrilineal kinsmen. But he will certainly cease to live with his unmarried age mates and any involvement he has in ceremonial duelling contests will be as a "referee". It will be seen in Part III how duelling among the unmarried can become a focus of the opposition between the adolescent members of the society and established authority - the latter being represented by the bara. Duelling is something which married men - especially the bara - seek to control, and indeed do control in the capacity of referees. In Part II, however, I turn to the question of how actual conflicts of interest are controlled - conflicts which may also be expressed in duelling, but in which there are real stakes, and which may not therefore be described as "play". I will be concerned, therefore, with the settlement of individual disputes, and with the arrangements which most typically govern everyday relations of economic cooperation and co-residence. It will be seen that the "real life" referees of Mursi society are women.

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PART II: REFERENCES

Chapter 4: Marriage Practices

I have already indicated that genealogically defined groups among the Mursi are of relatively narrow span, being commonly based upon the grandfathers of current adult males. I have also noted that individual family heads, with their wives and children, form only ideally autonomous units of production and consumption (See above, p. 48). In the next chapter I will analyse the intra-settlement relationships existing between the married men of a particular cattle settlement, in order to demonstrate the importance of marriage links in everyday relations of economic cooperation and co-residence. In Chapter 6, I consider what happens when such relationships are disrupted by conflicting claims to property and by homicide, and describe the use made of affinal and matrilineal ties in the procedures by which the parties to a dispute are reconciled. I will be concerned throughout to demonstrate the positive significance¹ in Mursi social organisation of relationships created through marriage.

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1. As opposed, that is, to the negative significance which has frequently been attributed to the rule that near relatives cannot marry: namely, that it has a divisive effect on the unilineal kin group, by providing its members with conflicting affinal allegiances.

It is necessary to begin by describing in this chapter the marriage practices of the Mursi. Marriage is achieved, above all, by means of a transfer of stock which represents the most important economic transaction that any individual is likely to be involved in. This transaction takes place in accordance with a set of rules which define not only the recipients of bridewealth but also the effective limits of the genealogical reckoning of descent and the degree of prohibited marriage. I therefore describe first the conventional rules governing bridewealth distribution, and provide some examples of how they are followed in practice. Having shown how the rules serve to mark off a range of prohibited marital unions, I go on, in the final part of the chapter, to describe the negotiations which precede marriage, and the ceremonies by which it is accomplished.

The rules governing the distribution of bridewealth are stated by informants on the assumption that the total payment will consist of 38 head of cattle. These cattle are to be distributed among the representatives of eight patrilineages, corresponding to the bride's eight great grandparents (Figure 7). On the bride's mother's side, which the Mursi refer to as "the female stream" (tan a ngaha), these are her classificatory MBs (ten head), MMBs (three head), ~~MMBs~~ (one head) and MFMBs (one head). On her father's side (tan a ma), the number of cattle due to her own patrilineal kinsmen, given an ideal total and an ideal pattern of distribution,

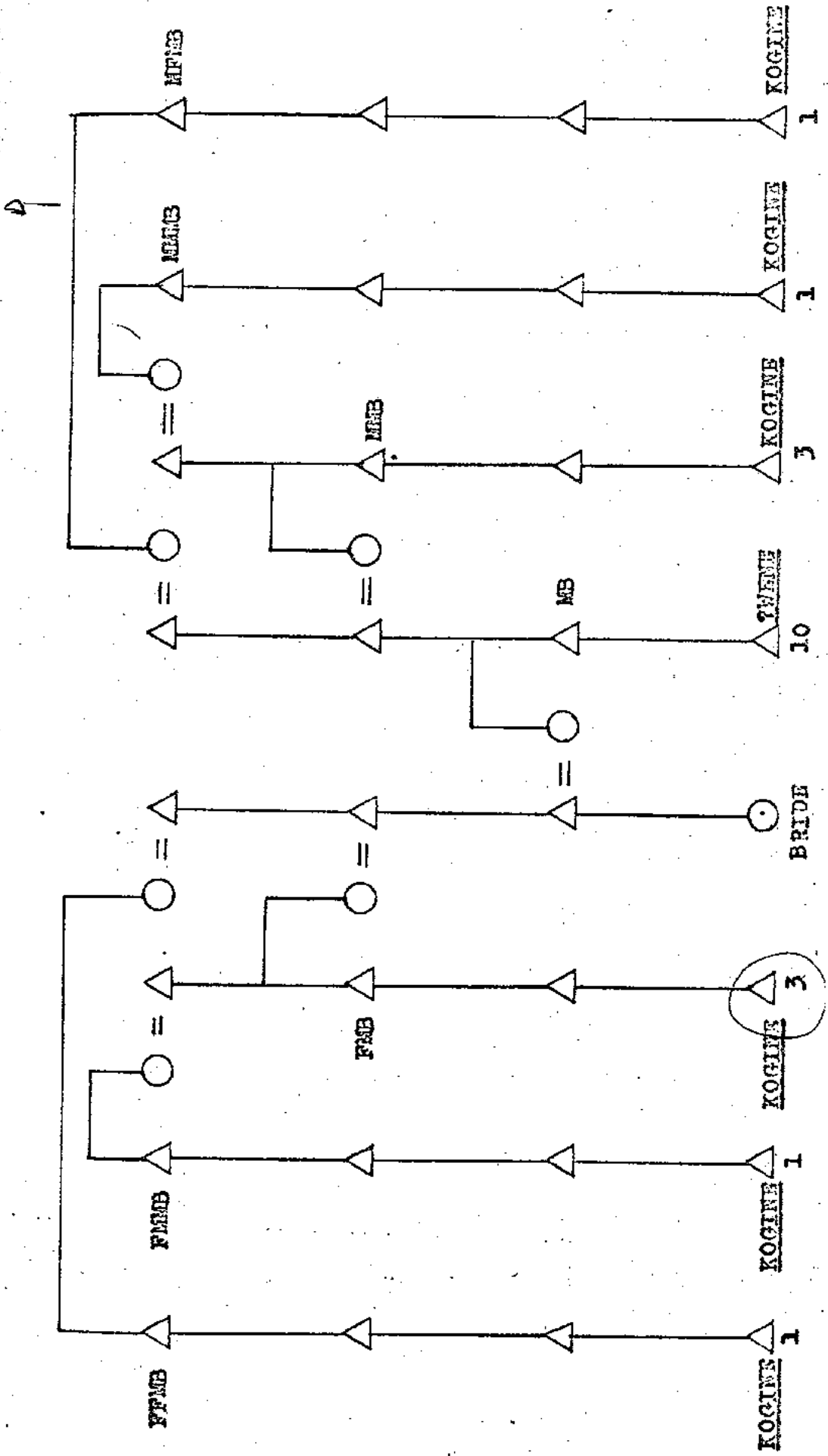


Fig. 7 : Ideal distribution of bridewealth cattle among "zuo a mojan"

will be 18, but such a figure is not formally specified by the rules, for reasons which will be explained below. The three remaining patrilineages are those of the bride's FMB (three head, FMMB (one head) and FFMB (one head).

The rules therefore specify categories of kin, rather than particular individuals, and this is consistent with the nature of Mursi kinship terminology, which is of the Omaha type.¹ Thus, all the patrilineal kinsmen of the bride's mother, of the latter's own and descending generations, are her ?wege² (sing. ?wene) and all the sisters and daughters of these men are identified with her own mother by means of the term juge (sing. jone). The ten cattle which are due to the ?wene may therefore be distributed among several men whose actual genealogical relationship to the bride could be MB, MFBS, MBS, or even MBSS, priority in claiming these cattle being exercised in accordance with the closeness of genealogical link to the bride and seniority in patrilineal descent.

The patrilineal kinsman of the bride's maternal grandmother, of the latter's own and descending generations, are koige (sing. kogine) of the bride, and the representatives of this descent line have a right to three cattle of bridewealth, having taken (ideally) ten from the

1. That is: MB = MFBS = MBS = MBSS, and M = MZ = MED.
A full list of Mursi relationship terms, together with their genealogical specifications, is given in Appendix 3.

2. ? signifies a glottal stop.

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bridewealth of the bride's mother. Since the bride's actual MMB is almost certain to be dead, these cattle are normally taken by a MMBS or MMBSS, such a man being described as "a three cow kogine" (kogine a bio ko sizzi).

The patrilineal kinsmen of the bride's mother's maternal grandmother, of the latter's own and descending generations, are also koige of the bride, and have a right to receive one cow of bridewealth, having received three from that of the bride's mother and ten from that of her grandmother. A patrilineal descendant of the bride's MMB is therefore described as "a one cow kogine" (kogine a bi 'done), as also is a patrilineal descendant of her MFMB - a member, that is, of the patrilineal descent group of her mother's paternal grandmother.

Thus, on the bride's mother's side, 15 head of cattle are, ideally, earmarked for the representatives of four separate patrilineal lines, the lion's share going to the representatives of that line to which the bride is linked at the first ascending generation - her classificatory mother's brothers. It can be seen from Figure 7 that the three patrilineal lines of koige on the mother's side are balanced exactly on the father's side by the patrilineal descendants of her FMB (three head), FMFB (one head) and FFMB (one head). A total of 20 cattle is therefore due to the representatives of seven separate patrilineal lines, to whom the bride is related by at least one female link. Given an ideal payment of 38 cattle, therefore, this would leave 18 animals to be distributed among the bride's own patrilineal

kinsmen. But the claims of the latter are not given numerical specification by the rules, for they are residual to those of the representatives of the other seven patriline. The claims which are formally specified, therefore, are those which come from outside the bride's patrilineal descent group, and these have both logical and chronological priority. For if these claimants are not satisfied they can, by means of a curse, either cause the bride to be infertile, or bring about the death of any child she might bear. In the latter case, it is said, the child dies of a disease, the principal symptom of which is continual salivation, which accounts for the fact that all claimants to bridewealth other than the bride's own patrilineal kinsmen are termed "people of the saliva" (zuo a modain).

These, then, are the formal rules. All I wish to emphasise at this point is that they give prominence to claims which originate from outside the bride's own patrilineal descent group. The cattle paid in settlement of these claims may clearly be regarded as deferred payments for seven previous marriages - those of the bride's F, FF, FFF, FMF, MF, MFF and MMF. Each marriage may therefore be seen as a link in a chain of debts¹, debts which are thought of as existing not between particular individuals, but between different sets of patri-kin. Thus, the rules require that more than half the total number of cattle handed over should be used to pay off debts resulting from

1. M. Glickman (1972) has developed the same point for the Nuer.

previous marriages. But even the cattle which remain after the zuo a modain have been satisfied are not necessarily all "eaten"¹ by the bride's own patrilineal kinsmen, for these men have to meet other claims coming principally from men in the bridewealth of whose sisters they have a right to share - the descendants, that is, of their patrilineal kinswomen up to the third ascending generation (Figure 9).

These claims, being neither formally specified by the rules nor backed by the sanction of the curse, allow greater room for manoeuvre on the part of that kinsman of the bride - typically her father, or, in the event of the latter's death, her brother - who is responsible for the division of her bridewealth. He is able to play these claimants off against each other, to send some away empty-handed with the assurance that he would have helped them if others had not made their requests earlier, and even to engage in the short-term subterfuge of pretending, with the cooperation of the groom and his people, that the bridewealth is smaller than it is. But the mere fact that such tactics are employed indicates that claims of this type, based as they are on reciprocal rights to bridewealth, cannot be completely ignored, even though they are not backed by supernatural sanctions. They have to be seen to be

1. A man is said to "eat" cattle which are owed to him, whether or not in the context of bridewealth.

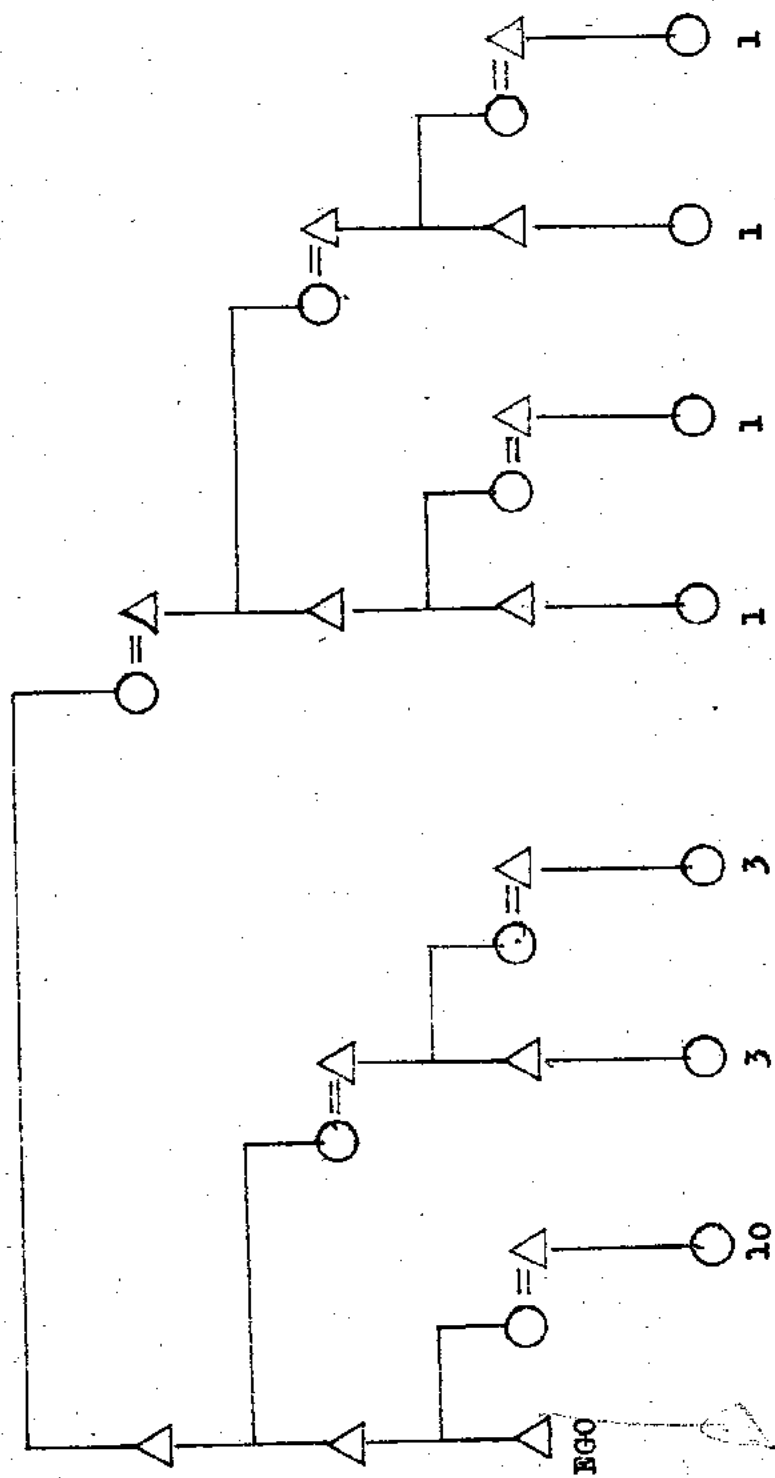


Fig 8 : Women in whose bridewealth a man has a right to share, but who are not patrilineally related to him.

respected, and to be given at least minimal recognition in practice. From another point of view, of course, this aspect of bridewealth distribution allows the bride's father to pick out for special recognition particular relationships from a number of possibilities. I now give some examples of bridewealth distribution, in order that the reader may gain some idea of the way in which the rules I have been describing are accommodated in practice, for I did not come across a single instance in which this accommodation was complete.

Table 6 shows the recipients, specified genealogically in relation to the bride, of the bridewealth paid by Ulichagi (See above, p. 86 and Figure 4) in 1967 for his junior wife (his senior wife having been inherited from an elder brother). There were clearly a number of discrepancies here from the rules I have given above. Firstly, the bridewealth did not reach the ideal total. Indeed, I came across no instance in which it did, although informants often stated that they had paid 38 head of cattle for their wives. Close questioning always revealed that the actual number was lower than this, though always an even one, and in those cases in which I was able to obtain a detailed specification of the animals involved, these never consisted of cattle alone. When it is agreed by the bride's people that a goat or a sheep should be included in the bridewealth, such an animal counts as, even though it is not economically equivalent to, a large stock animal, which, depending

Genealogical Specification In Relation To Bride	Description of Stock	Total Stock	
MB	2 cows with their calves, a bull and a goat	7	16
MMB	2 cows with their calves	4	
MMM	None		
MPMB	None		
FMB	A cow with its calf and a bull	3	
FM	A cow	1	
FFMB	A calf	1	
FB	3 cows with their calves, a bull, a cow, a calf and an ox	10	
BI	A cow with its calf and a bull	3	
BII	2 cows and a calf	3	
		32	

Table 6 : Distribution of Bridewealth
 of Ulichagi's Junior Wife

upon its size, would be worth between four and twelve goats. Small stock do not, therefore, form part of bridewealth in their own right, but only as symbolic substitutes for cattle: their inclusion is a way of "stretching" the actual total in the direction of an ideal payment which is always stated in terms of large stock. In the example just given, the bridewealth would be described initially by an informant as consisting of 32 cattle, and it would only be when these "cattle" were enumerated that it would transpire that one of them was a goat. Another acceptable substitute, in this case for its conventional economic equivalent of four head of cattle, is a rifle.

A second departure from the rules to be noted in this example is that the classificatory MBs of the bride received only seven head of stock, instead of the ten specified by the rules. This was explained by reference both to the less than ideal size of the total bridewealth payment, and to the fact that these relatives had taken their full share of ten cattle from the bridewealth of the bride's eldest sister. She also had an unmarried, sixteen year old sister, and it was said that her MBs would again take ten cattle from this girl's bridewealth. Thirdly, the genealogical specification "MMB" (in this case represented by an actual MMBs) accounted in this example for four cattle, one more than the due of a "three cow kogine". This was explained by the fact that the individual in question had taken only six cattle from the bridewealth of the

bride's mother, his classificatory ZD. Thus, not only do the rules of bridewealth distribution cause each marriage to become a link in a chain of indebtedness, but the way in which a particular bridewealth payment is distributed will depend upon the way in which previous payments - notably for the bride's mother and/or elder sisters - were distributed.

Fourthly, in the example given above, the representatives of only six patrilineages, including that of the bride herself, are involved, no cattle having been distributed to the patrilineal descendants of the bride's MMB and MFMB. This was explained by the statement that these two descent lines had become extinct ('due) by the time of the marriage in question. I did not come across a single instance of bridewealth distribution in which this was not said of at least one descent line specified by the rules, usually that of a "one cow kogine" - a relative, that is, whose right to claim a cow of bridewealth depends upon a previous marriage which took place at the level of the third generation above that of the bride. Since descent is rarely reckoned beyond the grandfathers of living adults, it is clear that at the level of this third ascending generation there will be an area of ambiguity which will allow some room for manoeuvre on the part of the bride's father - or whichever patrilineal relative is responsible for the distribution of her bridewealth.

Table 7 shows the way in which the bridewealth of Gowa's dead brother's daughter, who married Aholi (See above, pp. 86-7) and

Genealogical Specification In Relation To Bride		Description of Stock	Total Stock
MB		2 cows with their calves, a calf, a bull and a goat	7
MMB		None	
MMMB		None	
MFMB		A cow	1
FMB		A cow with its calf and a sheep	3
FMFB		An ox	1
FFMB		A calf	1
FZDS		A cow	1
ZS		A cow	1
FBS		A bull	1
FB (Gowa)		5 cows with their calves, 2 oxen, 2 bulls, 2 cows, and 2 calves	18
			34

Table 7: Distribution of Bridewealth
of Aholi's Junior Wife

Figure 4) in 1966, was distributed. It can be seen that no provision was made for the relatives of the bride specified genealogically as MMB and MMMB. This was accounted for by the fact that the bride's mother was of Bume origin, these being a people with whom the Mursi are, at the best of times, in a state of uneasy peace, and with whom they do not normally intermarry. The patrilineal relatives of the bride's mother and maternal grandmother, who were all resident in Bume country at the time of my fieldwork, were not, consequently, individuals with whom it was advantageous for the bride's descent group to maintain an effective link through continuing economic transactions.

The bride's FZDS (to whom her father stood as a "one cow kogine") received a cow from her bridewealth, not only in recognition of this genealogical link, but also and more importantly, in recognition of the part he had played in the negotiations which preceded the marriage. (As will be explained later, the bride's "father" plays little part, formally, in the bridewealth negotiations, most of the talking on the bride's side being done by an individual who may be matrilocally or patrilocally related to the bride's father.) Gowa was able to take 18 cattle for himself, because, it was said, he had no surviving full or half siblings. He used two of these cattle, however, to repay two cattle debts which he had

incurred outside the immediate context of marriage.¹

My third and last example of bridewealth distribution is shown in Table 8. The marriage in question took place while I was in the field, and I recorded the information contained in the table in May 1970, before the bride had left her natal family, and before all the bridewealth had been handed over. Thus the table represents an incomplete distribution: it was said that six cattle and a rifle (that is, ten "cattle") were still to be handed over, that they would be transferred at harvest time (June), and that the bride would then go to live with the groom. One cow from this additional payment was earmarked for a FZS, while the remaining cattle and the rifle were to go to the bride's father, who had taken none of the 22 cattle which had been handed over so far. He had one living full brother, but it was said that this man would not receive any cattle from his niece's bridewealth. The reason given was that he was impotent (he had no wife) and that, having no offspring, he would not be able to reciprocate such a gift through the marriage of a female descendant. It will be noticed that the genealogical specification "MB" accounted once more for seven cattle, these being shared by two full brothers and one half-brother of the bride's mother.

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1. A man is said to "carry" a debt (ewo) in respect of moveable property which he has been given by another and which he subsequently consumes, loses or which is destroyed due to his negligence. Such a debt relationship may therefore be created deliberately or accidentally. The most typical procedure, in the former case, occurs when a man is given a stock animal by a friend to kill in order to provide broth (kangia) for a sick relative - another procedure for creating social relationships through economic indebtedness.

Table 8 : An incomplete distribution
of bridewealth

Genealogical Specification In Relation To Bride	Description of Stock	Total Stock	
MB	3 cows with their calves and an ox	7	16
MMB	A bull, a cow and a calf	3	
MMMB	A cow	1	
MPMB	None		
FMB	A cow with its calf and one more calf	3	
FMMB	A cow	1	
FFMB	A cow	1	
FBS	A calf	1	
FFBS	A cow with its calf and one more calf	3	
FFEZS	A calf	1	
FZS	A cow	1	
		22	

This last example illustrates the chronological priority which is accorded to those claims to a girl's bridewealth which come from outside her patrilineal group. Although all bridewealth cattle are initially handed over to the bride's father, it is the settlement of these external claims, based on previous marriages, which gives the new marriage its legal status, rather than the simple acquisition of cattle by the bride's patrilineal kinsmen. She may go to live with her husband before these latter have received any significant payment for themselves, their willingness to wait being an indication of their interest in bringing about the new affinal tie. It is said that nowadays, due to the shortage of cattle, few men are able to achieve the recognised ideal of handing over the agreed bridewealth payment in full at the time of their marriage. In these circumstances it is the zuo a modain who are given priority at the expense of the bride's own descent group and, as will be seen later, even when the agreed bridewealth is handed over in full before the girl leaves her parents, the formal procedures leading up to a marriage provide for a time lag between the settlement of these two sets of claims. The Mursi explain this in terms of supernatural sanctions, but belief in the curse is, of course, a folk justification for providing a set of genealogical relationships created through marriage with social significance by giving them a property content.

The rules of bridewealth distribution therefore require that each marriage be followed by a series of deferred payments, of decreasing economic value, over a period of three generations. A corollary of this is that, over the same period, the original link of affinity cannot be repeated. Thus, while the bridewealth regulations have the effect of preserving past marital alliances, through periodic transfers of stock, for a number of generations, the marriage regulations would appear to prevent the use of new marriages to reinforce existing affinal ties. These latter regulations may be summed up as follows: a man may not marry a woman of his own clan, nor of his mother's sub-clan, nor any woman who is patrilineally related to one of his great grandparents.

A man refers to women of his own clan as benen, and to women of clans into which he may marry as miroga, two terms which may be translated, in this context, as "unmarriageable" and "marriageable" respectively. The term miroga (sing. mirogi) is also used, however, of human and non-human threats to the well-being of the society as a whole, such as cattle raiders, crop pests, hyenas (which attack cattle) and crocodiles (which attack people). When used of, for example, the Hamar, it may be translated literally as "enemies", and carries no implications to do with intermarriage: the Mursi and the Hamar do not achieve that degree of peaceful contact and co-existence that would make intermarriage possible - that would, in other words, allow the continuing series of bridewealth

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transactions described above to be carried out, or, putting it yet another way, that would make the retention of affinal alliances between groups of these two populations advantageous to the individuals involved. When used to mean "marriageable women", therefore, the term miroga refers to outsiders with whom it is nevertheless necessary to engage in peaceful social relations - necessary, that is, if the multi-clan 'buran a minoin is to remain the basic warring and territorial unit. Marriage into the mother's sub-clan (and, in those cases in which the mother's clan is not so subdivided, into the mother's clan itself) is also prohibited, and this, of course, is the rule which ensures that each marriage creates a new alliance (although, as will be seen later, the fact of polygamy enables the effect of this rule to be modified in practice).

But it is not clans which are linked by means of marriage alliances: clans are not localized, nor do they function corporately in relation to political, economic or ritual activity. The Mursi certainly think of their society as a system of dispersed exogamous clans, and the prohibition on marriage into the mother's clan or sub-clan is a vital element of this indigenous model of social structure. But the units which are actually involved, in terms of property rights, in a marriage alliance are relatively short-lived descent groups of narrow span, the members of which define their interest in the marriage both genealogically and through recognised

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rights to bridewealth. Figure 8, which is the reciprocal of Figure 7, specifies the genealogical relationships by virtue of which a man can claim a share in the bridewealth of women who are not members of his patrilineal group. It shows that a man has a right to share in the bridewealth of any girl descended by not more than three generations from a woman of his patrilineal group. Within this third cousin range, the descendants of "residual siblings" may not be married. Put the other way, marriage is prohibited with a member of a non-lineal parent's, grandparent's, or great grandparent's descent group. This, of course, is consistent with the fact that descent is reckoned for no more than three generations above that of living adults - this is as far back as a man need trace his patrilineal descent in order to give genealogical specification to his rights to bridewealth, and to mark off a range of prohibited marital unions. As Levi-Strauss, writing of Crow-Omaha systems in general, has succinctly put it, "whenever a descent line is picked up to provide a mate, all individuals belonging to that line are excluded from the range of potential mates for the first lineage, during a period covering several" - in this case, three - "generations" (1965, p.19).

There are other considerations which tend to prevent the reinforcing of existing affinal ties through further marriages, and therefore to widen the range of individuals with an interest in any one marriage. A man should on no account marry his wife's full sister, a rule which is extended to include a woman of his wife's descent group. A corollary of this is that a man should not marry

the sister of his full brother's wife, which is again extended to include any sister of a wife of any of his close patrilineal kinsmen. Thus a man should not marry into a descent group from which a member of his own descent group, of his own generation, has already taken a wife. Sister exchange, known by the Mursi as chai ngonigen, is also frowned upon, though not unheard of. This arrangement is specifically disapproved of because of the obstacles it puts in the way of the smooth transfer of bridewealth in the next generation. For the male offspring of the two marriages will stand to each other as classificatory MBs, and will thus have a formal right to ten cattle from the bridewealth of each other's sisters. But if one of them were to use the threat of the curse to exact such a payment, his classificatory ZS, who is also his classificatory MB, would be able to make a similar threat. The two curses would thus cancel each other out, so that stock transfers between the two men in respect of their sisters' marriages would, as the Mursi say, "go badly".

Although the rules I have been describing may be said, loosely, to "force" a dispersal of affinal ties, it cannot also be said that each marriage represents a conscious attempt on the part of those involved to distribute such ties as widely as possible. On the contrary, it would be easy to interpret many marriages as attempts to achieve precisely the opposite result, within the limits

set by the rules. I am thinking particularly here of marriage with a close patrilineal kinswoman of a mother's co-wife, or in other words, and from the point of view of a male Ego, with a half-sibling's MBD. Not only do the rules allow a man, in this way, to marry into the same patrilineal group as his father, but such unions are positively valued and occur frequently.¹ It is said that they enable the groups involved to become "real affines" (lango hang).

This form of marriage may therefore be seen as an attempt to overcome the opposition, set by the rules I have been describing, between kinship and affinity on the one hand, and between the dispersal and retention of affinal alliances on the other. By preventing new marriages from repeating existing affinal ties for a period of three generations, the rules have the effect of "turning affines into kinsmen", thus enabling "kinship and affinity to become mutually exclusive ties" (Levi-Strauss, 1965, p.19). The rules of bridewealth distribution, however, place a strong emphasis on maintaining the attachment between groups once linked by marriage. Marriage into the patrilineal group of a mother's co-wife is a way of reinforcing with a second marriage an existing affinal tie while nevertheless maintaining the distinctness of ties of kinship and affinity. The

1. Although I do not have adequate data to present a satisfactory statistical confirmation of this latter statement, it is perhaps worth recording that 12 of the 31 married sons of census respondents for whom I have the necessary information had married into the descent group or sub-clan of a mother's co-wife.

fact that it is a favoured form of union reflects the conscious emphasis given by the Mursi to the retention and consolidation of existing marital alliances.

This chapter, which attempts to shed light on the significance of marriage among the Mursi through an analysis of its procedural aspects, would clearly not be complete without an account of the ritual and ceremonial events by which an individual marriage is established. Rather than abstract such an account from a walter of informants' statements and empirical observation, I intend to focus on two particular marriages which took place while I was in the field, and to describe the procedures by which they were accompanied, interspersing my account with generalisations about "normal" practice when this seems appropriate.

On the 12th March, 1970 I was invited by Komoragolanyi to go with him to the Mara cultivation site of a man called Ulikoro in order to "drink water". This phrase refers to the discussions over bridewealth which take place between the parties to a proposed marriage, although it is not simply "water" which is drunk during these discussions, but a mixture of lukewarm water, coffee¹ and chilli peppers (*Capisicum Fruticosum* L.) and which is normally referred to as bunna (from the Amharic for

1. The Mursi obtain coffee beans principally in exchange for honey from the agriculturalists (sunya) who live on the plateau on either side of the Omo Valley.

"coffee"). The proposed marriage in this case was between a son, Tiodario of a dead brother of Komoragolanyi and a seventeen year old daughter, Nyabi Bu, of Ulikoro's senior wife. Komoragolanyi was accompanied on this first formal¹ visit to discuss bridewealth by Arigidanga, whose wife is a full sister of Tiodario and who is a member of the same clan (Bumai) as Ulikoro. The ostensible purpose of my inclusion in the party was to treat an ulcer which another of Ulikoro's daughters had on her leg. Fig. 9 shows the relationships existing between the individuals referred to so far. It can be seen from this that the proposed marriage would repeat an affinal link established in the previous generation by the marriage of Komoragolanyi himself with a daughter of Ulikoro's dead half-brother. (This was the second of Komoragolanyi's own - as opposed to inherited - three wives, all of whom were the daughters of Bumai men.) From May to September 1970 Komoragolanyi, Tiodario and Arigidanga were living at the settlement shown as No. 11 on Map 3. Since this settlement is mentioned at other points in the thesis, I show in Fig. 10 some of the links of kinship and affinity which existed between its married, male occupants.

On our arrival at Ulikoro's cultivation site (at approximately 10 a.m.) Komoragolanyi was given a skin to recline on (a courtesy due to an honoured guest) and pleasantries were exchanged while Ulikoro's elder full brother, Girashu, who had a cultivation site nearby, was sent for. When the latter had arrived, Komoragolanyi made his formal

1. There had already been an informal meeting between Komoragolanyi and Ulikoro, and the latter had discussed the matter with his only surviving full brother, Girashu (See below).

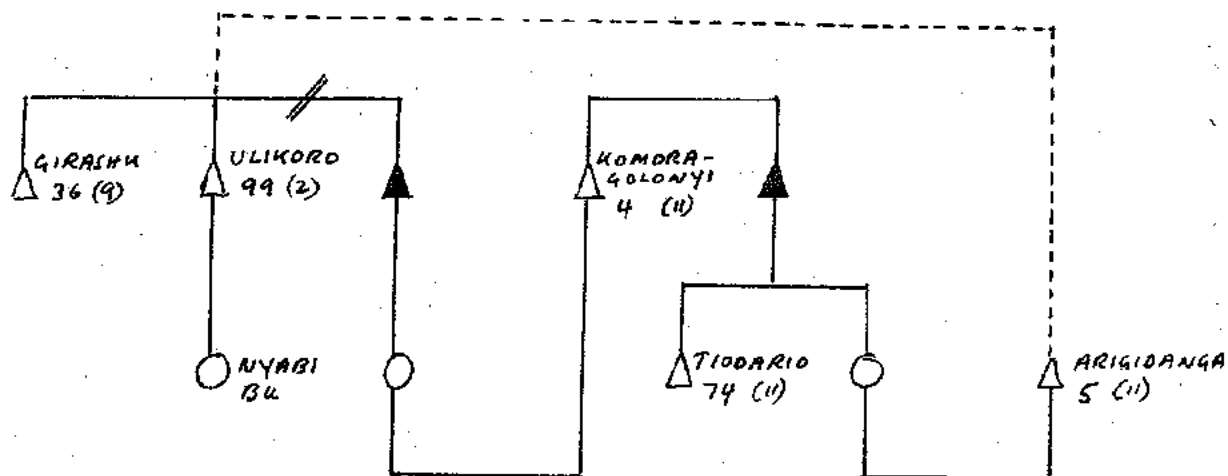


Figure 9:

The Marriage of Tiodario and Nyabi Bu

(Cattle settlement numbers shown in brackets)

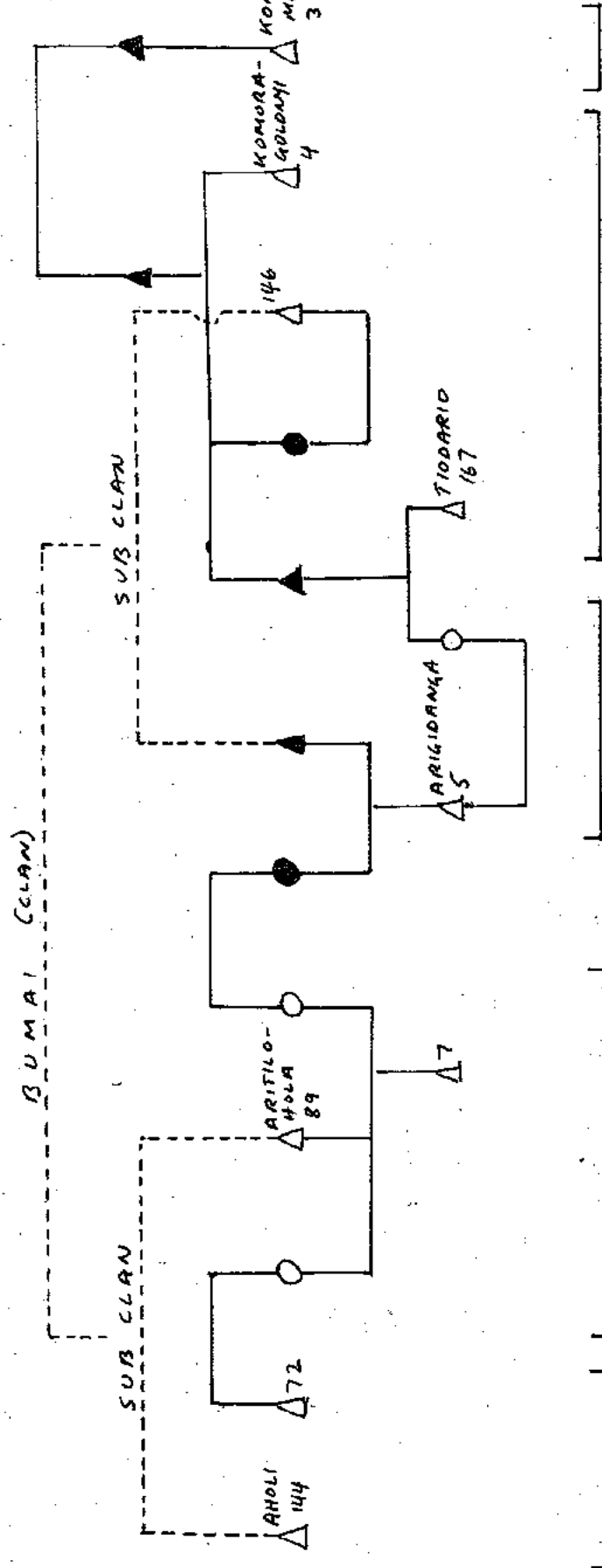


Fig. 10 : Genealogical Relationships Between Married Men of Settlement 10

request for Ulikoro's daughter, and was answered, by Girashu, with an adamant refusal. Ulikoro remained silent during Girashu's reply and maintained a friendly attitude to Komoragolanyi throughout the proceedings. Arigidanga attempted to persuade Girashu to relent, but without success. After bunna, prepared by Ulikoro's wife, had been drunk and the discussion had reverted once more to pleasantries, the meeting ended, at about 3 p.m. On our way back to the large "communal" settlement at Romo (See above, p. 93), Komoragolanyi told me that Girashu's reply was simply a "way of speaking" (ba lokwin) and that we would return in two days' time, when the answer would be different.

On the 14th March, therefore, Komoragolanyi, Arigidanga and I again went to Ulikoro's cultivation site, but the discussion on this occasion took place at the nearby hut of Girashu. Notwithstanding the latter's negative reaction on the 12th, he opened this second meeting by inviting Komoragolanyi to give an account of the cattle he would be able to provide as bridewealth for Nyabi Bu. This "cow talk" was continued on the 17th March (when I was not present) and by the end of it, Komoragolanyi^a had agreed to hand over 24 cattle immediately (ngamea) and a further eight later (runo), making a total of 32. Runo can mean anything from a day later to 20 years. On this occasion it was said to mean "in three months'" time, when, the harvest having been taken in, Nyabi Bu would join Tiodario.

In the early morning of the 18th March, Tiodario drove out from his compound (that of the unmarried rora) at the Romo settlement, 15 head of cattle as follows: two oxen, two bulls, two cows with their calves, one more cow and six heifers. All three cows were in milk, though one had lost its calf, the skin of which had been stuffed with grass to make a dummy, which was necessary ^{to induce} to induce the mother to drop her milk. These cattle were driven a short distance away from the settlement by Komoragolanyi, and a twelve year old full brother of Tiodario, who was also carrying the dummy calf. Komoragolanyi returned to the settlement, leaving the cattle to graze ^{is the care of} under the eye of the boy, and left again shortly afterwards, for Mara, with Arigidanga. They collected the cattle together on their way, Arigidanga and Tiodario's brother driving them, while Komoragolanyi walked ahead (See photograph 16). Having reached the bed of the Mara, the boy took the cattle just north of it, within a short distance of the cultivation areas, to graze, while Komoragolanyi and Arigidanga went on to Ulikoro's cultivation site. Bunna was served and Girashu arrived, but they engaged in general chatting rather than in serious discussion of the marriage. This continued until about 4 p.m. when Komoragolanyi and Arigidanga went off to find the cattle and to take them on to Ulikoro's settlement which, at that time, was about 30 minutes' walk north of the Mara. (Later, following the shooting of a Mursi youth in Bodi country in June and the consequent deterioration in Mursi-Bodi relations [See below, p. 308] he occupied the settlement shown as No. 2 on Map 3).



Photograph 16:

Arigidanga and a younger brother
of Tiedario driving part of the
latter's bridewealth cattle along
the bed of the Mara.

On arrival at the settlement, the cattle were driven into Ulikoro's compound and, after the guests (Komoragolanyi, Arigidanga, Tiodario's brother and myself) had been provided with milk, the serious business of the day began. Ulikoro placed two skins in a corner of the compound, with a large pot of bunna between them. Girashu, who was not a resident of this settlement, and Komoragolanyi sat facing each other on these two skins and drank bunna. Arigidanga was sitting to Komoragolanyi's left, while Ulikoro sat on one side in a "neutral" position, almost exactly equidistant between Girashu and Komoragolanyi. A small circle of onlookers was also formed. While the bunna was being drunk, the bridewealth cattle were enumerated, being symbolically represented by pebbles, which Komoragolanyi handed over, one by one, to Girashu.

The latter declared adamantly that while he was satisfied with the promised total, the initial payment which had been handed over that day was insufficient. It had been agreed that 24 cattle would form the first "installment" - where were the other nine? Komoragolanyi replied that these would be handed over "soon" (harle ngamea) but that he was depending on them at the moment to provide his "children" with milk. Girashu said that he would not insist on receiving the full 24 now, but that he did want two cows with their calves to be added to the 15 Komoragolanyi had brought. After taking Arigidanga aside for a private discussion, Komoragolanyi

proposed that he substitute a rifle for the four extra animals Girashu was demanding. The latter, however, said that he wanted the cattle or nothing, and with this, brought the discussion to a close by standing up and saying it was time to sleep. Ulikoro, who was all the time keeping up excellent relations with Komoragolanyi, took the guests to an empty hut, where they spent the night.

Girashu also stayed overnight at the settlement, and early the next morning he had a further brief discussion with Komoragolanyi and Arigidanga. The result, however, was the same as the night before, and as we left, at about 9 a.m., Ulikoro said, in a sympathetic way, to Komoragolanyi, "Now go and sell that rifle and ^{bring} buy us the cattle". His tone of voice implied that if it had been up to him, he would have been happy to accept the rifle: it was Girashu who was "causing all the trouble". Komoragolanyi had, of course, anticipated this request for more cattle: he had, as he told me on the way to Mara the day before, kept some cattle "in reserve" for such an eventuality.

It is convenient to make some general points here arising out of the information I have given so far. Firstly, it may be stated as a general rule that neither the groom, nor the closest patrilineal kinsman of the bride take an active part in the formal bridewealth negotiations. Indeed, if his father, or a paternal uncle is alive, the groom will not go to "drink water" at all, as in the case of Tiodario. The latter's father would have attended the

discussions if he had been alive but would have left the talking to a patrilineal kinsman such, for example, as Komoragolanyi. If the groom is without a close patrilineal kinsman of the senior generation, he will attend the negotiations but will not take an active part in them. Thus, Aholi attended the negotiations which preceded his marriage to Gowa's niece but left the talking, on his side, to Aritilohola (See Fig. 10), a fellow member of his sub-clan.

The negotiations on the bride's side should, ideally, be left in the hands of a paternal uncle. It is said that a number of brothers will "take turns" in playing this role in the bridewealth negotiation of each of their daughters, that "father" of the bride whose turn it is being entitled to a larger share in the bridewealth than the others - including her actual father. This arrangement therefore creates ties of economic interdependence between close patrilineal kinsmen in respect of their daughters' marriages while allowing the bride's actual father to maintain a sympathetic and friendly attitude towards his future affines during a number of what may be very hard bargaining sessions. What I wish to emphasise here is that in the procedures of bridewealth negotiation (including the seating arrangements described on p. 189, which are also the norm) there appears to be on the one hand a recognition of the strains which are inherent in such a situation, and on the other hand an attempt to divert these strains, as far as possible, away from the relationship between those most immediately involved in the new alliance. We have

here what may be described as a "symbolic" statement of the positive value placed by the Mursi on the tie between affines, a tie which should be characterised by mutual trust, affection and assistance but which can only be created by means of an immediate and far from nominal transfer of economic wealth. This brings me to the second point I wish to mention at this stage.

It is clear from what I have said, in the Introduction, about the approximate size of the cattle population in Mursi country that the payment of bridewealth on the scale I have been describing, even though less than the stated ideal, must represent an extremely onerous undertaking. The negotiations, although they follow recognised procedures which involve a certain amount of conventional "deception", should not be thought of simply as a formal exercise. The groom's people do not hand over, or agree initially to hand over, all the cattle they could, if necessary, provide. The bride's people, on the other hand, have a good idea both of the actual cattle wealth of the groom and also of the number of cattle he could obtain from relatives and associates. They also know that the groom's people will have kept some cattle "in reserve". The bargaining therefore consists of an attempt to raise, rather than lower the "price", on the part of the bride's people, their aim being to ensure that the groom's people part with that amount of stock which represents the limit of what, in the light of their subsistence needs, they can afford.

Not only is the payment of real economic significance, but it should also be handed over before the girl begins to live with, and provide sexual and domestic services for, her husband. From my observation, it seems that the typical practice is for the bride-wealth negotiations, and the first transfer of stock, to take place at the time of wet-season planting, in March or April, and for this to be followed by a second stock transfer after the June or July harvest. The stated ideal is that this second instalment should bring the bridewealth payment up to its agreed total, and that it should be handed over during the course of a day-long wedding ceremony (duri) at the bride's father's settlement. Nowadays, the ability to conform to this ideal is considered to be the sign of a relatively wealthy groom, and in my experience a more frequent procedure is for the bride's people to agree to her joining the groom while some (though still a small proportion) of her bridewealth remains outstanding. In this case, a shorter ceremony is held, which consists essentially in the blessing of the bride, at her father's settlement, after which she is escorted to that of the groom. Such a ceremony was held for Nyabi Bu on the 15th September 1970.

For, although it had been agreed in March that 32 head of cattle would be handed over after the harvest and before the wedding, this was clearly a pious hope rather than an accurate forecast. The two additional cows with their calves which Girashu had demanded were

provided towards the end of April and these were followed in mid-August by five more cattle, bringing the total up to 24. Although this was still eight short of the agreed figure, the wedding went ahead as has just been said by means of the short blessing rite. This last forms also a central part of the full scale duri, which I therefore propose to describe now, focussing for this purpose on another marriage which took place while I was in the field.

The bride was Nga Baiu, a daughter of Aritilohola's (See Fig. 10) second wife, and the groom was Ulibitheni, a member of the same clan (Juhai) as Aritilohola's third wife. It was his first marriage, he being about 25 years old. The groom's father, Dorba, was occupying the cattle settlement shown as No. 7 on Map 3 , the composition of which is described below in Chapter 8 (pp. 292-5). Eighteen bridewealth "cattle" (they included two goats) had been handed over by the time the duri took place, at Aritilohola's settlement (No. 11, Map 3), on the 4th September, 1970. This was a long and complex ceremony which I do not propose to describe in detail. My main purpose is to draw attention to those aspects of it which underlined the severing of the bride's relations with her natal family. The times shown in the following notes are only approximate.

8 a.m. A classificatory sister's son (ashai) of Aritilohola begins cutting branches, in the vicinity of the latter's settlement, with which to build a shelter (bartan) over the entrance to the bride's mother's hut (See photograph 17a). Ulibitheni leaves his father's

settlement with 12 cattle (two oxen, two cows with their calves, four heifers, and two bulls) which he drives slowly towards that of Aritilohola, letting them graze on the way.

9 a.m. The married women of Dorba's settlement, led by the groom's mother's brother, arrive at the entrance to Aritilohola's compound driving a cow with its calf (from among the 12 animals just mentioned). A mock fight ensues between them and the women of Aritilohola's settlement, who attempt to barricade the compound entrance with branches. The Dorba party enter the compound, however, and drive the calf into the hut of the bride's mother, despite attempts by the latter to drive it away. The visitors then start to dance in the compound, to the beat of a drum (kidong).¹ Meanwhile, the cattle brought by the groom are grazing within sight of the settlement, although the groom himself is remaining inconspicuous. The bride is equally inconspicuous, being in a hut in the compound next to her father's - that of Arigidanga (See above, p. 183 and Fig. 10), her MZS.

10 a.m. The classificatory MBs (dole juge = "girl mothers") and FMBs (dole ohige = "girl grandmothers") of the groom arrive with much commotion at the settlement, enter the compound and "take over" the dancing from the small group of women of Dorba's

1. It is this form of dancing, accompanied by a drum, which gives the ceremony its name.



a) The bartan being constructed
for the wedding of Nga Baiu and
Ulibitheni.



b) The dancing of the dole juge.

Photograph 17.

settlement (See photograph 17(6)). They continue virtually to monopolise the "floor" for the rest of the day. Meanwhile bunna has been prepared and is standing in two pots in the bartan, which has gradually been filling up with men, mostly of the bara grade. The groom's representatives sit on the north side of the bartan (all huts, it will be remembered, face west), and the bride's people sit facing them on the south side. As many men as possible, however, crowd into the bartan and, depending upon which side of it they happen to occupy, become "honorary" and temporary members of the groom's clan (Juhai) or of the bride's clan (Bumai). Two referees (kwethana) are appointed, one for each side, in an ad hoc and almost random fashion, their functions being wholly symbolic.

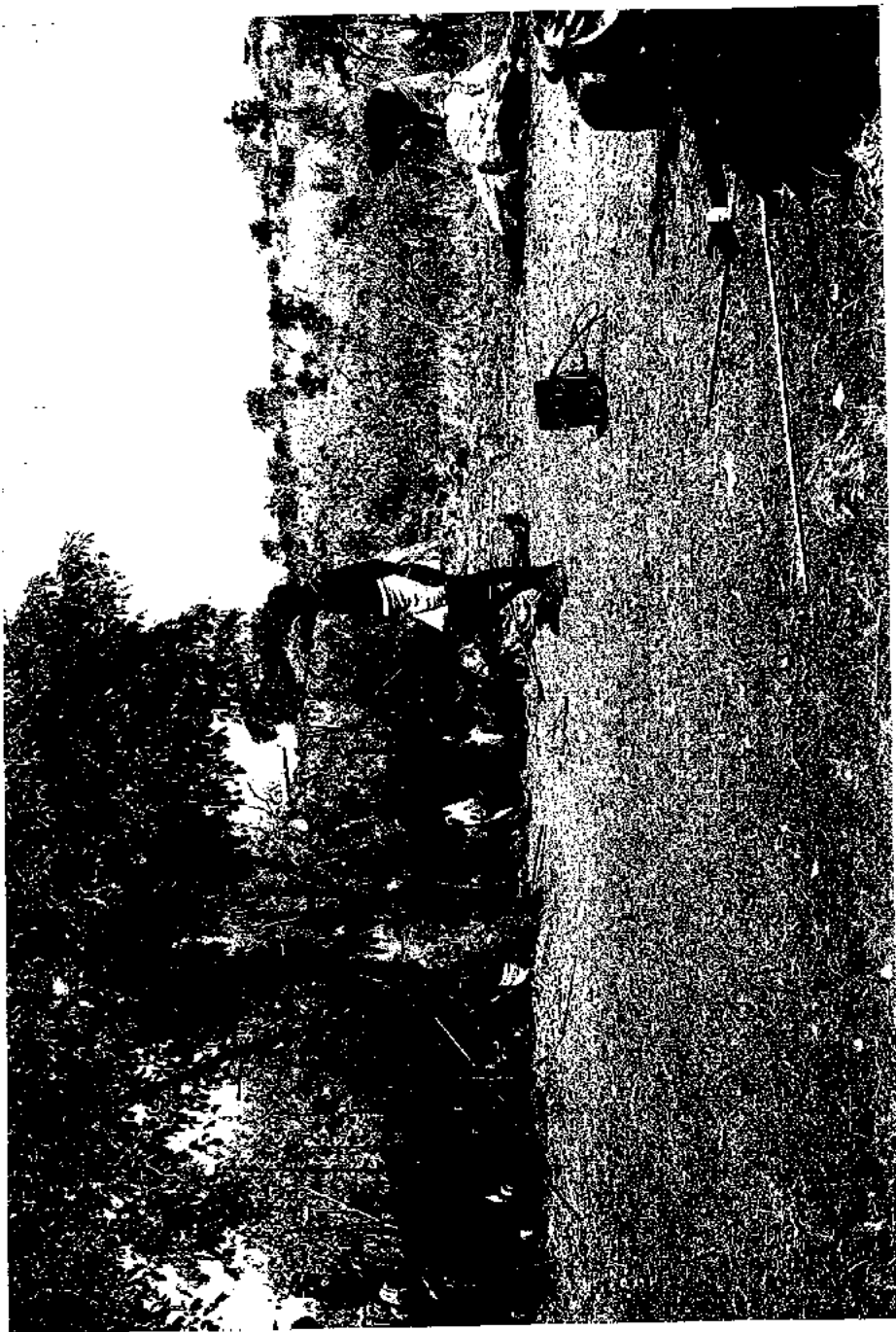
11 a.m. The two referees sit facing each other over the pots of bunna and, having first drunk some themselves, dispense it to the rest of the company. After this the final, somewhat ritualistic, bridewealth negotiations take place. The groom's father is not present, although expected, because of illness. He is represented by a full brother and by a full sister's husband, Maderibwi (See below, pp. 292-4.) who does most of the talking. On the bride's side, the negotiations are conducted by her father and married half-brother, it again being the latter who has most to say. It had been agreed previously that the total bridewealth would consist of 30 "cattle", 18 of which had already been handed over, and the remaining 12 of which had been brought on the day of the duri. But the bride's half-brother

opened the proceedings by demanding two more cattle, as indeed everyone knew he would, and for which the groom's people were therefore prepared. The request was thus agreed to (a young bull and a heifer were handed over on the following day), making a total payment of 32 animals, represented by 32 pebbles which Mederibwi handed over to the bride's half-brother.

1 p.m. - 3 p.m. The bara leave the bartan and move a few hundred yards away from the settlement, accompanied by a group of unmarried girls (their "daughters") whom they proceed to harangue and to beat with withies (See above, p. 156). An ox of the bride-wealth is killed in the bride's father's compound, and while it is being cut up and firewood is collected, a number of speeches are made (See photograph /8). There are six speakers, including Aritilohola, but they discuss matters of general public concern, unconnected with the ceremony in hand.¹

3 p.m. The meat having been eaten, the bride moves into her mother's hut, accompanied by three girl friends, her "bridesmaids". A sleeping skin is placed just outside the entrance of the hut, on which the bride sits, flanked by her three friends. The two referees tie strips cut from the peritoneum of the dead ox round each other's necks, simultaneously, and then round the necks of the bride and her

1. I discuss the procedures involved in public speaking and decision-making in Chapter 8.



Photograph 18:

A speech being made at the wedding
of Nga Bain and Ulibitheni.

bridesmaids. (As will be seen later, this is a rite of peacemaking which figures also in the settlement of homicide cases.)

4 p.m. The blessing of the bride begins. Her MZS, Arigidanga, "standing in", it is said, for her MB, who is in Chachi country, enters the bartan and smears debi (a mixture of clay and water) on the faces and arms of the four girls. He then takes mouthfuls of water from a drinking gourd, held in his right hand, and blows out the water, in a fine spray over each girl in turn, holding while he does so her two hands in his left. Aritilohola then smears the girls again with debi and, standing in front of his daughter, with the drinking gourd of water (which has now had milk added to it) in his hands, he proceeds to talk to her in a tone of mild admonition. He tells her not to argue with her husband, to give him porridge promptly when he asks for it, and to look after his calves well. The main burden of his speech, however, is to remind his daughter of her duty to remain from now on with the groom's people: to become, in fact, one of them. He tells her that her own mother had remained with him despite the fact that her brother had "many cattle": she, Nga Baiu, should be equally loyal to her new husband. At the end of his speech, Aritilohola blows out the mixture of water and milk in a fine spray over the bride and her friends. The Juhai referee holding a stick goes outside the bartan, shouts out "32 cows have been paid", and then breaks the stick in half. The bride then leaves her father's settlement, accompanied by her "bridesmaids",

for that of Dorba. The final "rite of separation" consists in the pouring out by a sister's son of Aritilohola, of the remainder of the milk and water, used in the blessing, across the entrance of Aritilohola's compound, after the bride and her party have left.

Thus, the marriage ceremony gives great prominence to the severing of the bride's links with her natal family and seeks to impress upon her at every turn that she is becoming a member of a new group. During the blessing ceremony, whether performed as part of a duri or on its own, the bride shows great distress and unwillingness to cooperate. She may even attempt to run away, as did Nyabi Bu when her blessing ceremony (though not duri) was held - or rather attempted - a few days later on the 9th September. She literally jumped over the fence of her father's compound and succeeded in postponing the ceremony until the 15th, when she proved more docile. A new wife is given a name by her husband, derived from the colour of his name ox which was included in her bridewealth, and she is henceforth known only by this name among her husband's patrikin.

Despite this emphasis on "separation", however, actual day-to-day relations between affines are generally close and affectionate. Although formally "sent away" to the groom's people, the bride may well continue to cultivate along with her mother both at the Omo and in the bushbelt and, as has already been indicated in the case of Aholi (See above, p. 88), her husband

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may share a cattle settlement with her close patrilineal kinsmen.

Despite the symbolism of separation seen in the marriage ceremony, the association between affines, and therefore the maintenance of the link between a woman and her own patrilineal group, plays a vital part in the day-to-day life of the community. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Residence Patterns

I have been using such phrases as "patrilineal group" and "close patrilineal kinsmen" to refer to a group of men who are descended by known links from a common ancestor, who is normally the grandfather of current adults, and whose name they bear. This unit represents the limits of genealogical reckoning and is associated with similar units only by the concept of clanship - that is to say, by non-specific ties of patrilineal descent. Apart from its possession of "an exclusive common name" (Fortes, 1959, p.208), it is difficult to see in what sense it could usefully be described as a "corporate unilineal descent group": it is not localised, it has no recognised head, and does not emerge in actual life as a legally independent stock and land-owning unit. The ideally autonomous unit of production and consumption is a family group consisting of a man, his wives and unmarried children. As was noted earlier, however, such a unit is rarely able to maintain strict economic independence in practice, both because of the need to span geographically distinct pastoral and agricultural resources and because of the special labour requirements of herding. These latter call for a boy of about eight to watch the calves close by the settlement, a boy of about fourteen to take the cattle to their daily grazing, and a boy of at least eighteen to take charge of the herd in the absence of the herd-owner. In seeking to meet these requirements, a married man does not necessarily cooperate in herding with other herd-owners from among his

own close patrilineal kin, but is at least as likely to make use of affinal and matrilineal ties. Only three cattle settlements in 1970 were occupied exclusively by married men who were patrilineally related, while, on the other hand, 62 of the 84 named patrilineal groups which were represented in the census by more than one married man had members in two or more different cattle settlements.¹

Close patrilineal kinsmen are considered to be under a moral obligation to assist each other in stock transactions - principally in the accumulation and distribution of bridewealth - and to unite in support of each other's rights in respect of outsiders. But the group which is effective in this way does not form a fixed genealogical unit: it has to be defined pragmatically in each case on the basis of an examination of existing relations at a given time. The most that can be said is that between such people there exists, to use a phrase of Fortes's, a rule of "prescriptive altruism" (1969, p.237), though the same can also be said of the members of one sub-clan, or unit which is not based on known genealogical links. This "ethic of generosity" (Fortes, loc. cit.) is highlighted by the fact that claims to bridewealth which come from outside a bride's own patrilineal group are backed by the sanction of the curse.

1. The 389 married men in the census were members of 131 named patrilineal groups, of which 84 were represented at least twice.

In practice, however, the fact of descent does not produce cooperating groups beyond individual stock-owning units, which are focussed on ideally independent married men (cf. Gulliver, 1955, pp. 247-8; Rigby, 1969, pp. 5-7). Such a situation is obviously a concomitant of residential mobility and flexibility in an environment where ecological conditions make for a low population density, and where access to resources is open and egalitarian. It is true that at the Omo there does exist a basis for the localization of those with an interest in property - namely land liable to be flooded. It has already been shown, however, that the scarcity of this resource, the unpredictability of the Omo flood, and the fact that rights of ownership in Omo land are restricted to certain descent lines, puts a premium for the majority of individuals on keeping open as many options as possible to cultivation sites at different points along the river, options which can then be utilized at short notice, in accordance with prevailing flood conditions.

Thus, although the central feature of Mursi kinship ideology is patrilineal descent, patrilineal ties based upon the limit of genealogical reckoning are, in practice, of secondary significance. Of primary importance is (apart from local contiguity) a network of interpersonal kinship and affinal ties. The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief demonstration of the positive significance of affinity in everyday life by examining in detail the composition of one particular cattle settlement (No. 14, Map 3), considering only the intra-settlement links of kinship and affinity between married



Photograph 19:

Settlement No. 14, from
the south.

men. I have chosen this settlement because it was occupied by a relatively large number of married men (See Tables 2 and 3), because it contained links not only within but also between generations and because I was well acquainted with its occupants and with the nature of their intra- and extra-settlement ties. I consider that the following analysis illustrates some common features of economic cooperation and co-residence among the Mursi: the reader may check this assertion both by examining the examples of settlement composition given at other points in this thesis (Figs. 4 , 10, 12, 15 and 17) and, more thoroughly, by consulting Appendix 2 , wherein are listed the married men, by their census index numbers of all 51 1970 cattle settlements. All the information necessary to establish how the married men of any particular settlement were related to each other is contained in the census print-out (Appendix 1).

Fig . 11 shows, in matrix form, the traceable links of kinship and affinity which existed between the married men of settlement 14. The columns show primary (underlined) and classificatory relationships to Ego. Thus, for example, 48 is an own sister's husband of 37, while 37 is a classificatory sister's husband of 56. By "primary" I mean a relationship of the first degree in each category. The term gwodine, for example, refers, in its primary meaning to a male full or half-sibling, and in its classificatory meaning to any male of Ego's own generation to whom he can trace a link of patrilineal kinship. Given the limited genealogical "memory" of the Mursi, therefore, it follows that

	37	38	39	40	41	48	49	50	56	57	58	61	62	76	164	384
37			<u>MZS</u>			<u>ZH</u>	B	B	WB	WF			WF		ZH	
38			WMB	<u>F</u>					WB	WF			<u>WF</u>			
39	<u>MZS</u>	ZDH		<u>ZH</u>								ZH	ZH			
40		<u>S</u>	<u>WB</u>						SWB	SWF	SWB		SWF			
41												ZH				
48	<u>WB</u>								WB	WF	WB		WF		<u>B</u>	
49	B							<u>B</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>WF</u>	WB		WF			<u>WZH</u>
50	B						<u>B</u>		WB	WF	WB		<u>WF</u>			
56	ZH	ZH		ZHF		ZH	<u>ZH</u>	ZH		<u>F</u>	B		F		ZH	<u>ZH</u>
57	DH	DH		DHF		DH	<u>DH</u>	DH	<u>S</u>		S		B	<u>WB</u>	DH	<u>DH</u>
58				ZHF		ZH	ZH	ZH	B	F			F	<u>MB</u>	ZH	ZH
61			WB		WB											
62	DH	<u>DH</u>	WB	<u>DHF</u>		DH	DH	<u>DH</u>	S	B	S			WB	DH	DH
76										<u>ZH</u>	<u>ZS</u>		ZH			ZDH
164	WB					<u>B</u>			WB	WF	WB		WF			
384							<u>WZH</u>		<u>WB</u>	<u>WF</u>	WB		WF	<u>WMB</u>		

Fig. 11 : Traceable links of kinship and affinity between married men (by their census index number) of settlement 14; primary links underlined.

classificatory brothers will be descended from, at most, a common great grandfather. "Wife's brother", to take another example, is one of several primary meanings of the term kwonen, but a classificatory wife's brother may be an actual WFBS or BWB. The reader is referred to Appendix 3 for further information concerning Mursi kinship terms.

The matrix records 108 Ego-oriented, or 54 dyadic links of kinship and affinity between the married men of this settlement. It is clear from Table 9 that the majority (76%) of these links are affinal, while links based upon patrilineal descent account for a total of only eleven (20%) of all dyadic links. Of these two are between "own father/own son" (57/56 and 40/38) and two are between full siblings (48/164 and 49/50). So much for the frequencies with which certain categories of relationship occurred in this settlement. It is clear that the men in question must have belonged to a relatively large number of patrilineal groups. There were, in fact, six clans and eleven named groups of close patrilineal kin (as defined above) represented in the settlement; nine of which last were also represented in one or more other settlements in 1970. Over time, the members of such descent categories become geographically dispersed and have little or nothing to do with each other, although there are statistical preponderances of the members of certain clans in certain areas (See above, Table 4). I wish now to show how the frequencies just described appeared in relation to

Relationship Category		No. of Links		
		Primary	Classificatory	Totals
<u>Patrilineal</u>	F/S	2	3	5
	BS	2	4	6
<u>Affinal</u>	WB/ZH	5	15	20
	DH/WF	4	10	14
	DHF/SWF	2		2
	ZHF/SWB	2		2
	WZH	1		1
	ZDH/WMB	2		2
				41
<u>Matrilateral</u>	MZSS	1		1
	MB/ZS	1		1
		22	32	54

Table 9 : Frequency of dyadic links between
married men of settlement 14.

the spatial arrangement of settlement 14 and to the economic activities of its members. In doing so, I hope to suggest some of the factors which bring about the dispersal of patrilineal ties just mentioned.

The most obvious characteristic held in common by the married men of this settlement, apart from their actual membership of it, was that at least one of the wives of each of them except 76 cultivated at Alaka in 1970. Only four of them, however, have hereditary cultivation rights there - namely 56, 57, 58 and 62, who are related to each other by known patrilineal links and to ten of the twelve remaining married men of the settlement as affines. Of these ten, eight were related as "DHs" or "DHF's" to 57 and 62 and therefore as "ZHs" or "ZHF's" to the latters' "sons", 56 and 58. These eight had therefore made, or contributed towards, at least indirectly, payments of bridewealth cattle to the four men of the settlement with hereditary cultivation rights at Alaka. I have already indicated that the payment of bridewealth commonly involves a man in a sudden and drastic change from a predominantly pastoral to a predominantly agricultural mode of subsistence. In these circumstances, a newly married man may be said to have exchanged his cattle not only for a wife, but also for an alternative food supply which, the division of labour being what it is, only she can supply and upon which, in the short run at least, he is almost entirely dependent. It is not only in such an extreme case as this, however, that the request of a "sister's husband" for access to

cultivable Omo land is regarded as one that cannot easily be resisted. Such an allocation may be seen, on the one hand, as no more than a recognition of the rights of a patrilineally related female, and on the other hand, as a return payment for bridewealth cattle. In this way, a relationship established by the giving of a wife against cattle is maintained by the granting of cultivation rights, which, in turn, requires some degree of co-residence on the part of wife-receivers and wife-givers. Thus, as far as settlement 14 is concerned, a residence pattern based upon the allocation of Omo cultivation rights to affines has been, as it were, carried over into wet-season settlement, although it is evident that such co-residence is not required by the nature of economic activities in the wet season, whether agricultural or pastoral. Alaka may therefore be described as the geographical focus of the local group comprised of the members of settlement 14 while the classificatory brothers, 57 and 62, who have hereditary cultivation rights at Alaka and to whom most of the other members of the settlement are related as "daughters' husbands", may be described as the social focus of the settlement.

It was 57, however, whose personal name, Saba Ramai, was most frequently used by people living in the area to refer to this settlement as a whole. This can be accounted for by reference both to his structural position within the settlement and to the prominent part he played in the public life of the Mara section (See Chapters 8 and 9, where it is made clear that the exercise of influence in public

decision-making is not necessarily correlated with the occupation of such a structurally "central" position within a settlement). If the reader now refers to Fig. 12, he will see that 57 and his "brother" 62 occupied separate compounds. What this figure does not show, however, is that 62's compound, which he shared with a daughter's husband, a "son" and a "sister's husband", was situated about 300 yds. away from the other three contiguous compounds of the settlement. Unlike 57, who is about ten years his senior and has three living wives and fourteen surviving children, 62 has married only once, to a woman who has died leaving four daughters and a son, now about nine years old. He did not establish, with the three individuals just mentioned, this separate compound until after the harvest in mid-July, but this was not the result of any breakdown in intra-settlement relations. It was not until this time that sufficient personnel were available in the settlement to make such a separation - which meant that the occupants of 62's compound could run their cattle together as a herding unit apart from those of the main settlement - a practical possibility. Their ability to do this, in fact, depended upon the labour provided by two unmarried younger full brothers of 58, since none of the married men in question, including 62, could meet the labour requirements of herding from among their own offspring. This separation, which resulted in the creation of what was, to all intents and purposes, a separate settlement, can be seen as a move on the part of 62 to establish his independence of his patrilineal kinsman, 57, a move which was by no means regarded as an ideologically retrograde step.

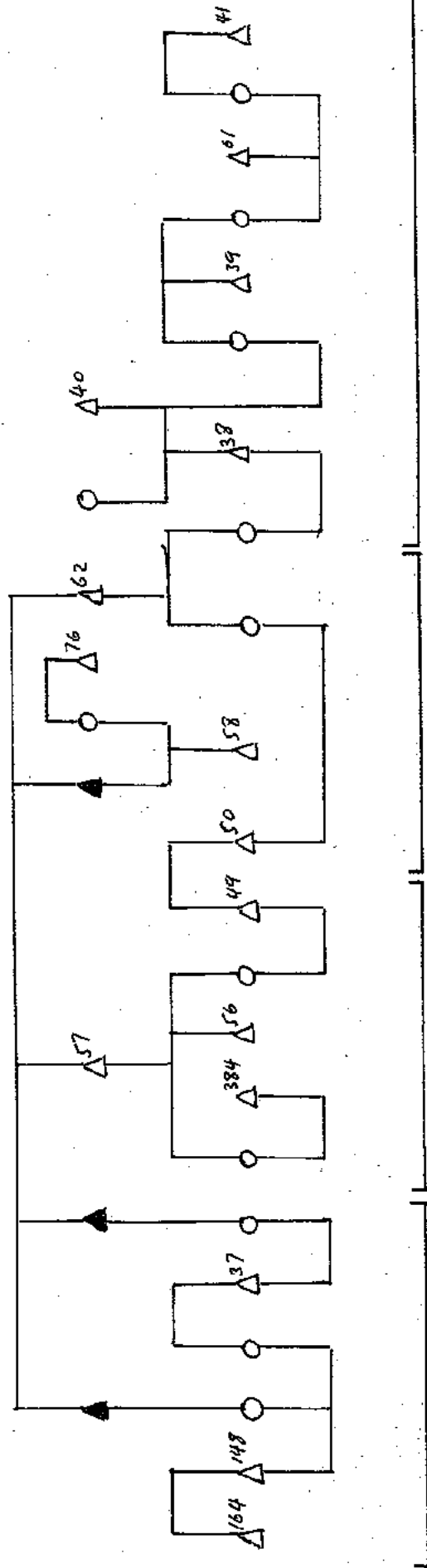


Fig. 12 : Genealogical Relationships Between Married Men of Settlement 14

It is significant, from the point of view of the dispersal of patrilineal ties, that he "took" with him an own daughter's husband (50) whose full brother (49) remained in the main settlement, sharing a compound with his own wife's father (57).

The two "own father/own son" links did not cross compound boundaries. Both the fathers in question (57 and 40) were still fully active, both in the management of their herds and in public life (See Chapter 9) and their sons (56 and 38, respectively) were recently married, with only infant children, and had no married full or half-brothers. Under these conditions married sons are expected to live with their fathers, and when they do so, they normally occupy the same compound. It is recognised, however, that the interests of father and son are likely to diverge, especially in relation to the accumulation of bridewealth cattle, even though the operation of the "house-property system" differentiates potential rights in livestock within each generation before inheritance. When a man dies, his entire herd, apart from those animals which he has previously allocated to his various wives, is inherited by the eldest son of his senior wife. An eldest son also has a right to inherit any of his father's wives, apart from his own mother, who are of child-bearing age. The special nature of this relationship between a man and his eldest son is recognised by a number of avoidance rules, mostly to do with commensality. Also, if a man's first son is born while he is away from home, he should not, on returning to his

settlement, enter his compound until the infant has been temporarily removed from it. Only when the father has "re-possessed" his compound, and kindled a new fire within it, should his son be allowed to enter it. It is said that unless this procedure is observed, the parents will die and the son will "eat" their cattle.

Of the co-residence of married sons with their fathers, the Mursi generally have the same comment to make as of the co-residence of married full or half-brothers: "it is good if there are no arguments". The dispersal of patrilineal ties is a result not only of such "arguments" - usually, between brothers, about the order of marriage¹ - but also of the ambitions of individual men to become socially significant points of genealogical reference. If a man wishes to become such a point of reference for a group of patrilineal descendants who will bear his name, he must clearly remove himself, at some stage, from the orbit of influence, both economic and political, of his close patrilineal kinsmen, especially those of his own generation. It has already been pointed out, however, that individual family groups cannot attain full economic independence, but have to establish ties of economic cooperation with other groups of the same order. This is a condition of survival, and results in the importance and maintenance of affinal ties within each and between generations, illustrated by the above analysis.

1. I know of a case, referred to below (p. 333-4) in which a man (213) shot and killed his half-brother as a result of such a disagreement.

As has been suggested, the reader may himself check this interpretation of residence pattern by reference to information provided at other places in the text and in the Appendices. If, for example, he considers settlement 19 (Fig. 17), he will see that, although it contains fewer married men than settlement 14, and although it has no such obvious social focus, the same preponderance of affinal links is discernible. There were, in fact, twelve dyadic ties of kinship and affinity linking the eight married men of this settlement, three of which were between classificatory brothers (8, 10, and 133). Of the remaining nine links, seven were affinal and two matrilinear. There were no father/son links within the settlement, whether primary or classificatory, and no links of full or half-siblingship. Extra-settlement links of such a nature, however, were readily discernible. Thus, 6 (Dukul) has a living father (60) who was occupying at the time a nearby settlement (18 on Map 3), and a married half-brother (135) who was living with a sister's husband (87) in settlement 17. 77 has two married sons (175 and 246) who were living in the south of the country (settlement 44, Map 4). 9 had a younger half-brother (5) living in settlement 11, and 128, his son-in-law, had a full and a half-brother (67 and 68, respectively) living in settlement 13.

I leave the reader to follow up other examples as he wishes. I have said enough to establish the fact that although patrilineal

descent is a basic element in Mursi kinship relations and theory, the emphasis in practice is upon affinal and resulting cognatic relationships. It is these relationships, and not those of descent, which provide the localised bonds upon which economic cooperation is based.

*Law of descent - based
(two groups) - affinal
descent*

Chapter 6: Disputes

I have so far considered affinity from two points of view: that of the rules and conventions governing bridewealth distribution and marriage (Chapter 4), and that of everyday relations of co-residence and economic cooperation (Chapter 5). In this chapter, I adopt a third viewpoint which brings out more clearly than the other two the significance of the title I have given to this second part of my thesis.

As has been explained, I use the term "referee" to translate the Mursi kwethani, a translation which is based upon the role of the individuals who are referred to by this name in ceremonial duelling contests. It was this particular use of the term which led me, in the first place, to adopt this translation. I soon discovered, however, that kwethani has a much more extensive meaning than is immediately brought to mind by the term "referee", which is most commonly employed in modern English to refer to an individual who presides over some form of sporting occasion, to see that the rules of the sport are not broken, and to whose decision all doubtful points are "referred". According to the Oxford Dictionary, however, this is a relatively late use of the word in English, for which the earliest illustrative quotation provided (Compact Edition, 1971, p.2463) is dated 1860. Like its synonym "umpire", "referee" appears to have had a much longer history in the language as an item of legal, rather than of sporting vocabulary. It was used, that is, of "a person to whom (either alone or with others) a dispute between parties is referred by mutual consent, an arbitrator (loc. cit.)". The Mursi term kwethani is similarly used

not only for the individuals who perform the practical "refereeing" tasks in ceremonial duelling contests, but also for those who act as mediators and go-betweens in the processes by which disputes are settled.

Sporting and legal proceedings have, of course, the element of contest in common (cf. Huizinga, 1970, Chapter 4), and in our own society it is easy to view a court case as a contest, albeit verbal and intellectual, between opposing counsels. Among the Mursi it is not simply the use of the term kwethani which makes this link explicit, for duelling plays an important part in the procedures of dispute settlement. Except in homicide cases, the disputants, dressed in all the paraphernalia of duelling described in Chapter 1, fight each other until forcibly separated and held apart by neutral onlookers, all of whom are regarded as kwethana. (The procedures by which a particular individual, or kwethani "par excellence", emerges as mediator will be described later.)

There is no need to dwell upon the similarities which exist between sporting and legal proceedings, nor to pursue the obvious analogy between a referee settling disagreements between participants in a game, according to the rules of that game, and a judge, jury or mediator resolving a dispute between disputants according to the legal conventions of a particular society. In this chapter, I wish to show that mediation between disputants among the Mursi depends, first and foremost, upon the existence of a local network of affinal and

matrilateral ties and that, indeed, the "ultimate" form of mediation consists in involving the disputants in the creation of new ties of affinity which will rule out a continued state of hostility between them. Despite the ideological predominance of patriliney, illustrated by the rules of inheritance, and also, as will be seen, by the obligation incumbent upon a man's close patrilineal kinsmen to support him in disputes and to avenge his murder, social control among the Mursi cannot be adequately described as resulting from the maintenance of a "balanced opposition" between corporate groups, based either on kinship alone or on a combination of kinship and locality. Nor is it possible in this case to have recourse, as is sometimes done in general discussions of East African pastoral societies lacking segmentary lineage systems, to age organisation as a sort of explanatory "deus ex machina".

In this chapter, therefore, I complete my account of affinity by demonstrating its overriding importance as a means of coping with disharmony in social relations. At the same time, of course, this chapter is intended to contribute towards an understanding of the institution of ceremonial duelling. For this activity clearly cannot be understood unless it is seen in relation to processes of dispute settlement, with which it is visibly connected. I wrote in Chapter 1 that the contestants in ceremonial duelling "set about each other with the utmost seriousness", and this is sufficiently obvious from Photographs 9(a) and 9(b). But I have also pointed out that the antagonism shown between the opposing sides is largely manufactured for the occasion. I suggested

that it is the absence of real and continuing conflicts of interest between the "teams" which make it possible to hold regular contests in which, on the one hand, each contestant makes an all-out effort to inflict the maximum possible injury upon his opponent, and which, on the other hand, are completely governed by a set of rules and conventions - among them that which calls for the cessation of duelling in the event of even a relatively mild injury being sustained by one of the contestants (See above, p. 52).

Where disputes - over, for example, the ownership of property - are concerned, it is clear that there does exist a real and continuing basis for antagonism between the disputants. But, even so, they dual in full protective clothing, and not before they have, by their own actions, ensured the presence of a large crowd of onlookers, or kwethana, whose function it will be to pull them apart. There is no question of the matter in dispute being decided by the superior strength, or greater skill with the donga, of one of the disputants. This is not, therefore, the "trial by combat" or "judicial duel", which was apparently "the only honourable means of deciding a matter of right" in England from the Norman conquest to the reign of Henry II (Baldick, 1965, p.18).¹ "Trial by combat" was, of course, an appeal to the judgement of God, as the ultimate "referee", so even this form of dispute settlement is not a reflection of a "feeble ethical standard",

1. And which, incidentally, was not abolished in this country until 1819 (Ibid., p.20).

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as opposed to "the very concrete question of winning or losing", as Huizinger suggests (1970, pp. 99-100).

In ceremonial duelling, a referee is always a married man, but, other than this, needs only a certain strength and agility to perform his function effectively. In dispute settlement, a successful mediator must possess a number of attributes, both social and personal, which will be described later. But just as duelling is associated with the unmarried, and controlled by the married, acting as referees, so disputes between neighbours are mediated by the utilization of existing, and the creation of new, affinal ties: the Mursi do not so much fight the people they marry as marry the people they have fought. A kwethani is a third party, whose presence is a condition of continuing harmonious relations between two others. Just as sporting contests require such individuals, so also does everyday social life, and among the Mursi the provision of kwethana in this latter sense is bound up with the institution of marriage and with the affinal and cognatic ties which result from it. Given the marriage rules and preferences described in the last chapter, it is clear that at least three exogamous units are required to provide a workable system of marriage exchange. Indeed, the Mursi recognise that there is a certain completeness about the number three, which they express by means of the aphorism "it takes only three stones to boil a pot". Neutral intermediaries, related to the disputants by affinal and matrilineal ties, will always be provided given at least three intermarrying

exogamous, property-holding units.¹ In fact, the dispersal of patrilineal ties, together with a relatively localised marriage pattern (See Table 10) ensures that the number of potential mediators who are available to help bring about a settlement in any particular dispute is practically unlimited. I now turn to a detailed description of the processes of public dispute settlement utilized by the Mursi. It is necessary to distinguish here between disputes which arise from cases of homicide and those which do not. I take the latter type first.

It must be admitted, first of all, that the majority of disputes never reach the public stage: it is only the particularly intractable ones which require for their resolution the public procedures I am about to describe. Of course, differences between neighbours quickly become common knowledge and may drag on for months or even years. But although they thus become topics of general conversation, they are normally resolved by means of bargaining and the application of social and economic pressures among those immediately concerned. During my stay among the Mursi I witnessed only three cases of public dispute settlement - cases, that is, which were formally argued out in front of a group of neighbours assembled for the purpose. While there were undoubtedly other such cases which I did not witness (although I did not hear of any), I am confident that all of them together did not amount to more than a tiny minority of the disputed questions and

1. cf. Browning, *La Saizir*, p.277: "Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for referee, how should I distinguish?"

Husband's Section	Father's Section								Total
	Mara	Mako	Biogolokare	Ariholi	Gongulobibi	Chachi	Bodi	Not Known	
Mara	131	30	20	6	11	1	4	1	204
Mako	14	49	7	3	8				81
Biogolokare	21	23	69	8	10				131
Ariholi	5	5	12	14	10				46
Gongulobibi	7	6	11	3	28				55
Chachi	3								3
Bodi	3								3
Not Known	55	27	12	7	20	1			122
TOTAL	239	140	131	41	87	2	4	1	645

Table 10: Natal Sections of 645 Married
Women Compared to Sections of
Husbands

conflicts of interest which occurred during that time and which, though potentially subject to public settlement, were resolved privately. The reader may therefore justifiably ask why I should trouble him with what, by my own admission, is an exceptional procedure, and why I do not instead devote my attention to an examination of what I have called the "private" resolution of disputed issues. In answer to this, I must first admit to a lack of the necessary information to carry out satisfactorily a task which I recognise to be important - the tracing through of a number of disputes which were never brought to a public head. On the other hand, I believe that the consideration of disputes which were brought to such a head enables one to observe, albeit in a heightened and dramatic way, some processes which are fundamental to the control of conflict within this society.

What I have been referring to as a "public settlement" of a dispute is termed by the Mursi a yaiye, and it may be divided, for purposes of exposition, into two parts. In the first part, the two principals, supported by their close patrilineal relatives and fully dressed in tumoga, fight each other with duelling poles, either at some neutral spot, such as a recognised gul, or at the defendants' homestead. Long before the yaiye takes place, it will have become common knowledge in the community that the principals intend to bring their disagreement onto the public stage in this way. A large gathering of onlookers is further ensured by the din created by the cattle bells which the principals wear round their waists as they

prance about their respective cattle compounds, building up their nervous energy in the same manner as contestants in ceremonial duelling contests.

"Might", however, is not allowed to establish "right", for the duelling is brought to an end by the intervention of the onlookers who have to hold the principals apart by force. It is not possible for me to make a hard and fast statement about the point at which such intervention occurs. This is because, firstly, each yaiye I witnessed took place during a period when, for reasons explained in Chapter 9, prohibition was in force against the shedding of human blood within the society. As a result, on each occasion, duelling was hardly allowed to get under way. I was told, however, that in different circumstances several bouts might take place, one after the other, between both the principals and any of their close patrilineal kinsmen who are present. Secondly, the point at which the onlookers intervene is related to attempts being made by certain individuals among them to establish their rival claims to the role of mediator. Thus, a man so inclined will attempt to initiate a successful intervention at what he judges to be the first likely opportunity. I consider in a moment the attributes necessary for successful mediation. All I wish to point out here is that this is not a function of office: there are no individuals whose recognised right or duty it is to act as mediators.

The second part of the yaiye begins when the duelling has been brought to an end. The two principals, seated within a small circle

formed by the crowd of onlookers, put their cases in turn, the plaintiff speaking first, and witnesses being called if available. One or more neutral individuals, who took the lead in getting the talking started, sit with the principals, as prospective mediators, within the circle. I say "prospective mediators" because all does not necessarily proceed smoothly from this point, especially if the duelling has been brought to a close too quickly for it to have reduced sufficiently the high state of nervous tension of the principals. Duelling may well break out again and one or more different individuals may take over the role of mediation.

A successful mediator needs to possess, to varying degrees, the following attributes. Firstly, a sensitivity to the issues and personalities involved which helps him to intervene at the right moment and to know whether there is any point in his intervening at all. Secondly, powers of expression and verbal fluency. Thirdly, a reputation for moderation and responsibility which gives him a ready hearing from the onlookers, and fourthly, some connection with one or both of the principals of which he can make use in order, for example, to coax a reluctant disputant to accept his proposal for a settlement. I am concerned here, and in what follows, with this last aspect of mediation. The others are dealt with in the final part of this thesis as part of a general discussion of leadership and the exercise of influence. It will be explained there that certain men in a local community are acknowledged to possess particular ability in the processes of public decision-making and have, as a result, greater influence over their

neighbours than other men, to the point of becoming informal leaders, or jalaba. These are men of ability and ambition who do not occupy an office and who cannot be said to be "in authority". Their leadership role is not well defined, they do not adjudicate, and they have no active sanctions to support their proposals. Successful mediation of disputes is one of the ways in which a man is able to achieve such a role of informal leadership but, as is explained in Chapter 8 in relation to other forms of public decision-making, the attempt to exercise influence is always a more or less risky undertaking.

a or b?

Gulliver has suggested (1969, pp. 17-19) that we distinguish, as a first step in the study of dispute settlement, between "two structurally different modes", which he calls "negotiation" and "adjudication". Negotiations may take place between the two parties only, or they may be mediated by a third party "who has no ability to issue any binding decision". If we take this latter criterion as the essential difference between negotiation and adjudication, it might appear that Mursi practice fits nicely into the former category, and indeed, if one had to choose between them, one would undoubtedly describe Mursi dispute settlement procedures as "negotiations mediated by some third party" (loc. cit.). Gulliver makes use of another criterion, however, which he presumably sees as merely the obverse of the one already stated. In negotiations "agreement is not the result only of consideration and application of norms and rules and of standard expectations. . . . There is . . . the additional and critical factor of the relative strengths of the two parties"

(loc. cit.). Without using the familiar but unsatisfactory device of a "continuum" it is difficult to see how this criterion can be used to establish a real distinction between types of dispute settlement - let alone between two "structurally different modes" - which will serve as a useful "first step" in a comparative study. For rigid adherence to "norms and rules" must always be more or less theoretical in any area of social life, and "the relative strengths of the two parties" (in terms of numbers, political power, social and economic status) is presumably always a factor in any system of dispute settlement, however authoritarian. Given that this factor is always present, it would be difficult to distinguish, in actual practice, between types of dispute settlement in which it was, and was not "critical". Essential to adjudication, according to Gulliver's rather vague formulation, is the presence of an "overriding external authority", and yet he also says that "The ability to enforce may range from the virtually absolute to little more than the effective public expression of accepted norms and standards of expectations". Now, although a third party with "overriding authority" cannot be recognised in Mursi dispute settlement procedures, "the effective public expression of accepted norms and standards of expectations" would be an accurate enough description of the function of a Mursi kwethani - although, of course, one cannot know precisely what Gulliver intends, in the above quotation, by the phrase "little more than". There is no doubt that a yaiye looks more like the negotiation of a compromise than it does the handing down

of a binding decision by a third party with the power to enforce it. But although a mediator has no active sanctions at his disposal, that of public opinion is not to be underestimated. If one asks why a disputant accepts a decision which goes against him, one is usually told "people's tongues' hurt".

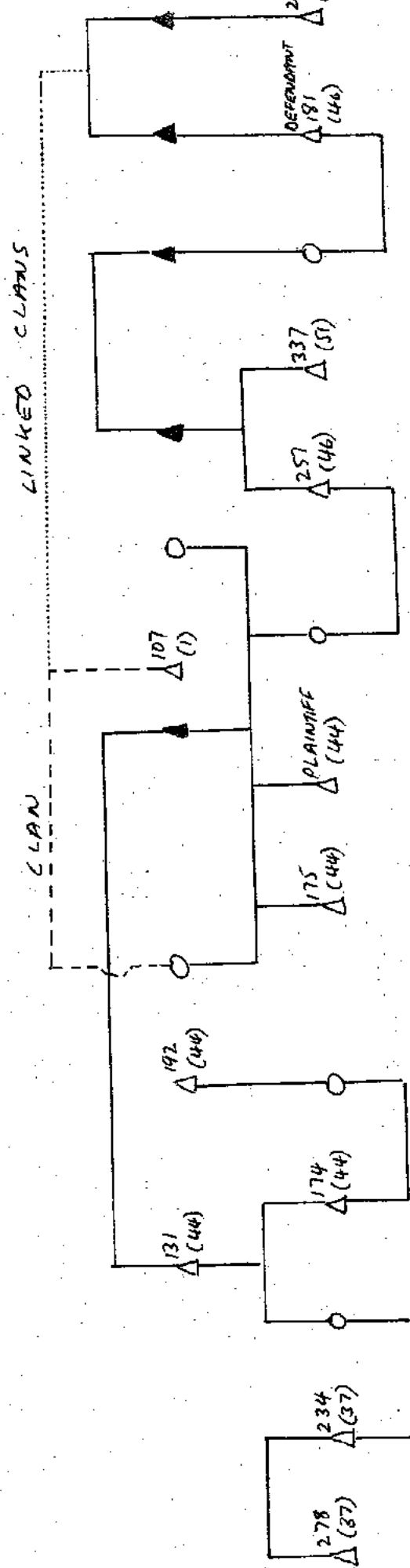
I therefore do not consider that it would be profitable to fit Mursi dispute settlement into even such a minimal and basic analytical scheme as that suggested by Gulliver. As far as I am concerned here, there are two essential features of a yaiye. Firstly, a mediator is always necessary, both in practice and in theory (Gulliver says of the Ndenda^uli, who appear to have a system of dispute settlement which is similar in many respects to that of the Mursi, that they "not only have no word translatable as 'mediator', but also do not explicitly recognise such a role and scarcely refer to it indirectly" [1969b, p.61]). Secondly, there are no formally recognised mediators in Mursi society. Since the successful performance of this role is one of the means by which men can gain and exercise influence over their neighbours, it is to be assumed that at any particular yaiye there will be several men present who would like to play the part of mediator. If we hold constant the factors of personal ability, history and achievement (to be discussed in Part III), the critical one remaining is the relationships of these aspirant mediators to the disputants. I now illustrate this, and other aspects of the simplified model of dispute settlement presented above, by describing the public resolution of a case which I witnessed in June 1970 at Bennakora. The individuals involved, to whom I shall

refer, where possible, by their census index numbers¹, are shown in Fig. 13, to which I have also added, in brackets, their 1970 settlement numbers.

The dispute was over the ownership of a rifle which 181, the defendant, had captured from a raider in March 1970. The plaintiff claimed that the rifle was his property since he had shot and wounded the raider in question, 181 having merely administered the "coup de grace" with a knife. The yaiye took place on the 25th June at a gul on the north bank of the River Bennakora, about 300 yds. from the plaintiff's settlement. 181 is a married man, between thirty-five and forty years old who was living at the time in settlement 46 with, among others, three close patrilineal kinsmen of his wife (311, 257 and 312) and a MZS (182). He was actively supported in the dispute by a FBS (244) who was, however, living in the same settlement as the plaintiff. The latter is an unmarried teri who was sharing a compound at settlement 44 (where I was living at the time) with two full brothers, one married (175) and one unmarried.

At first light on the day in question the plaintiff began donning tumoga, helped by 175, after which he ran and pranced about his compound, brandishing his donga and causing the cattle bell he wore around his waist to ring continuously. By 7.30 a.m. a group of about fifty onlookers (men, women and children), had gathered outside the plaintiff's

1. The plaintiff has no such number, being unmarried.

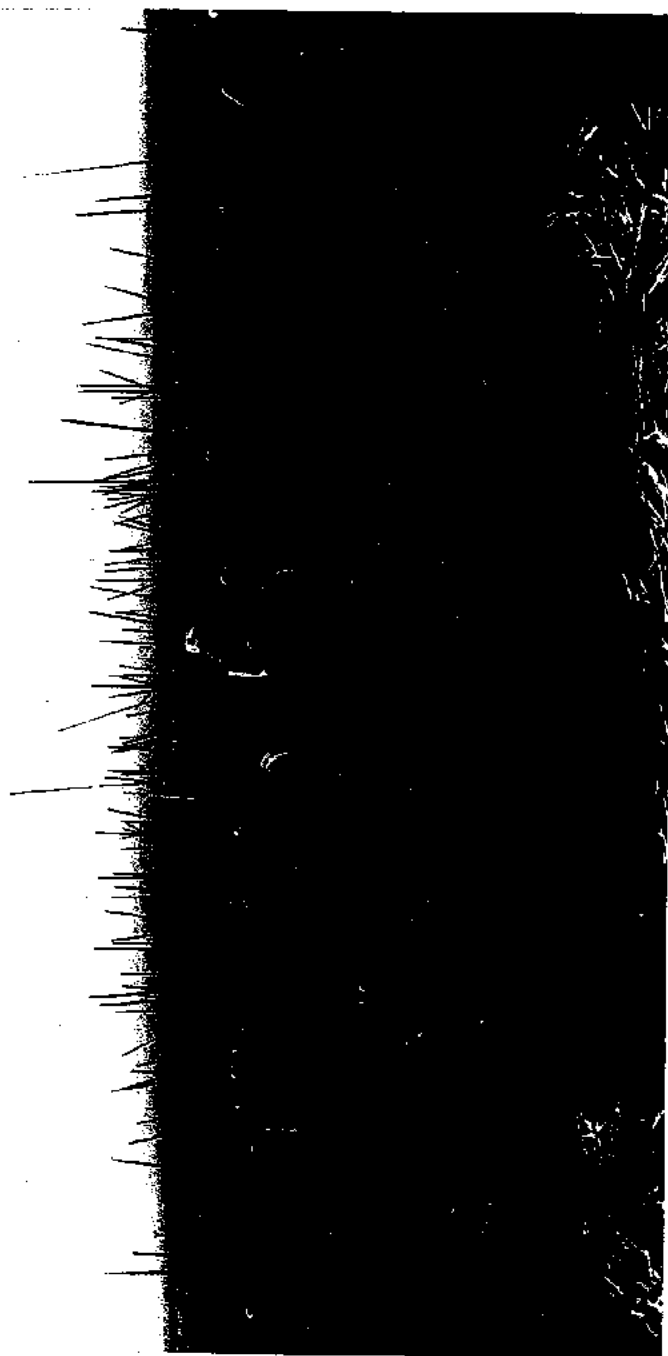


SETTLEMENT NUMBERS IN BRACKETS

Fig. 13: Genealogical Relationships Between Participants in the Case of the Disputed Rifle

compound, the unmarried men and boys among them carrying dongen also. 192, a bari who is about fifty-five years old, and a classificatory wife's father of the plaintiff, shouted to the onlookers that they should hurry to the gul and "be kwethana". But when 181, also in tumoga arrived at about 8.00 a.m. in the vicinity of settlement 44, accompanied by 244 and more spectators from settlements south of the Bennakora, no move towards the gul had been made. There followed what appeared to be a chaotic scramble as the two principals, trying to come to blows, were borne along to the gul, amid a forest of dongen, by the milling crowd of kwethana (See Photograph 20). The first attempt to get the principals to start talking was made even before they arrived at the gul but the would-be mediator (278), a classificatory sister's husband of the plaintiff, received a nasty blow to the side of his head for his pains. After a short but violent exchange of blows between the principals at the gul, 192 succeeded in getting them and, after much shouting, some of the onlookers to sit down.

There was thus formed a small circle of seated onlookers, within which sat 192, the plaintiff, 175, 181 and 244. The majority of onlookers remained standing, in a compact, jostling group around the circle (See Photograph 20). The plaintiff spoke first, giving his version of the incident which gave rise to the dispute, and then 181 gave his. The case turned, at this point, on whether the plaintiff's bullet had seriously wounded the raider, and 192 called for a witness to give his opinion on the matter. The witness proved very reluctant to



Photograph 20:

The Case of the Disputed
Rifle.

become involved, however, and when he had finally been pulled into the circle he made very little attempt to cooperate. This led to a break in the fragile peace, as the principals leapt to their feet, and the onlookers again tried to force them apart. Order was restored after a few minutes, but now two other men took over 192's role of mediator.

107, who from this moment played the part of principal mediator, is a bari, about fifty years old, a member of the Ariholi section and of the Komorte clan. This is also the clan of the plaintiff's mother, while the original member of 181's clan (Ngeriai) is said to have been "adopted" by the Komorte clan during the migration. The members of these two clans are therefore "brothers", and intermarriage does not take place between them. Although giving his section name as Ariholi (his wife cultivates on the Omo at Kurum), he was living, during the latter part of the 1970 wet season, at settlement 1 (Map 3) with, among others, his mother's brother (111) and a sister's son (102). His wife's bushbelt cultivation area that year was along the Mara. He had, however, moved his cattle down to the Bennakora area, in company with most other occupants of the northern group of settlements, after a shooting incident which occurred at the beginning of June, north of the Mara, in which a Mursi was killed by a Bodi (See below, p. 308). At the time of the dispute he was still occupying a cattle camp, in the south. 337 played a sufficiently important part, though subsidiary to that of 107, in the mediation for him to be justifiably described

as a "joint mediator". It can be seen from Fig. 13 that he is a classificatory wife's brother of the defendants, and a classificatory sister's husband of the plaintiff. His full brother, 257, who married the plaintiff's half-sister lives in the same settlement as the defendant.

By the time the talking started again, it had become evident, from the comments that were being made by the onlookers, that the tide of public opinion was running against 181. The mediators appeared to have accepted this, and to ^{be} searching for a solution which recognised the plaintiff's right to the rifle and which they could also persuade 181 to accept. To this end, 107 made a great effort to convince 181 that he had his best interests at heart, constantly reiterating the fact that they belonged to linked clans: "we are one; we are brothers". It was 337 who first put into words the proposal which eventually settled the dispute. This was that 181 should hand over the rifle to the plaintiff, but that the latter should forthwith exchange it for four head of cattle. These cattle should then be shared equally between the principals. What this meant, however, as everyone understood, was that the plaintiff would keep the rifle and hand over at most one large stock animal to 181 by way of compensation. Although this solution was, on the face of it, as impartial as any judgement of Solomon, and therefore face-saving for 181, it in fact favoured the plaintiff. The two mediators therefore had to use all their powers of persuasion before 181 could be prevailed upon to agree

to hand over the rifle, thus bringing the yaiye to an end about an hour after 107 and 337 had first assumed the role of mediation.

This account provides an adequate illustration of the significance of the dispersal of patrilineal ties and of the existence of a localised network of affinal and cognatic relationships in the settlement of disputes. I now describe the outcome of a case which was even more intractable, and in the settlement of which affinity played an even more direct part, since it was, as the Mursi say, "untied by a girl".

This dispute had dragged on for three years before it was brought to a yaiye at which I was not present on the 20th June, 1970 at Bennakora. The two disputants had gone on a cattle raid together into Hamar country and had argued about the distribution of the spoils, but it was not a straightforward case of disputed ownership. On the way back from the raid the party had stopped, in semi-arid and unfamiliar country and killed one of the stolen animals in order to cope with their hunger and, more importantly, thirst. The plaintiff's (280) case was that the defendant (245) had, by a deception, killed one of the animals which he, the defendant, had already claimed for himself. The defendant denied this and argued that there was anyway no case for compensation because the animal had been consumed by the whole party and not by him alone. He had therefore adamantly and persistently refused to hand over a cow to 280.

This case therefore had an element of deadlock about it which was also present in the case of the disputed rifle. That it was a matter of principle rather than of economic advantage is indicated by the fact that the disputants announced, in June 1970, their determination to initiate a yaiye and declared that they would, if necessary, each kill a cow afterwards in order to rectify the state of ritual disturbance that would otherwise result from the spilling of blood while the prohibition mentioned above was in force (See below, p. 26/). In other words, they publicly announced by this decision their inability to come to terms and engage in normal social intercourse. They both belong to the same territorial section (Gongulobibi) however, and occupied nearby settlements in 1970 - namely settlements 29 (280) and 37 (245). The Omo cultivation sites of their respective wives were at Bongo (245) and Nyaure (280).

The yaiye apparently followed much the same course as the one just described, the principals only being allowed to come to blows for one short bout. The successful mediator was a bari of about fifty years (214), one of whose three wives is a member of the same Juhai sub-clan as 280, and whose eldest daughter has married into the Komorte sub-clan of which 245 is a member. But while 214 belongs to a clan (Kagisi), the members of which form an exogamous unit in relation to both Juhai and Komorte, the members of these latter clans do not intermarry.¹ Thus 214 already occupied, both in terms

1. The following clan affiliations constitute a bar to inter-marriage: 1) Juhai, Komorte and Garakuli; 2) Komorte and Mangwi; 3) Komorte and Ngeriai; 4) Bumai and Gongwi.

of clan exogamy and of actual affinal relations (through his own and his daughter's marriage) a structurally intermediate position between the two disputants. This, of course, does not account for the fact that 214 emerged as mediator in this particular dispute, since the same could undoubtedly have been said of many other men who were present at the yaiye. The differential exercise of influence in public decision-making is, as I have said, discussed in later chapters. What concerns me here is the way in which this dispute was settled.

214 undertook to give a daughter in marriage to each of the disputants. Full brideprice would be paid for these girls at some time in the future (they were as yet below marriageable age). In a sense, therefore, this settlement may be said to have gone against 280 since he did not receive the cow he had been demanding for the last three years. But the fact that he had announced his preparedness to kill a cow, should blood be spilt during the duelling, and thus to gain no economic advantage even if the case went in his favour, clearly indicates that it was not the ownership of a cow that was really at stake. The yaiye was held purely and simply in order to mend a break in social relations and this was achieved by linking the disputants in a new relationship of affinity, through a third party, 214.

This was a dispute over a relatively trivial matter, which nevertheless required for its resolution recourse to what the Mursi describe as the ultimate manner of settling a dispute - its "untying

by a girl". This is a form of dispute settlement which places all the emphasis upon the maintenance of harmonious relations, rather than upon the provision of compensation for a wrong received. Its use is an indication of the seriousness of a dispute, measured not according to the nature of the real or alleged actions which caused the original conflict, but according to the nature of the resulting breakdown in social relationships. It is an ultimate procedure for settling a particularly intractable dispute, no matter how trivial the matter which originally gave rise to it. It is also the only procedure for settling disputes which arise from what must be regarded as the most serious source of conflict within the society - homicide. For homicide cases are settled in essentially the same way as I have just described for a relatively trivial disagreement over the ownership of a single animal, and it is for this reason that I include a discussion of homicide in a chapter on dispute settlement.

There is no institution of bloodwealth worthy of the name among the Mursi. Although a conventional payment of four head of cattle is made to the dead man's kin by the killer, this must clearly be regarded as nominal when it is remembered that the ideal bridewealth payment consists of thirty-eight head (cf. Evans-Pritchard, 1951, p.98). A homicide case is only settled when a girl from the killer's patrilineal group or, if necessary, sub-clan, has been promised as a wife to the kin of the dead man. But such a bride is not "married to the name of the dead man to bear him a son" (loc. cit.), and since bridewealth has

to be paid for her by the dead man's kin to those of the killer, this cannot be described as primarily a form of compensation. It is clearly not so much a question of repairing an injury done to a corporate group, as of overcoming a state of deadlock in social relationships. The custom of marrying a girl to the name of a dead man does exist, but it is adopted only in special circumstances, such, for example as when the dead man is a childless eldest, or only, son. In such cases the marriage is a wholly separate transaction from that involved in the settlement of the homicide case. In cases in which the dead man and his killer are members of the same clan, or of non-intermarrying clans, the matter can only be settled through a kwethani who is an actual or potential affine of both parties and who is prepared to provide a girl, in return for full bridewealth, for the kin of the dead man.

Because of the usually long drawn-out nature of homicide cases, I was not able to witness, during the relatively short time I was in the field, the progress of a single case from start to finish. The following outline model of the processes involved has therefore been pieced together from my observations of a number of cases at different stages in their development.

In theory, the first and only concern of a murdered man's close patrilineal kinsmen is for revenge: it is their duty to kill the murderer, or one of his close patrilineal kinsmen. In practice, it is acknowledged that such reprisals (of which I was able to discover

only one recent example) occur very rarely. In the first place, vengeance groups are not fixed, exclusive units, either genealogically or locally. This is ensured both by the dispersal of patrilineal ties and by the fact that ties of locality are not assimilated to those of kinship. In the second place, and following from what has just been said, there exists an easily available means of preventing further bloodshed which nevertheless allows the "eye for an eye" ideology to be fully maintained. For if a man, after killing a fellow Mursi, is given hospitality by a neutral individual - which means, in effect, an affinal or uterine kinsman - and remains within this man's hut or compound, he is safe from the kinsmen of his victim. For if they were to kill him in these circumstances they would, by settling one conflict, simply initiate a new one - namely, with the man acting as host to the murderer, with whom, incidentally, they will almost certainly be able to trace some form of affinal or cognatic relationship. This is a consideration which enables the dead man's kin to fail honourably in their duty to avenge his murder.

But another form of reprisal remains open to them, against which the murderer is less able to protect himself - namely the capture of some or all of his cattle. The kinsmen of the dead man attempt to seize as many cattle as possible belonging to the murderer and/or any of his patrilineal kinsmen, extending in theory as far as fellow members of his sub-clan. But again, in practice, such extensive action is hindered by the local network of affinal and cognatic ties, so that it is only

the closest patrilineal kinsmen of the murderer - especially his full brothers - whose cattle are at risk in this way. The only defensive action they take is to disperse their cattle as quickly as possible, following the murder, again typically among affines, in order to keep the number seized to a minimum. The seizure of cattle is not resisted in any other way, the main concern of the murderer and his close patrilineal kinsmen being to avoid the crippling and sudden reduction in their immediate sources of subsistence which would result if the dead man's kinsmen were presented with an opportunity of seizing a large number of cattle in one fell swoop.

It is already clear, therefore, that this second form of redressive action open to the dead man's kin is of a limited nature. In fact, it seems that the number of cattle seized in this way is generally less than ten. But the really significant fact is that cattle seized in this way are not, given a satisfactory settlement of the case, retained by the dead man's group, nor are they used as bridewealth in the marriage which such a satisfactory settlement involves. They should be returned, together with any natural increase, following a ceremony of reconciliation, to be described later, in which a girl is publicly presented by the murderer's group to that of the dead man. Furthermore, the four cattle which I described above as constituting a "nominal" bloodwealth payment should not be used as bridewealth cattle by the dead man's patrilineal relatives in any marriage they might subsequently contract. Such a rule obviously deprives these cattle

of almost all social utility as far as their owners are concerned, and I was told that "all you can do with them is exchange them for a rifle".

Both the seizing of cattle and this nominal payment are, in fact, merely stages in the long drawn-out process by which a case of homicide is settled. Although they have about them the look of redress and compensation, they are significant only as more or less necessary conditions for the achievement of a type of settlement which cannot be satisfactorily represented in these terms. It is after the dead man's kin have seized some of the murderer's cattle, and while they continue to look for an opportunity to kill either him, or a close kinsman, that the first positive step towards a settlement is taken. The murderer chooses a kwethani, normally the man who has given him sanctuary, to represent him in negotiations with the dead man's kinsmen. The first and most pressing task of the kwethani is to break down their more or less ostensive and conventional intransigence to the idea of a peaceful settlement. The successful completion of this part of the negotiations, which is sure to take several meetings between the kwethani and the dead man's kinsmen, is marked by the handing over, by the kwethani, of the four cattle mentioned above. Three of these are said to symbolise the dead man, while the fourth symbolises the girl who will eventually be provided. This payment therefore represents, on the part of the murderer, an undertaking to provide a bride for the dead man's group, and on the part of the latter a

willingness to forgo violence. It also makes possible the holding of the first of two ceremonies of reconciliation, after which the state of active hostility between the principals ceases. But, as an indication that the matter has not yet been settled the cattle seized from the murderer are retained by the dead man's kinsmen who avoid unnecessary social contact with the murderer.

The second reconciliation ceremony should, ideally, follow immediately on the first, but in practice a considerable time lag may occur, during which a girl is eventually specified to redeem the undertaking made earlier. It is this part of the process which appears to be most fraught with complications and potential obstacles. It is frequently necessary for a kwethani to provide the dead man's kin with a bride on behalf of the murderer (to whom he is already linked by affinity) either because the two parties belong to clans which do not intermarry, or because the murderer's group cannot find a suitable girl. Only when a girl has been specified can the final ceremony of reconciliation, held in the compound of a patrilineal kinsman of the dead man¹, take place.

This girl is married by a (not necessarily the same) patrilineal kinsman of the dead man in accordance with the seniority rules which regulate the order of marriage among brothers and does not, as I have

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1. The first ceremony takes place in the bush, the two parties being separated by a stream bed. The central rite of both ceremonies is the cutting of the peritoneum of a sacrificial sheep or ox into strips, and the tying of it round the necks of the parties, by kwethana.



a) A kwethani (Kaulosir: see below, p. 296) speaking at a homicide reconciliation ceremony.



b) At the same ceremony, another kwethani anoints female representatives of the murderer's group with clay.

already explained bear children to the name of the dead man. Bride-wealth has to be paid for her, since otherwise the marriage would not be legal. In particular, of course, the claims of the zuo modain, who are not members of the murderer's patrilineal group have to be satisfied as they would in any other marriage. The bride's own patrilineal kinsmen are likely to have to wait for their share of bridewealth cattle until she has born children, but this is by no means unusual in marriages which do not result from homicide cases.

This examination of ways of resolving conflicts within Mursi society throws into unmistakable relief the all important role of affinity, within a context of dispersed patrilineal ties and a localised marriage pattern, in providing neutral, because structurally intermediate, "referees". At this general level all men are "referees" in relation to at least some others - hence all the onlookers at a yaiye who are not patrilineally related to the principals are kwethana. But at another level the role of kwethani is restricted to men with certain attributes and abilities which enable them to express and thereby mould public opinion and to exercise influence over their neighbours. This brings us to the question of leadership, without a discussion of which no treatment of social control would be complete, and to which the next part of this thesis is therefore devoted.

HEAVY

PART III: LEADERS

Chapter 7: Priests

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the meaning of the Mursi term komoru - to describe, in other words, the rules according to which it is employed. I consider that these rules are sufficiently similar to those which govern the use of the English term "priest" to make this a satisfactory translation. To begin with, however, it is necessary to analyse the use of two other terms, lalini and barari, by means of which the Mursi make a distinction which is fundamental to their cosmology.

Perhaps the most common, everyday use made of these terms is in relation to taste, and in particular, to the varying strengths of sour milk. In the early stages of the souring process milk is lalini, but when it has reached the stage when it causes a burning sensation in the mouth and throat when drunk, it has become barari. Peppers, used in the making of bunna are also barari, for the same reason. Thus, it would seem possible to translate barari as "hot" and lalini as "cool".

But although lalini is certainly used for the general quality of coolness (ri a lalini, "the shade is cool"), its antonym in this sense is not barari but bureni (su a bureni, "the sun is hot"). The various contexts in which lalini and barari are used as antonyms appear to have in common the attribution of some sort of hidden potency, which is both efficacious and dangerous. Thus, the dew is barari because it appears in the morning even when there has been no rain. Certain plants are barari because they are believed to ward off danger when worn as amulets. When, towards the end of my stay among the Mursi, I had some articles stolen from my tent for the first time, it was explained to me that when I had first arrived I had been barari and for this reason no one had stolen any of my things. But it had gradually become clear that I was subject to more or less the same constraints as other men, including having my possessions stolen and being unable to do much about it. I had become lalini.

Barari appears to refer, in these contexts, to a sphere of reality in which things "just happen", without any apparent cause. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that when barari is used of sour milk, it does not connote simply, or even primarily, a hot sense perception, as does our word "hot" when it is used, for example, of curry. In my view, what is involved here is the attribution of some potency to the milk which enables it both to change from one state into another without anything being "done"

to it, and to produce on the sense organs of whoever drinks it a particularly "violent" effect. This effect is "surprising" and "unexpected" in the sense that it has no apparent cause - there is no way, in other words, in which substances which will produce this effect can be distinguished, as a class, from those which will not. It is not that causes are assumed to be present in this sphere of the barari, and to be unperceived through lack of knowledge: on the contrary, it is a sphere in which ordinary empirical causation is assumed to be unnecessary.¹

It is for this reason that I have chosen to translate barari by "absolute", a term used by Idealist philosophers to refer to "reality as such", or to occurrences which are their own explanation and justification. "Contingent" occurrences, on the other hand, are those which depend upon a chain of cause and effect, and the very existence of which makes it necessary to posit the existence of other occurrences which are not so dependent, and which are therefore "absolute". Whatever the merits of this as a philosophical theory, I consider that the terminology employed provides a much more satisfactory rendering into English of the terms

1. This interpretation is based solely on an analysis of the way in which these two terms are used in everyday speech.

barari and lalini than such alternatives as "supra-" or "supernatural" and "natural", not simply because these are ambiguous¹ but also because they do not make immediately clear that the distinction is between occurrences which are not, and occurrences which are, causally dependent.

The principal way in which the Mursi have "inserted themselves"² into the absolute, or the barari, is by means of their priests, who could be described as occupying a position on the circumference of contingent reality to which the absolute is tangential. They are able to break through from the one type of reality to the other, and their role is therefore characterised by the performance of public rituals to bring rain, to protect men, cattle and crops from disease, to ward off threatened attacks from other tribes, and to safeguard the fertility of the soil, of men and of the cattle. They achieve these purposes by means of a sort of "omnibus" ritual, which each priest holds at least once a year, which lasts for four consecutive days, and which is known as bio lama (literally "the collecting of the cattle"). A

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1. "Supernatural" may refer to that which is not only "beyond" nature, but also in contradiction to it, or in violation of it.
 2. cf. M. Eliade, 1968, p.40 ". . . . un rite dont l'intermédiaire aide l'homme à approcher la réalité, à s'insérer dans l'ontique"

priest may also hold a special rain-making ceremony in conditions of drought.

Three priests were active during the time I was in Mursi country, each being associated with a particular territorial section and each being a member of one or other of the three clans to which the office is confined. These clans are Komorte, Bumai and Garakuli, the first and second of which are among the largest Mursi clans (they account respectively for 13.9% and 18.8% of the census), while the third is among the smallest (4.9% of the census). Since clans are dispersed, however, and since there are many more clans than have the office of priesthood associated with them, they do not form ritual congregations in relation to particular priests.

A priest's congregation consists of all the people who live in a particular part of the country, irrespective of clan affiliation. But, although each priest is associated with a particular territorial section, it is not the case that each section has its own priest, or that the public rituals at which a priest officiates are attended only by members of his own section. To illustrate this, I present in Table // some basic information about the three priests who were active while I was in the field. (For place names see Map 5).

There were thus two recognised and active priests in the Mara section. Duli, however, was very ill with tuberculosis for

Table 11 : Priests active among the Mursi, 1968-70

Name	Age	Clan	Section	Cultivation		1970 Cattle Settlement
				Omo	Bushbelt	
Duli	60-65	Bumai	Mara	Kuduma	Mara	-
Konyo-nomora	30-35	Komorte	Mara	Alaka	Belbel	Ngurug, No. 11
Bule	30-35	Komorte	Ariholi	Kurum	Bennakora	Bennakora, No. 47

most of my stay, the last public ritual he performed being a bio lama in April 1969. He was too ill to occupy a cattle settlement in 1970 when I was carrying out my census, and remained with the women at his Mara cultivation site until he died in June of that year. The two priests of the Mara section were "shared" by the next two sections to the south, Mako and Biogolokare. These three sections together, as has been explained above, make up a larger named unit known as Dola, in opposition to the two southernmost sections, Ariholi and Gongulobibi, the members of which are often referred to collectively as "downstream people".

Although there was a priest of the Garakuli clan, he was one in name only, since he no longer officiates at public rituals. This is because he has ceased to exploit the land along the Omo which is associated with his clan, and has gone to live and to cultivate with his wife's people, who are of the Mako section. The members of his own section, Gongulobibi, whom he has left without a priest, now attend the bio lama ceremonies held by the Ariholi priest, Bule. The relationship of a priest to the community with which he is associated can best be understood by considering the most characteristic use he makes of his ritual power - to control rainfall.

As was explained in the Introduction, the Mursi live in a semi-arid area, the mean annual rainfall of which probably lies

between 15 and 20 inches. Rain, which is not only scarce, but also very localised, constitutes the principal limiting factor, and the chief element of uncertainty in both the agricultural and pastoral activities of the Mursi. The control of it, therefore, to a great extent holds the key to Mursi prosperity, and it is by the positive use of his rain-making powers that a priest is considered to benefit the community most, while the negative use of them is among his most characteristic sanctions.

Rain-making rites are an integral part of the rituals performed on each of the four days of a bio lama, whether or not it is held in a period of drought. In the latter circumstances, a priest may hold a separate ceremony specifically for bringing rain. In 1970, sufficiently heavy rain had fallen by the 10th of March to enable planting to begin on that day in the bushbelt cultivation areas, in the north of the country. In the previous year, however, there had been no significant rainfall by the end of March, when Duli held a bio lama (31st March to 3rd April). By the middle of April, however, there had still not been sufficient rain to enable planting to take place, and the situation had become very serious. For, the longer planting is delayed, the more likely it is that the crop will suffer from the hot, dry conditions of July and August. On the 14th April, therefore, Konyonomora held a rain-making ceremony at his cattle settlement which, in 1969, was situated about midway between the Rivers Ngurug and Mara and about thirty minutes' walk

from that of Duli. On the night of the 17th April, there was a heavy fall of what was described as "Konyonomora's rain", and planting began on the morning of the 18th April.

It is, strictly speaking, inaccurate to say that a priest "makes" rain, for it is a manifestation "par excellence" of the barari, and can therefore have no contingent explanation. The source of rain is tumwi, which means both the sky, as an empirically observable phenomenon, and the absolute power which resides there and from which men, together with their crops and animals, have originated. At any public ritual a special fire is kindled, the smoke from which is said to "attract the attention" of tumwi. A priest is also said to "korl tumwi", which might be translated as "pray", were it not for the fact that he does not so much ask for a desired state of affairs to occur as declare that it will occur - the rain will come, the cattle will recover, and raiders will be repelled. The word korl is used to describe the requests that men make of each other for food and tobacco, which are really more like demands, especially when it is clear that the person asked is well able to satisfy them. But although the Mursi attribute certain human faculties to tumwi, any attempt to engage them in anthropomorphic speculations on this subject is sure to be met by a version of Wittgenstein's dictum that "whereof we cannot speak, thereof we should be silent" (1922, p. 55). Tumwi must therefore be regarded as a largely impersonal being.

Mursi priests should not be thought of as "ritual experts" who are in possession of certain techniques which enable them to manipulate the forces of nature, but as permanent "conductors" of absolute power from which the community must never be separated. Thus, not only should a priest never travel beyond the borders of Mursi country but neither, as far as my experience goes, does he leave, even for short periods, that part of the country with which his own local community is associated. (The exception that proves the rule being the Garakuli priest mentioned earlier). A priest should also be actively associated with the subsistence activities of the community, if these activities are to prosper. It is believed, for example, that the crops will not succeed unless planting is initiated by a priest. When the tribe was migrating into new territories, the priests drove their cattle before those of other men, while the same procedure is adopted today if the cattle have to be moved, under pressure from raiders, into tsetse infested areas. Again, it is not so much that a priest has to perform particular ritual actions at every stage in the cycle of subsistence activities, as that his mere physical presence within the community is considered to make a vital contribution to its well-being.

This can be seen also if we look at the negative aspects of a priest's role. For, as a "conductor" of absolute power, he is also a source of danger, since he can let loose this power into

the contingent, human world indiscriminately, with devastating effects, and without having to perform any particular ritual actions. The following explanation was given to me, by an informant in the Bennakora area, of why 1969 was a disastrously poor year for rain, while in 1970 there was enough for an excellent crop.

In November 1968 a full brother of the priest Bule was shot dead, following an argument over the ownership of a cow, by X, the third son of his father's senior wife. About eight months later, at the height of the 1969 drought, X was himself killed, as a result of another dispute, unconnected with the first. Then, in March 1970, X's two elder full brothers were among the four Mursi who were killed during a large-scale cattle raid on the Bennakora settlements, and in which 24 raiders died. According to my informant, the murder of the priest's brother led not only to the deaths of X and of his two brothers, but also to the failure of the rains in 1969. These results followed not from the priest's performance of, or failure to perform, particular ritual actions, but from the fact that he had been placed in a ritually unpropitious state.

This was one man's view of events, and not necessarily that of every member of the population. I offer it merely as an illustration of the indiscriminate way in which the sanctions

available to a priest are considered to operate. For although, according to this account, Bule was able to take very effective revenge on the family of his mother's murderer, the whole community was also made to suffer, regardless of local group or kin affiliations (and including, therefore, the members of Bule's own descent group and territorial section). It is as though a priest, so far from being a "ritual expert", is unable to control, in so far as he is human, the power he conducts into the human world. He is rather a human embodiment of absolute power which is indifferent to individual and local interests and in the face of which men are made aware of the vicissitudes of death, disease and hunger to which they are all subject.

A priest is therefore a source of danger within the community, as well as a vital means of contact with the absolute. But he does not play an entirely passive role - that is to say, he both gives orders and makes pronouncements about what will occur if they are not carried out. These orders are characteristically concerned with the maintenance of harmonious relations between individuals and local groups at times of public crisis - such as during droughts and epidemics, and when the threat of attack from neighbouring groups is particularly serious. At such times a priest will order the men of his area to put away their duelling poles and the women to put away their heavy metal bracelets¹, so

1. A woman fights by attempting to rain blows from her bracelets onto her opponent's head, with a flailing movement of the arms.

as to reduce the likelihood of a chance argument leading to an exchange of blows. Organised duelling contests, between young men from different parts of the country, will also be banned. The purpose of these prohibitions is to prevent the shedding of human blood within the society. If this should occur during such a moratorium, however trivial the circumstances, a state of pollution ensues which can only be removed by means of a cleansing ceremony in which the participants are smeared in the blood and chyme of a sacrificial animal. This ceremony is thought of as cleaning the blood not only from those immediately concerned, but also from the land, and from the priest, who does not officiate at the ceremony and who may or may not be present at it.

This clearly illustrates the way in which a priest is identified not simply with a particular territorial base (upon his continued association with which the efficacy of his ritual power is considered to depend), but also with the tribal land in general. It also shows that, although he needs a local congregation in order to perform his ritual functions, a priest is to some extent a tribal figure. He is associated with both the land and the sky (tumwi), his most characteristic function being the control of that element which physically unites these two, enabling the land to support its human population: rain. Finally, it can also be seen that a priest represents a standard of social harmony to which men must aspire, but which is, in practice, unattainable.

I said earlier that the office of priesthood is confined to three clans, Komorte, Bumai, and Garakuli. Only the first of these, however, may properly be called a "priestly" clan, for all the members of the Komorte clan, unlike those of the other two, are in some sense "Komoreenna" (the plural form of Komoru). It is immediately apparent, therefore, that there is some indeterminacy in succession to the office - in the first place because all the members of the Komorte clan are, in a sense, priests, and in the second place because it appears that members of non-priestly (in the sense just noted) clans may also become priests, or at least have done so at some point in the past. Such indeterminacy may be considered either from the point of view of the system, or from the point of view of the individuals who seek to gain influence within it. The first approach leads us to consider the "gains and costs" to the society of a particular system of "transferring scarce resources"¹, while the second leads us to consider the means by which individuals seek to gain access to these resources. In this section I take the first of these two possible lines of approach, because the second presupposes more information than I

1. cf. J. Goody, 1966, p.2: "In this introduction I examine some of the variable elements in systems of succession and try to assess the gains and costs of each of these modes of transferring scarce resources."

have as yet provided, both about the kind of influence a priest exercises and about the way in which influence is commonly exercised in this society in the context of public decision-making.

The Mursi say that a priest is succeeded by his eldest son, but that his successor has to be approved by the people. This public approval is given formally by means of an installation ceremony which may not be held until several years after a man has begun to assume the public duties of a priest. Until he has been so installed, a priest does not wear the insignia of his office, which consist of a necklace and a lion's skin and mane. Thus, there may be said to exist a "probationary" period, during which it is possible for the merits of the various eligibles¹ to be assessed by the community, and by means of which "some allowance can be made for achievement as well as ascription" (Goody, 1966, p.27). To be eligible for the office, a man must belong not only to one of the three clans in question, but also to a particular descent group within it. In the case of the Komorte clan, there are two such descent groups - those of Bule and Konyonomora, the former being associated with the south and the latter with the north of the country. Every male member of these priestly descent groups is a potential holder of the office, within the limits set by the rules of seniority in patrilineal descent.

1. The terminology I adopt here is that of Goody, my indebtedness to whose account of "Corporateness and indeterminacy in dynastic succession" (1966, pp. 24-39) will be evident to the reader.

As Goody points out, "no dynastic system can operate on a completely 'ideal' basis; the most ruthless unigeniture must allow for occasional reversion to a collateral line should the king die or be without issue or should such issue die; high rates of infantile mortality make the provision of a plurality of heirs a measure of common prudence" (1966, p.27). The office of priesthood among the Mursi, furthermore, demands certain minimum qualities of its incumbent. He must be mentally and physically fit, he must be willing to undertake the duties involved, he must not have killed a fellow tribesman, and he must be a fully adult, and therefore married, member of the tribe. Thus, a priest will be succeeded by a brother, or by some other close patrilineal kinsman, if he has no male heir who can satisfy these requirements. There results, in practice, a form of "modified unigeniture" or "collateral elimination" which is best illustrated by means of an actual genealogy of a priestly descent group.

Figure 14 shows the genealogy, as far as I am able to reconstruct it, of the priestly descent group of Konyonomora. The current priest, whom I refer to as Konyonomora even though this name applies to all the members of his descent group, is shown as the fifth office holder. He took over the role from his elder full brother, by the rule of seniority, when the latter died about five years ago, but he has not yet been formally installed in office. The previous priest had two wives, the senior of whom

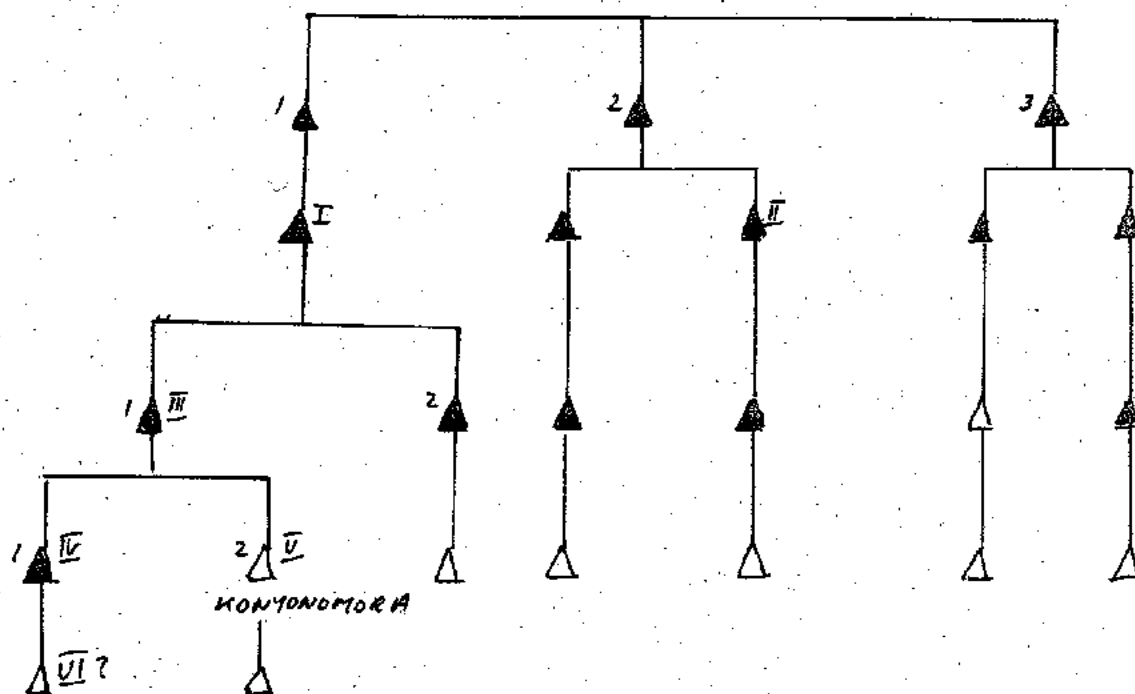


Figure 14:

Recent order of succession within the Priestly descent group of Konyonmora.

- Order of office holders shown in Roman numerals
- Birth order of siblings shown in Arabic numerals



Photograph 22:

Konyonoma

was inherited by Konyonomora and the other by a son of a junior wife of the third office holder. Although Konyonomora has a son (about ten years old) by his own wife, it is said that he will be succeeded by the son (about fourteen years old) of his predecessor's senior wife, whom he has inherited. (I have indicated this possible line of succession by means of the question-mark against the sixth incumbent). The possibility that a man may be a priest while his children are not is demonstrated if we look at the third ascending generation on the figure, where it can be seen that the office reverted, temporarily, to a collateral line. Goody calls this a "most explosive system" in the context of his discussion of succession to the office of kingship (1966, p.36). One reason why it does not have "explosive" consequences in the case of Mursi priesthood is that the Priest's is an essentially religious role, out of which it is not possible to make significant political capital. This will be argued in Chapter 10, but such an argument presupposes an account of the way in which influence is exercised in public decision-making.

In order to gain some idea of the sort of residential group in which a priest may be found living, the reader should turn to Fig. 10, where the composition of Konyonomora's 1970 cattle settlement is illustrated. Comparison with other examples of settlement composition given in the thesis (Figs. 4, 14, 12, 15; and 17) indicates that there was nothing remarkable about this settlement, whether as to size, or internal relationships.

Chapter 8: The Exercise of Influence¹

In this chapter, I describe the way in which public decision-making typically proceeds among the Mursi, and come to some preliminary conclusions about the typical attributes of an influential man. One form of public decision-making - that involved in the settling of disputes - has already been described, and I am therefore principally concerned here with decisions affecting public policy, although I consider that both forms of decision-making may be treated as essentially similar from the point of view of the exercise of influence.

The Mursi word methe (pl. methinya) refers to a meeting at which a number of men² discuss some issue which is public in the sense that it may be assumed to affect all members of the community equally. Whenever people meet, of course, they are likely to discuss matters of current public concern, but the seriousness

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1. By the "exercise of influence" I mean, following Lasswell and Kaplan, the process of "affecting the policies of others than the self" (1952, p.71). I adopt this definition because I wish to distinguish influence from power, which the same authors define as "the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivations for nonconformity with the policies intended" (1952, loc. cit.).
 2. I have, on one occasion, seen a woman speak in public before a predominantly male audience, but this is such a rare occurrence that public speaking may be regarded as a prerogative of adult males - that is to say, of men who have achieved rora status, and who are therefore members of an age set.

and formality with which they do so varies. To discuss something with complete informality is described by the verb tirain, which may be translated as "to chat" or "to gossip". The essential feature of such a discussion, however serious the matters being discussed may be, is that the participants are not attempting to make a decision, from which some form of concerted action will follow. When this latter condition does prevail, the discussion is known as a methe, the distinctive feature of which being that individuals are allowed to speak without interruption, provided they are not considered to be getting too far off the point, or to be wasting time in some other way.

Any discussion which has this minimum degree of formality about it is known as a methe. Such meetings, however, vary greatly, both in size and in the formality with which they are conducted, and I propose to make a distinction (which the Mursi do not) between "discussions" and "debates". A discussion is a meeting which satisfies the minimum requirements of a methe which have just been mentioned, and no more. A debate involves certain further formalities, is attended by a relatively large number of people, and is held in conjunction with some type of ritual performance.

A discussion might occur, for example, if it were necessary for a number of men who were living in nearby dry-season cattle camps to decide what concerted action to take as a result of a

recent series of night-time cattle raids. Such a meeting would be likely to take place under a shade tree at some common watering point for the cattle of the area, where the adult men would be in the habit of spending a large part of the day. A discussion, in the sense in which I am using the term, emerges from the general chatting and gossiping when one of the individuals present starts to make a speech, signalling his intention by means of the conventional phrases and expressions with which all public speeches begin. If the others present fall silent, and if the first speaker is followed by a second, then a discussion is under way, each individual who speaks doing so from wherever he happens to be sitting. The speeches continue until a consensus, which is summed up by one of the last men to speak, has been achieved.

Debates are more formal and involve larger numbers, but follow the same basic pattern and are also resolved by consensus alone, there being no individual or group empowered to decide between competing opinions. The increased formality of a debate is, to some extent, a function of the larger number of people present. The speakers, for example, make their speeches while pacing back and forth in front of the audience, holding a rifle, a spear, or just a stick in their hands. Large numbers also make it practicable to give expression to age and sex divisions in the seating arrangements of the audience. But while the familiar sight of a speaker pacing back and forth in front of a group of

men sitting under a shade tree is the most obvious distinguishing feature of a debate from the point of view of an onlooker, there is a further factor which distinguishes these meetings from those which I have called discussions, and which indicates that a debate is an occasion not only for the making of decisions, but also for the affirmation of group norms and of the shared needs and aspirations of its members. For debates are always linked to some public ritual performance, and should perhaps be thought of as an integral part of these rituals.

In my experience, all public rituals, including weddings and the "cleansing" ceremonies mentioned in the previous chapter, may provide an occasion for the discussion, by means of formal debates, of issues of general public concern. This is hardly surprising, of course, in view of the fact that public rituals are themselves indicators of the state of the human and physical environment. Even bio lama ceremonies do not occur at any fixed time of year, and they may therefore be held to coincide with some particularly pressing problem facing the community which requires for its solution not only ritual action but also public discussion. A bio lama, since it is the only annually recurring occasion on which virtually the total human and animal populations of a local area are gathered together in one place, and since it lasts for four consecutive days, provides a unique opportunity for such public discussion.

But the ritual performance which is most typically and minimally associated with a debate is the killing and public eating of a stock animal, usually one which is suffering from an illness which it is considered unlikely to survive. With the apparently increasing incidence of bovine trypanosomiasis in this area, there is no shortage of occasions of this type, and it is by no means the case that every such meat-eating is made the occasion for a debate. Whether it is or not will depend upon the state of "current affairs" and upon the mood and number of those present. A man who wishes to raise a particular issue may make a speech, but the issue may not be taken up, or, if it is, the debate may fizzle out after only a few speeches. When the sick animal is its owner's name-ox, however, it is more likely that a debate will ensue, for people are summoned from a distance of several miles on such occasions by the firing of rifle shots or by the blowing of horns. Since the first symptoms of trypanosomiasis may appear several months before an animal dies of it, it is obviously possible, if this is the disease in question, to arrange the meat-eating for a time when there are important matters to be discussed.

The public killing and eating of a stock animal is an activity which, perhaps more obviously, and certainly more frequently, than any other, gives expression to the significance of age differences in the maintenance of orderly social life. Through the etiquette involved in the killing, cooking and eating of the animal,

every member of the community present, from the young boys who collect firewood and do the cooking to the older men who distribute the meat according to strict rules to their juniors, is made aware of his position within the ideal authority structure of the society. This structure is also represented by the physical distribution of those present, since men sit in separate eating groups according to age grade status, while women, if present, form a group of their own. Men of the senior grade, being few in number, rarely form an eating group of their own, but join instead that of the bara. It is to this group that the choice pieces of meat are taken, some of which is then redistributed to the rora and teru. The intestines of the animal are also taken to the older men, who scrutinize them carefully in order to divine the course of future events. Ability to perform this kind of divination is considered to be a matter of experience only, although some men have a better reputation at it than others, having scored a number of notable successes in the past. At a public meat-eating, therefore, a stock animal is used as a means of summing up and reaffirming the ideal authority structure upon which the maintenance of ordered social relations is considered to depend, and this has an obvious significance as a prelude to public decision-making.

Having described in outline the procedures involved in public decision-making, I come now to the question of how certain

individuals are able to exercise more influence than others on such occasions, gaining in the process public recognition of their leadership qualities. It is not difficult to recognise such men. They are the speakers who are listened to without interruption and whose speeches tend to come towards the end of a debate, not because there is any set order of speakers, but because the very nature of their contributions reduces the need for further discussion. These are the men who present an argument, or sum up a situation in such a way that they make, or are allowed to make, a positive and significant contribution to the achievement of consensus. The Mursi have a word by means of which they refer to men who consistently make such decisive speeches at public discussions and debates - they call them jalaba (sing. jalabai).

If one asks a Mursi for the meaning of this term, one will be told that it denotes a man who speaks well in public, who is able to put together an argument fluently and forcefully, who never loses his temper or becomes excited at a meeting, who therefore has a way of enabling a discussion to reach a conclusion, and who is an authority on the traditional norms and practices of the tribe. One is given, therefore, a list of personal characteristics, which serve to distinguish a class of men from those who either do not possess them, or who possess them to a lesser degree. The use of the term jalabai to denote a particular individual therefore depends upon social consensus alone, in the sense that it is theoretically

possible for two people who are in possession of all the relevant information to disagree, nevertheless, about its correct predication of particular subjects. As Maurice Bloch has written of the raiamandreny who play an important part in public decision-making among the Merina of Madagascar, "Becoming, and therefore being" a jalabai "is an ambiguous business" (1971, p.46).

For there is no moment in time at which a man may be said to have become one, since it is not an office to which men are appointed or elected, or which they inherit. Nor is it a "corporate office" (Dyson-Hudson, 1966, p.212) to which men accede on the achievement of a certain age. It should be noted here that the same term is used by the Borana Galla (whose territory lies within 100 miles of Mursi country, to the southeast) to refer to men who have the same general characteristics as Mursi jalaba, but who are formally appointed to office by the Quallu, the Boran "ritual figurehead"¹. Whether or not the Mursi borrowed this word from

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1. cf. Baxter, 1966, p.244: "The Quallu appoints officers, jalaba, to represent him in different grazing areas of Borana. Appointment depends upon achievement and prestige, and confirms the reputation as a 'case-cutter' a man has already acquired. Appointment to this office is marked by the appointer dispatching a skin wristlet, cut from a specially sacrificed goat to the appointee."

Sudanese itinerant merchants were apparently known as jalaba in northern and central Ethiopia during the last century (Abir, 1968, p.51; Trimmingham, 1965, p.219; and Gunnison, 1966, p.119), and it is possible that the term was applied by the local people to men of importance in public affairs by analogy with these traders.

the Boran, it is not difficult to imagine them doing without it. In the first place, it does not seem to occur often, in any sphere of discourse. In the second place, it is never used to refer to a bounded group of individuals, for the characteristics which make up the verbal definition of the term jalabai ideally belong to every member of the two senior age grades, bara and karo. There is a term, kumin, which is used to refer collectively to the members of both of these grades and which may be translated as "elders". But the karo are physically less active and also less numerous than the bara, and they may therefore be regarded as "retired" elders. When it is necessary to refer to a group of secular leaders, the term kumin or, more commonly, the term bara, will be used.

This terminology serves to perpetuate what might be called the "political doctrine" (See above, p. 55) that only men of a certain age possess the characteristics which are necessary to make them effective leaders. But, of course, not all men who have reached the bara grade are influential in public decision-making, and of those who are, some are more influential than others. The term jalabai is a recognition of this fact: it refers to men who are influential in practice. It is a term which enables the Mursi to think about and reflect upon their system of public decision-making, but not one which it is necessary for them to employ to work it. Indeed, it will be suggested later that it is essential

to the working of the system that those who are actually influential within the community should not be enumerated and collected into a formally defined group.

There are, consequently, certain minimum conditions imposed, by the expectations of those who accept influence, on anyone aspiring to a recognised position of leadership within the community.¹ The logically prior condition of all is regular attendance at, and active participation in, public meetings of all sorts, which requires both conscious effort and physical stamina. Those who make such an effort are not necessarily among the most respected members of the community, and it is possible, as will be seen later, to lose respect by making too much of an effort. On the other hand, men who are highly respected in everyday life may never open their mouths at a public meeting, with the result that they would not be regarded as jalaba.

It seems (such is the strength of what I referred to above as the political doctrine) that a man must normally have reached the

1. cf. Simon, 1953, p.511: "If we accept the proposition . . . that expectations of consequences are a major determinant of behaviour, then we can use such expectations, so long as the situation remains stable, to estimate where power lies It seems to me that this is the valid core of the naive method we commonly employ as political scientists when, seeking to determine the power structure in a given situation, we ask the participants what the power structure is. This procedure is valid to the extent that the expectations of the participants constitute the power base."

bara grade before the term jalabai will be used of him in the present tense. Men of the rora grade who make the right sort of contribution to public meetings may be referred to as "future jalaba", while old men, who were once influential debaters but who no longer take an active part in public affairs, are "former jalaba". But it cannot be said that this is a rigidly applied rule, for the grades have a wide age-span, and senior members of the rora grade, who are of approximately the same age as junior members of the bara grade, may also be called jalaba. All that can be said with certainty is that, other things being equal, a man of the bara grade is likely to exercise more influence at a public meeting than a man of the rora grade. This is not necessarily because such a man actually possesses to a greater degree the various qualities of a jalabai (although, of course, they are all the sort of qualities which can only improve with experience and practice) but because, as a member of the bara grade, he is expected to possess them. As long as the political doctrine maintains its credibility, people will behave as though men of a certain age were more influential than their juniors, and indeed, they will be. It can be assumed that such men will be listened to more attentively, and that their speeches will be less subject to interruption than those of younger men, so that they will have a greater opportunity to be persuasive, simply by reason of their age.

Although it is expected that the most influential speeches at a debate will be made by members of the two senior age grades, these men are not able to force the meeting to accept a decision through the use of sanctions whether natural or supernatural (See above, p. 13/). Influential men are the self-appointed guardians of tribal tradition. The willingness of people to accept their influence may be regarded as a recognition of the fact that they render a valuable service to the community by making authoritative pronouncements which relieve others of the need to carry out the reasoning, or gain the experience necessary to act effectively in a given situation.¹ A jalabai is "an authority" even if he is not "in authority": his right to make pronouncements (rather than to issue commands) "derives from his personal history and achievements" and not from a set of rules which determine who has this right and in what context.²

But the most frequently mentioned attribute of an influential man is the ability to speak well in public, and none of the characteristics I have so far mentioned will help a man gain public recognition as a jalabai unless he also has a reputation for making moderate and

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1. cf. Friedrich, 1964, p. 42 : Authority "bridges the gap between rational demonstration and the requirements of the concrete situation."
 2. cf. Benn and Peters, 1959, pp. 19-21 for a discussion of the difference between what it means to say that a man is "in authority" and what it means to say that he is "an authority."

articulate speeches at public meetings. Compulsive public speakers, who attempt to speak on any and every subject and who often reach such a pitch of excitement that they become quite unintelligible (not only to an outside observer) are regarded as something of a joke. It is not only the tone of a speech but also the skill with which it is constructed that impresses an audience. Mursi public speeches tend to be very allusive, simply because this is a small and geographically fairly isolated language community, but some men excel in the subtlety with which they employ allusions and images in their speeches, thereby achieving a terseness of style which is clearly appreciated by the audience. It seems to be popularly assumed that men either have or do not have the ability to speak well in public, and that possession of this ability is the principal determinant of an individual's exercise of influence in public affairs.

But while such an assumption must be given due weight as part of the expectations of the participants, it over-simplifies matters in at least three ways. Firstly, it ignores the fact that the making of a public speech and the attempt to mediate a dispute are more or less risky undertakings. This is due to the high degree of informality which characterises public decision-making procedures among the Mursi. Thus, it is not only what a man says and how he says it, but also the point in the proceedings at which he decides to intervene, which determines not only how his speech is received

but also, in many cases, his ability to make a speech at all. Secondly, the popular emphasis on public speaking ability ignores the fact that a speaker takes his social personality with him to a meeting, which makes it impossible to separate out the effect of what he says, and how he says it from the effect of the audience's awareness of who is saying it.¹ From which there follows a third point, namely that public meetings are a means not only of settling matters of current concern to the community, but also of testing out in public the social standing of individuals, and of establishing a rank order between them. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of these three points. I begin by presenting what amounts to an ideal model of the decision-making process, holding constant the social personalities of the participants and assuming that the exercise of influence is a goal which they are equally motivated to achieve and which they pursue in an equally rational fashion.

I said earlier that what distinguishes a methe from general gossiping and chatting, called "tirain", is that individuals

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1. Bloch, 1971, p.46. "They [raiamandreny] are maintained in their position by their wisdom and their ability to make formal speeches. However, . . . this ability to make speeches, and this wisdom may be as much the result as the cause of their influence."

are listened to in silence, thus making their contributions in the form of speeches. But most speeches do not end before the speaker has been subjected to such comments from the audience as "sit down" and "we have understood". Speakers who are thought to be wasting time by getting too far off the point, or by grinding a private axe, or by being inordinately repetitive, find themselves having to contend with a rising tide of such comments, against which it is impossible to battle on for long. Faced with such a situation, a speaker has to choose between taking the hint, or attempting to reassert his hold on the meeting. Since the latter course is by far the most dangerous, in terms of loss of face, most speakers go quietly. By the time a speech comes to an end, the next speaker is already standing, so to speak, "in the wings", impatiently awaiting his turn to begin.

Since there are no rules of precedence determining the order of speakers, it is a matter of the would-be speaker's individual judgement when to take up such a position, a move by which he suggests that the audience has heard enough from the current speaker. On the one hand, he must not let his impatience to speak lead him into the trap of rising too early, before the speaker he wishes to replace has lost his hold on the meeting, for he will then suffer the rebuff of being told to sit down before he has opened his mouth, or the embarrassment of having to stand in full view of the audience while the current speaker

continues, undeterred. Having committed such an error of judgement, some men go on to make the further mistake of reacting with a show of pique, or with the sullen announcement that they won't make a speech at all. On the other hand, a would-be speaker, conscious of the fact that other men are also looking for an opportunity to air their views, must attempt to judge correctly the earliest possible moment at which to make his move, thereby establishing his right to speak next.

Since would-be speakers are under pressure to detect the slightest sign of weakening in a speaker's hold over the audience, this in turn puts pressure on speakers to be brief and to convince the meeting that they have something useful to contribute. Most speeches, in fact, do not last more than five to seven minutes, and it is clear from the number of speakers who begin by declaring that they intend to be brief that this is a consciously valued quality of a public speech. The successful speakers are those who are not only instrumental in bringing to an end the speeches immediately preceding their own, but who also do not finish speaking themselves until they are ready. But it is by no means the case that the most influential speeches are the longest. Knowing when to stop is just as important as knowing when, and indeed whether, to begin.

The same ability to judge a situation correctly which is needed to make a successful contribution to a debate is also

required to intervene successfully in a dispute and, as the "Case of the Disputed Rifle"¹ illustrates, several unsuccessful attempts at mediation may be made by different individuals before a dispute is finally settled. The same powers of verbal persuasion and the same familiarity with traditional norms and practices which stand a debator in good stead are also among the principal assets of a successful mediator, but he needs above all a sensitivity to the personalities and issues involved, as well as to the temper of the onlookers, which enables him to intervene at the right moment and to know whether there is any point in his intervening at all.

The number of potential mediators who are available to bring about a settlement in any particular dispute is bound to be practically unlimited, a fact which is recognised by the use of the term kwethana to refer to all the onlookers. This is because, although disputes involve the close patrilineal kin of the principals, they do not serve to affirm local group boundaries. Thus, the only negative condition that a potential mediator has to satisfy is that he should not be a close patrilineal kinsman of the participants. His chances of "bringing off" a successful mediation are clearly enhanced if he is linked in some other way to one or both of the disputants, but again, such is the proliferation of affinal and uterine links within any local group that men with such qualifications are unlikely to be in short supply. If we assume then that successful mediation of disputes is one of the

1. See above, pp. 232-38

means whereby men seek to exercise influence in public affairs, it follows that at any yaiye there will be several men present who have this aim in mind. It follows also that they will all be looking for the earliest possible opening that seems to give them a realistic chance of success. Again, over-eagerness, leading a man to intervene before the principals have calmed down sufficiently, or to over-estimate the significance of his relationship to one or both of them, is likely to be rewarded by failure.

I have been emphasising in the last few pages, by means of an ideal model, the risks involved in active participation in public decision-making. I noted earlier that it is possible to be a respected figure in everyday life without incurring such risks, and it can be seen that, within the terms of the model, failure to take an active part in public meetings merely reflects an individual's preference for "playing safe". But, of course, "nothing ventured, nothing gained", and everytime a man intervenes successfully in a public meeting, or in a dispute, he reduces the risks involved in making such an intervention in the future. It comes to be expected that he will make a positive and useful contribution and, by the self-fulfilling prophecy, the chances that he will do so are increased. Such a man will be listened to more attentively and suffer fewer interruptions because, by means of a combination of good judgement and good luck, he has built up a history of personal "successes" which affects the expectations

of his audience, thereby increasing the likelihood that he will make a decisive speech. Thus it can be seen that, even within the limitations set by the model, it is an over-simplification to explain the differential exercise of influence in public decision-making by the ability of those concerned to make fluent and skillful speeches. Some men face fewer risks than others.

This brings me to the second point I made earlier - namely that it is impossible to separate the effect of what a man says at a public meeting from the effect of his listeners' awareness of who is saying it. By means of what other factors, apart from "good judgement and good luck", can a man seek to reduce the element of risk I have been talking about? Since influential men are not "in authority", there being no rules which determine who has the right to issue orders, and in what context, it is obviously necessary to look for such factors in the "personal history and achievements" of individuals. Having considered the importance of a man's "history" within the decision-making process itself, I now want to consider the extent to which control over economic resources, whether agricultural, pastoral or human enables a man to exercise influence through the making of speeches at public meetings. There are two logically separable ways in which this could work. Firstly, such tangible economic assets could provide a man with a direct means of forcing others, his debtors or dependants, to accept his policies. Such a man's influence would be backed up by his ability

to inflict, or to threaten to inflict others with deprivations and to offer them indulgences: he would therefore exercise power. Secondly, economic wealth may simply bestow reputation, in the same way as conformity to moral values, creating a presumption in favour of any speaker who possesses it, and thereby helping him to exercise influence.

It is, of course, a safe assumption that the ownership of economic assets always enables a man to affect the behaviour of others who are not so well endowed and who have become dependent upon him. If a man's "domain of influence"¹ is more or less totally comprised of such dependants, his exercise of influence may be interpreted as a process of "calling in" tangible debts. If on the other hand, the majority of those who accept the influence of a wealthy man are in no tangible way his dependants, it follows that his wealth can only be relevant to their acceptance of his influence in the sense that it adds to his status and reputation in their eyes. This may be expressed by saying that the "base value"² of influence is, in the one case, the material indebtedness of those who accept it, and in the other the reputation of the influencer. I now wish to show, by giving some consideration to a number of acknowledged jalaba, that it is only in this second sense

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1. Lasswell and Kaplan define this as "the persons whose policies are affected".
 2. cf. Lasswell and Kaplan, 1952, p.83: "The base value of an influence relation is that which is the condition for the exercise of the influence in question."

that control over economic assets can reduce the risks which are faced by those who participate actively in public meetings, and that even so, it is not a necessary condition of the exercise of influence on such occasions.

My first example, Saba Ramai, is about sixty-five years old and an occupant of the karo age grade and of the Mara section. The composition and lay-out of his 1970 cattle settlement (No. 14 on Map 3) has already been described (Figure 12). He has married three wives, one of whom is dead, and inherited a fourth from an elder brother. Of his fourteen surviving children, including those of his inherited wife, four daughters and one son are married. His married son, and the husbands of two of his married daughters, were members of his settlement in 1970. He is a member of the Mangwi clan, the founders of which are said to have been originally Komorte. The two clans are therefore considered to be "brothers" and do not intermarry. His wives cultivate on the Omo at Alaka, where the ownership of cultivation rights is shared between his own descent group and that of Konyonomora. During the 1970 wet season, one of his wives cultivated along the River Mara and the other along the Belbel.

It is clear from the analysis made of his settlement in Chapter 5 (See above, pp. 207-8) that control over natural and human resources can be used, through marriage, to create links of

dependence which, in turn, enable a man to gain a position of eminence within the community, a position which must also help him to gain an attentive hearing at public meetings. The point I wish to make here, however, is that, from the point of view of the exercise of influence in public decision-making, it is necessary to distinguish between the position a man occupies in relation to the other members of his settlement, and the position which he occupies as one of several jalaba within a local group comprised of the residents of all the settlements within a certain geographical area.¹ The exercise of influence within this wider group by such a man as Saba Ramai cannot be interpreted as a process of "calling in" tangible debts, even though the position which he occupies within his own settlement is susceptible to such an analysis.

A man can only become and remain a jalabai by influencing others in the context of public decision-making, the typical locus of which is the public meeting. The number of people present at a meeting is limited only by the same physical obstacles to travel and communication which exist in any small-scale pre-industrial society. As a jalabai, a man is not the permanent focus of a local group, but each meeting at which he is instrumental in enabling a decision to be made, brings into being for him, and for any

1. It should be remembered here that there is no correspondence in Mursi thought between kin groups and local groups, such as Evans-Pritchard describes for the Nuer, and therefore no tendency for ties of local residence to be assimilated to those of kinship.

other speaker who makes an equally important contribution, a temporary domain of influence, the extent of which varies with the nature of the meeting in question and with the concentration of settlement within a particular area. The importance of the first of these conditions will be evident from what I have already said about the varying size and formality of meetings, from a discussion between the members of a few neighbouring cattle camps, to the full scale, formal debates at a bio lama.

It is also evident that the more concentrated the settlement pattern of an area, the larger any public meeting which takes place within it is likely to be. The importance of this is that concentration of settlement varies with the state of the human and physical environment. By "human environment" I refer to those neighbouring groups of pastoralists between whom and the Mursi there exists a state of permanent or intermittent hostility. When the threat of cattle raids is particularly severe, the Mursi adopt the strategy of building their cattle settlements close together, so as to deter prospective raiders with the knowledge that they will not be able to get far with any cattle they manage to take, before a large pursuit party is raised. Thus, as was shown in Chapter 2, the 1970 pattern of cattle settlements, both in the north and south of the country, was more concentrated than in 1969 because of the cattle raids that took place over the 1969-1970 dry season.

Such a response to public crises has, apart from its obvious strategic benefits, the added advantage of maximising the leadership potential available to the community by reducing the physical obstacles to the attendance at meetings of relatively large numbers of people. Those who take an active part in these meetings are, on the other hand, presented with an opportunity to extend the domain of their influence.

I conclude that control over economic resources constitutes a potential base value of influence in public affairs, only in the sense that it adds to a man's reputation and therefore to the willingness of others to take him seriously, as would the successful achievement of any popularly valued goal. In other words, while ownership of economic assets may enable a man to make himself the focus of a small local group of "dependants", such is the "arena"¹ within which public decision-making proceeds, that the exercise of influence within it cannot be interpreted as a process of converting the accumulated material indebtedness of others into a readiness on their part to accept influence. This suggests that while the achievement of a "focal" position within a small local group may be one of the most effective ways of reducing the risks involved in active participation in public

1. By this I refer to the situation comprised by those who seek to exercise influence as well as those who come within the domain of influence. cf. Lasswell and Kaplan, 1952, p.78.

meetings, it is not a necessary condition of the exercise of influence in public affairs. I now turn to my second example, another member of the Mara section no less highly regarded as a jalabai than Saba Ramai, to show that this is indeed the case.

Mederibwi is between forty-five and fifty years old, and therefore of the para age grade. He has two wives and seven children, the oldest of whom is a girl of about sixteen. His wives cultivate on the Omo at Kuduma and in the bushbelt along the River Mara. In 1969 his cattle settlement was situated just north of the Mara, close enough to his cultivation site to provide a base for both pastoral and agricultural activities. Such a location was ruled out in 1970 by the Bodi threat, which necessitated that the cattle be kept further south. Until the end of July, therefore, when the sorgham had been harvested, he lived with his wives at his Mara cultivation site, keeping his cattle with those of his two full-brothers at the settlement shown as No. 6 on Map 3. When he finally moved to the cattle settlement, however, it was to join that of his brother-in-law, Dorba (No. 7 on Map 3).

The composition and lay-out of this settlement is shown on Figure 15. The first thing that will be noticed by comparing this with Saba Ramai's settlement (Figure 12) is that Mederibwi's contains only four married men. This, however, is nearer the average of 7.4 married men per settlement which is obtained by taking into account the total number of 1970 cattle settlements.

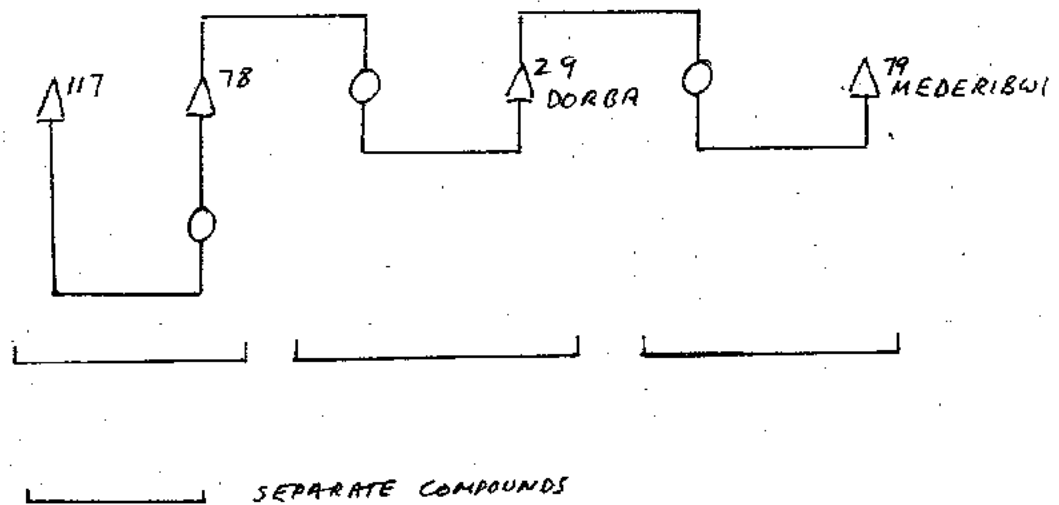


Figure 15:

Genealogical relationships between
married men of settlement 7.

Dorba established this settlement in the third week of July, while the two men shown on the figure as Nos. ⁷⁸3 and ¹¹⁷4, whose cattle he was looking after, were still at their Mara cultivation sites, as was Mederibwi. Dorba is between fifty and fifty-five years old, and has four wives and fifteen surviving children. Of his seven sons, the oldest is between twenty and twenty-five years old and was married in September 1970. Dorba therefore had adequate human resources at his disposal to meet the labour requirements of herding. Neither Nos. ⁷⁸3 and ¹¹⁷4, nor Mederibwi could meet these requirements from among their own offspring. No. ⁷⁸3 has six daughters and no sons, his eldest daughter being No. ¹¹⁷4's second wife. No. ¹¹⁷4 has two daughters by his first wife and a son, about two years old, by the second. Mederibwi has two sons, of approximately eight and ten years.

It is clear, therefore, that by their association with Dorba the other members of this settlement gained an economic advantage analogous to that derived by the other members of settlement 14 from their association with Saba Ramai. It should be pointed out, however, that each of the four married men of settlement 7 had close patrilineal kin living in nearby settlements, with whom they had chosen not to live, preferring instead to live with their affines. Mederibwi, for example, had left his cattle with his two full-brothers while he was at Mara, but when he came to live at the cattle settlements himself, he joined Dorba. This settlement was usually referred to by the people of the area as "Dorba's", in

recognition of the fact that he founded it and that his presence was the condition of its economic viability. He was, in general, a highly respected and successful man, evidence of which is provided by the fact that his son was able to dispense with the "installment" system of paying bride-price, handing over the agreed number of cattle in full, before the wedding took place in September. But, as far as my observations went, Dorba did not take an active part in public meetings, and is certainly not a recognised jalabai. Mederibwi, on the other hand, is not only a jalabai, but he was probably more actively engaged than any other in the public affairs of the Mara section during the crisis months of July, August and September 1970. Whatever the reason for this prominence of Mederibwi (a question which I consider later), it is clearly not the result of his control of natural or human resources. If settlement 7 was sometimes referred to as "Mederibwi's", this was not because of the position he occupied within it, but because of the part he played in the public "arena" of the Mara section. My next two examples make the same point, and I include them mainly because the individuals in question are among the principal "actors" of the next chapter.

Girimalori is between fifty-five and sixty years old, and has four wives, two of them inherited from two sons of his father's brother. His inherited wives have between them four sons and three daughters, two of the daughters but none of the sons being

married. He has four surviving children by his own wives: two daughters, of whom one is married, and two unmarried sons. All his wives cultivate on the Omo at Goladi and in the bushbelt along the River Bennakora. In 1970 he was a member of a cattle settlement on the right bank of the Bennakora (No. 39, Map 4) but he himself, having few cattle, was subsisting mainly on sorgham^u. His inherited wives were not living with him but, like many widows, were leading a relatively independent existence, supporting themselves by means of cultivation.

It is not necessary to describe in detail the composition of his settlement (Figure 16), for the main point I wish to make about it is a negative one: namely, there were no married men living in it who, in relation to Girimalori, came within the category of patrilineal kinsman, husband of close kinswoman (his two married daughters were living elsewhere with their husbands) or wife's patrilineal kinsman. His closest kin relationship to other married men in the settlement was one traced through his mother to four classificatory mother's brother's.

Thus, like Mederibwi, if Girimalori was the most prominent man of his settlement, this was not because the other members of it could be described as in any sense his personal followers or dependants, but because of the part he played in the public life of his local community. He is a member of the Mako section, which,

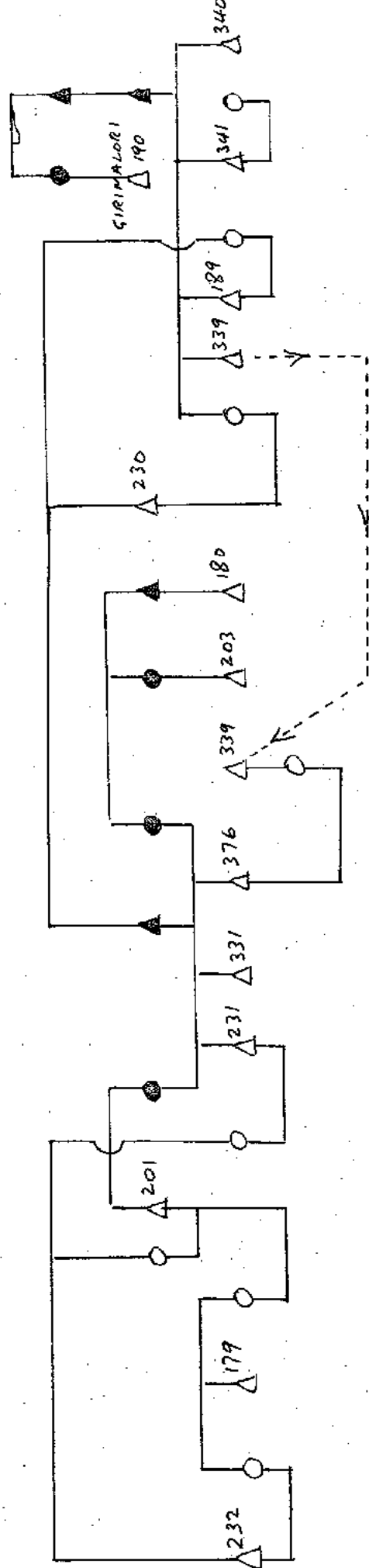
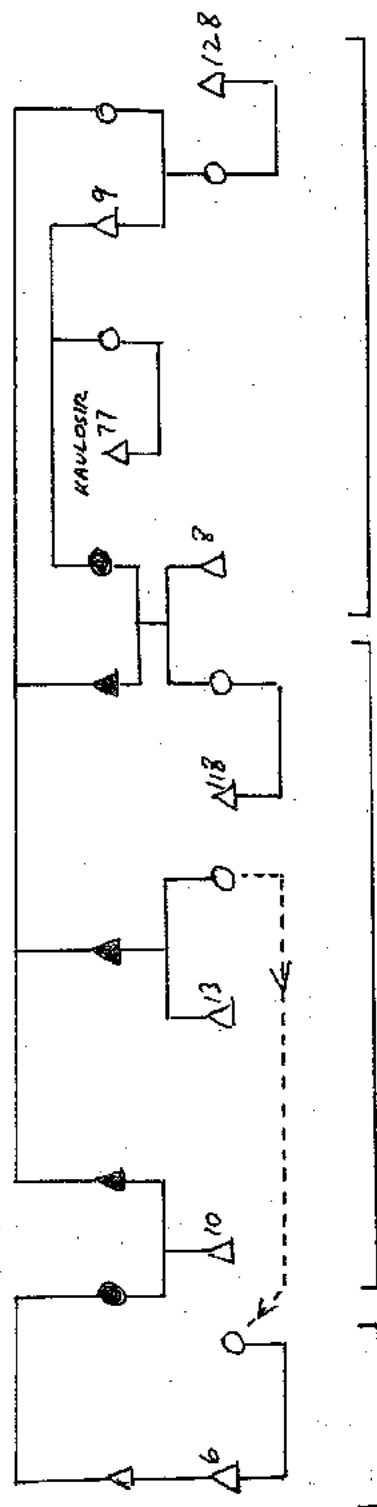


Fig. 16 : Genealogical Relationships Between Married Men of Settlement 39

together with Mara and Biogolokare makes up the wider unit known as Dola. It can be seen from Map 4 that there was an even greater concentration of cattle settlements in the south of the country than in the north, and that Girimalori's settlement was, unlike the other Mako settlements, in the thick of this concentration. This position can be accounted for easily enough by the desire of its members to remain as close as possible to their cultivation sites along the River Bennakora (the other Mako settlements consisted mainly of people who cultivated along the Dungwi). But by living in this settlement, Girimalori was obviously well placed, geographically, to play an active part in public decision-making, and it will be seen from the next chapter that his ability to do so depended upon his being "on hand" as events took place.

My last example of an influential man is Kaulosir, who is of the karo age grade, and between sixty and sixty-five years old. The majority of his patrilineal relatives live in the south of the country and are members of the Biogolokare section, but he has been living in the north since 1968. He still gives his section as Biogolokare, however, and says that he has only moved north temporarily. His cattle settlement in 1970 was No. 19 on Map 3 (the composition of which is shown on Fig. 7), where he shared a compound with his fourth, and junior, wife's brother, into whose descent group a daughter of his second wife had also married. His senior wife is dead, having been killed with her only



SEPARATE COMPOUNDS

Fig. 17: Genealogical Relationships Between Married Men of Settlement 19

son, by cattle raiders about ten years ago. His second and third wives, by whom he has ten surviving children, including two married sons and three married daughters, did not move north with him, but continued to cultivate on the Omo at Ilithey (where the cultivation rights belong to Kaulosir's descent group), and in the bushbelt at Bennakora.

He had with him in the north, therefore, only his fourth wife and her six children, the oldest of whom being a boy of about fourteen. This woman cultivated on the Omo at Kuduma in 1969-70, but in the following year she used Omo land associated with her own patrilineal descent group at Me'en. Her bushbelt cultivation site in 1970 was on the River Mara where Kaulosir spent most of his time, from the March planting to the June harvest, leaving his cattle to be herded, under the direction of his brother-in-law, by his fourteen year old son.

The four men I have described were undisputed jalaba who could be relied upon to gain a respectful and attentive hearing whenever they spoke at a public meeting, and who made the sort of speeches that are popularly regarded as the hallmark of an influential man. Only in the case of Saba Ramai, however, does the information I have given about them provide a clue to their distinctive role in public life. Thus, the following account by Evans-Pritchard of the attributes of a tut (meaning a "man of good standing" or "social leader") could be applied well enough to Saba Ramai in every

particular, but would have to be much qualified where the other three men are concerned: a " . . . social leader is usually a scion of an important lineage, the head of his own family, and master of his homestead and herd. He is generally also the eldest surviving son of his father's family and, therefore, head also of the joint family, the master of the hamlet Round such a man's homestead are clustered the homesteads of his brothers and married sons and often enough, the homesteads of his sisters' husbands and daughters' husbands." A man must obviously already have some standing in the community before people will take him seriously. He must be a married man with at least enough cattle to enable his personal interests to be identified with the overriding concern of the community for the defence and increase of its herds. It is also unlikely that he will be fully accepted as an influential and responsible man until he has reached the bara grade. But these minimum conditions are obviously not exclusive enough to explain why certain individuals are able to achieve positions of outstanding influence in public affairs. Unless we are prepared to accept, therefore, that the answer lies in a combination of speaking ability, good judgement and good fortune, the problem of the differential exercise of influence in public decision-making remains.

It can only be solved by considering the leadership of influential men in relation to that exercised by a Priest, and

the next two chapters are therefore devoted to bringing together these two types of leader. Meanwhile, I conclude this chapter by commenting briefly on the third point I made earlier when dismissing as over-simplified the view that the exercise of influence in public decision-making is a matter of public speaking ability.

I think it can be concluded from all that I have written in this chapter that what is at stake in a public meeting is not just the reaching of a decision on some matter of current concern, but also the reaching of a decision on status ranking within the community (Bloch, 1971, p.55). But I think it is also clear that public meetings are not simply a means by which status differences which have already been worked out in the arena of everyday life are, so to speak, publicly announced, but that they are themselves the principal arena within which competition for influence and social status is carried on. Indeed, it may be said that this is what they are "really about", since the solutions arrived at in debates appear to have an inevitability about them which makes them even forgone conclusions.

I wrote above (p. 271) that the holding of a public ritual can be seen as a response to a situation which requires not only ritual action but also public discussion. It can now be seen that such events also provide ambitious men with an

opportunity to engage in competition for influence, and it is not surprising therefore that, as will be seen in the next chapter, it is precisely these men (namely, acknowledged jalaba) whose job it is to force ritual performances on to an "unwilling" priest, in the interests of the community.

Chapter 9: Leaders in Action

In this chapter I provide an account, drawn from my observation of the course of public events in the south and north of the country between June and September 1970, of the way in which leadership is exercised in practice. I have already indicated that these were crisis months for the Mursi, due to the state of their external relations, and I therefore begin by outlining the way in which this situation of crisis developed, from about the time of the 1969 Omo harvest.

The Mursi consider themselves to be surrounded by hostile neighbours against whose predatory attacks they must constantly be on their guard. It can be seen from the map that their territory forms a particularly well-defined geographical unit, being bounded on three sides by permanent rivers, and that they do indeed appear to be "in the middle", as they describe themselves, in relation to the other cattle-keeping people of the Lower Omo area. Their three principal enemies, or potential enemies, are the Buma, the Bodi and the Hamar.

The Buma cultivate in the dry season along the right bank of the Omo, opposite Mursi cultivation sites, at about Lat. $5^{\circ} 23' N$. At this time of the year, therefore, there is at least some degree of peaceful contact between the two groups. It is not difficult,

however, for the Mursi to launch effective cattle raids into Bume country since they only have to retreat with the stolen cattle across the Omo to be fairly safe from pursuit. Through the Kwagu, and those Mursi who live at the Omo for most of the year, they are able to control all the dug-out canoes (without which the river cannot be crossed except at the height of the dry season) along their western and southern boundaries. The Mursi cattle, on the other hand, being kept east of the Omo and its bushbelt, would be a virtually impossible target for Bume attacks from the west.

Relations between the Mursi and the Bodi, from whom they are separated neither by an empty stretch of bush nor by any significant physical obstacle, are generally amicable. But the frequent contacts which result from physical propinquity, and which have made necessary some degree of cooperation, are also a ready source of friction between these two groups, who neither intermarry nor speak the same language. The hostility which underlies their relations is expressed not by intermittent cattle raids but rather by short periods of all-out war, separated by periods of peace lasting several years.

Thus, in normal circumstances, it is the Hamar, from whom they are separated by the no-man's land of the Mako valley and with whom they have no peaceful contacts at all, who present the Mursi with their greatest external threat. They are particularly vulnerable

to attack from the east at the height of the dry season, in December and January, and the Mursi say that Hamar raids occur virtually every year about this time (they certainly did in 1968-69 and 1969-70). At this time of year, the River Mako is easily fordable, and the Mursi cattle are further east than at any other time, due to the lack of water in the headstreams of the Omo's westward flowing tributaries. Also, the Omo harvest, in December and January, attracts men of all ages from the cattle camps to the cultivation sites along the river, thus leaving the cattle underprotected in the Elma Valley. The Mursi may thus be said to stand with their backs to the Omo, facing "outside" (that is, towards the east). When the intestines of a stock animal are laid out, in divination, as a map of the country, particular attention is paid to that part of them which represents the Mursi Mts. and the Omo-Mako watershed, for here are located the "weak points" or passes, through which raiders usually enter the country. Marks on the integument are considered to indicate whether, and through which passes raiders are likely to come in the near future.

The first Hamar raid of the 1969 dry season came on the night of the 23rd December. One man was shot dead and the raiders got away with about fourteen head of cattle. There was a further, unsuccessful, raid on the 29th December and by the morning of the 31st the Mursi had moved all their cattle either beyond the Mara into Bodi country or to such places on the Omo as Alaka, Ilithey

and Chen, where there was a limited amount of grazing available. This move to the Omo could obviously only be temporary, both because of the danger from tsetse flies and because of the lack of grass - it was estimated at Alaka, where I was living at the time, that the cattle would be reduced to eating leaves within two weeks. Four sick stock animals were killed at Alaka between the 3rd and 6th January, and the intestines were considered to show that the Hamar would soon be coming in force. Two debates were held, but there was hardly much choice of action facing the stock owners. The cattle would have to be moved back from the Omo, but only far enough to provide them with grazing. By the 15th January, this move had begun at Alaka, some men taking their cattle into Bodi country while the others set up a sort of "communal" settlement, comprising most of the men of the Mara section, on the eastern edge of the bushbelt between the Mara and its tributary the Romo.

A large number of cattle from this settlement were rounded up by raiders, while they were out grazing, on the 28th January, two Mursi men being shot dead. Their cattle, however, were brought back from beyond the Mako by a pursuit party the next day. There was another unsuccessful raid, again in the north of the country, on the 26th February, and on the 3rd March came the culmination of all these hostilities: a large-scale raid on the Bennakora settlements from across the Mursi Mts. The raiders, among whom there were said to be a number of Bume, came as far as the bushbelt but were unable

to get away with any cattle. Twenty-four of them were killed as they retreated towards the Mako, while four Mursi died and eight were wounded.

Meanwhile, the movement of Mursi cattle into Bodi country, at a time when the latter had precious little water even for their own cattle, had brought about a deterioration in Mursi-Bodi relations. It was thought likely that war would break out with the Bodi sometime after the July harvest. It was indeed important, at least for those Mursi cultivating in the north of the country, that, if there were to be trouble with the Bodi, it should not come until they had been able to take in the harvest. On the 2nd June, however, a Mursi youth was shot dead in Bodi country and by the same afternoon the cattle of the Mara section were being moved south to the Bennakora, in expectation of trouble. But after about two weeks, most of the Mara cattle had returned to the north, although, as has already been indicated, they were not taken as far north as some of them would have gone in normal circumstances, and a rather nervous peace ensued for the remainder of the wet season.

These were the events, therefore, which provided the background against which public affairs were conducted during the following months, and which gave them their distinctive character. For the external pressures I have described had the effect of causing heightened expression to be given to the underlying need

to preserve social harmony within the community, and to the political doctrine that this is to be achieved largely through the control of turbulent youth. The public roles of both priests and jalaba were highlighted, and it became possible to observe how these roles differ from and complement each other in practice. I intend to describe now the steps that led to the holding of ceremonial duelling contests at Bennakora on eight successive days, between the 26th June and the 3rd July, despite the prohibition on spilling human blood within the tribe which Bule formally announced on the 11th June. I will then move to the north of the country to describe the course of events leading to the holding of a bio lama ceremony at Ngurug on four successive days between the 24th and the 27th September, despite the apparent reluctance of Koryonomora to officiate at it.

There was already "donga fever" in the air at Bennakora when the Mara cattle were moved south at the beginning of June. The young men and boys (mainly unmarried rora, and teru) were carrying new duelling poles which they were clearly impatient to try out on more testing opposition than the long grass and branches upon which they practiced their strokes. They were confidently predicting that "the donga" would be "heard" very soon, and various items of tumoga, two complete sets of which would be required by the youths of each section, could be seen undergoing repair.

The older men, however, were saying that there would be no donga, because "the land now carries blood" and that if contests were held in these circumstances the indignation of the priest (in this case Bule, but the same was considered to apply to Konyonamora) would show itself eventually in yet more, and this time successful, attacks from the Hamar. It was clearly going to be difficult, as harvest time approached (they had started to cut the sorgham at Bennakora by the 6th June) and as the night-time dances increased in size and frequency, to restrain the young men. On the 11th June a debate, at which I was not present, was held at Bule's settlement on the left bank of the Bennakora. The speakers apparently reiterated what was well known - namely, that the Bodi now constituted the main threat, since the Mako had risen sufficiently to prevent the Hamar crossing it until October or November.¹ The February engagement with the Hamar, however, (in which every available able-bodied man took part) had seriously depleted the amount of ammunition held by the Mursi.² The main problem, or rather dilemma, therefore, was how to obtain more ammunition, for now that the Mako had risen there was little chance of taking cattle to exchange, for this

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1. There are no dug-out canoes along the Mako since its valley is uninhabited.
 2. They seem to use their rifles to lay down a "barrage" of fire in the general direction of the enemy, rather than to aim at individuals. Most of the raiders killed in February were literally run down, and killed with knives or spears.

purpose, in Jinka. Here was a second reason, therefore, why the Mursi should attempt to delay the outbreak of hostilities with the Bodi for as long as possible.

The last speech on this occasion was made by Bule, and took the form of a public announcement of the taboo on spilling blood which was already assumed, by the older men, at least, to be in existence. He said that duelling poles should be put away, that the donga would not be "heard" until the following wet season, and that the women must take off their heavy bracelets, their principal weapon of offence. If blood were spilt in anger, no matter how trivial the circumstances, those involved would have to kill a stock animal, and go through a cleansing ceremony.

The teru, however, were undeterred by this, and several of them told me that Bule would be prevailed upon before long to remove this ban on donga contests by performing a ceremony which consisted in smearing a number of duelling poles with a mixture of clay and water. (If the contests took place before such a rite had been performed, wounds sustained in the contests were likely to prove fatal, or at least serious). The "donga fever" therefore continued, and several fights took place, between boys of the 'donga age grade, from different territorial sections, as they collected sorgham stalks in the cultivation sites to take back to their respective settlements. On the 16th June a small piece of string with one knot tied in it was sent by the Ariholi teru

to those of the largest Biogolokare settlement, No. 44 on Map 4 . This was to signify that after one night the donga would begin. The man who brought this message (a rori of the Biogolokare settlement) reported that Bule had that morning succumbed to the insistence of the Ariholi teru and performed the rite just described, and told them to "go and fight".

Early the next morning, therefore, when the Ariholi teru came across the Bennakora, two of them dressed in tumoga, the Biogolokare teru were waiting for them. The Ariholi party made for an open space about three hundred yards northeast of settlement 44, which is a recognised duelling ground (gul). They were accompanied by several older Ariholi men and many women and girls. After about half an hour, the Biogolokare teru, preceded by their first two "champions", dressed in tumoga, began to make for the gul. But they were intercepted by a group of Biogolokare bara, one of whom, Girimalori, proceeded to harangue them. He told them that they were not men but "lusa" (boys) and that they should therefore be obedient to their elders. The land was still "bad", it still "carried blood", and therefore they should put down their duelling poles and go home. When he had finished, he turned to one of the Ariholi bara, telling him, in effect: "We have dealt with ours; now go and deal with yours."

The view of the Biogolokare bara, expressed by Girimalori, was that the ceremony performed the previous day by Bule had not

changed the situation: he had performed it, so to speak, "in bad grace", because the teru refused to give up their "lobbying". He had washed his hands of the situation, and said "fight if you must". He did not take part in any public discussions on the subject with the bara, nor did he attempt to harangue the teru and when I commented on this apparent aloofness of the priest, I was simply told "he is barari". It was clearly up to the bara of the various sections to control their respective teru, and by far the greatest impetus in this direction came from Girimalori.

On the 25th June, however, the Gongulobibi teru escalated the situation to a point where the demands of the young men could no longer be resisted. Up to this time donga contests had not taken place due to the success of the Biogolokare bara, and in particular of Girimalori (whose section, in fact, is Mako), in restraining "their" teru. For although Gongulobibi and Ariholi duel between themselves during the dry season at the Omo, they do not do so when they are living with the Dola sections, Biogolokare and Mako, in the wet season. Thus, unless the latter two sections took part, there would be no contests. On the 25th June, a day-light dance at the large Biogolokare settlement mentioned above, came to an end in a fight between Gongulobibi and Biogolokare teru. This developed into a stone-throwing battle, with the Gongulobibi youths throwing

a barrage of heavy stones¹ into the compounds of the Biogolokare settlement, causing serious danger to all its inhabitants, regardless of sex or age. A rifle was also fired.

Girimalori was again on hand, when the Gongulobibi teru had returned to their own settlements, to harangue the Dola youths. He again told them to "act like teru": to dance, to play the moru² and to flirt - and also, of course, to obey the bara. If the Gongulobibi teru came the next morning, in tumoga, they should go to the cultivation sites and "eat tima"³. But the teru insisted that they would remain at the settlements, and Girimalori appeared tacitly to accept this.

The next morning, 26th June, no attempt was made by the Biogolokare bara to restrain their teru, and the donga contests began. They continued each day until the 3rd July, and were watched by large crowds of spectators of all ages, many coming from the north of the country. A few Mara teru took part, but the contestants were mainly from the four southern sections. Thought of the dire

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1. This being very stony ground (Bennakora means "black stones"), there was no shortage of ammunition.
 2. A flute made from the bark of the loi tree (Cordia Gharaf. (Forsk) Ehrenb. ex Aschers).
 3. Ripe sorgham^u grains, lightly roasted.

consequences which it was still considered would inevitably follow did not appear to dampen the high spirits of either the contestants or the spectators, and these eight days were attended by a carnival atmosphere.

Thus, the donga contests began when, due to the "escalation" tactics of the Gongulobibi teru, sectional conflict among the teru threatened to reach uncontrollable proportions. That they did not take place earlier was undoubtedly due to the influence of the Biogolokare and Mako bara on their teru, and in particular to that of Girimalori. Bule, after making his public announcement on the 11th June, took no part in attempting to restrain the teru, and indeed did the opposite by giving them the "all-clear" which they insistently demanded, on the 16th. This last should be seen in the context of a priest's general aloofness from the practical business of translating into action the values for which he stands. It should also be remembered that his formal announcement of the 11th June was merely a confirmation of what was already assumed to be the case. It will also have been noted that the teru were concerned only that Bule should perform the rite which was necessary to prevent the wounds they would sustain in the duelling from proving fatal or otherwise serious. They were not deterred by the threat of raiders, disease and drought which remained, and nor did this prevent the contests being attended by a ^{CARNIVAL} ~~carnival~~ atmosphere. For these

consequences of priestly indignation are also, of course, inevitable concomitants of the human condition. I turn now to the north of the country in order to describe the events which led to the holding of a bio lama ceremony, which took place at the end of September, and at which Konyonomora officiated. These events illustrate, from another point of view, the points just made.

The first public call for a bio lama came at a "cleansing" ceremony held on the 30th August. A fight had taken place on the previous evening at Konyonomora's settlement between two boys whom I shall call G. and L., the former being about fifteen and the latter about seventeen years old. The trouble blew up over a girl, an unmarried daughter of Konyonomora's dead elder brother, whom they had both come to visit that evening. They fought with duelling poles, L. receiving a blow to the head from which he bled profusely. G., who was living at Konyonomora's settlement, killed a heifer the same evening, the chyme of which was sprinkled about the settlement to cleanse it of the blood and also smeared on G. himself. Konyonomora declared that the other boy, who had returned to his settlement, would have to sacrifice an animal the following day.

By about 9 o'clock on the morning of the 30th, men from the nearby settlements were on their way to that of L. (No. 21 on Map 3). They collected in an open space a short distance away from the settlement, and moved on as a single party, consisting mainly of rora, all of

whom carried withies which they had cut as they walked along. Having arrived at the settlement, the rora went straight to the compound of L.'s father and sat down in a group within it, while the older men (for the most part bara) remained outside under a shade tree, talking to a few men of the settlement. After about ten minutes the rora rose, threw their withies onto the fireplace in the middle of the compound, and went out to join the bara.

The latter had meanwhile discovered that the boy had disappeared. It was not known whether he was hiding in the vicinity, or whether he had run off to Bennakora, a day's journey away. The next move was made by Kaulosir, who rose to point out to the rora that it was their affair: they should therefore "methe", discuss it, and decide on a course of action. A rori of Konyonomora's settlement then made a speech which lasted for five minutes and which consisted of an eye-witness account of the previous night's incident. There followed a similar-length speech from a rori which again amounted to an account of the circumstances which had brought the meeting together, and a statement of the dilemma they now found themselves in due to the boy's absence. The speaker concluded that all they could do now was to return to their settlements and postpone the proceedings until such time as the boy turned up, to which there were murmurs of assent.

Before the meeting had a chance to break up, however, Mederibwi rose and said that, although they could not proceed with

the "cleansing", he nevertheless had something very important to say. He had been given a message that morning by Konyonomora, a message he would now repeat in the latter's own words. (Mederibwi had passed through Konyonomora's settlement [No. 11, Map 3] on his way to the meeting, and I was present when Konyonomora had taken him aside).

The priest had said that the land must be cleansed not only of the blood spilt on the previous evening, but also of that spilt during the donga contests which had taken place at Bennakora a month earlier. The teru of each of the four sections involved would have to sacrifice an animal, and unless they did so Konyonomora would not move to the Omo to start planting when the time came, towards the end of September (See above, p. 65). Mederibwi finished his six-minute speech by explaining that Konyonomora had stayed at his settlement that morning because he was suffering from a bad cold (which he was), and had therefore asked Mederibwi to make his announcement for him.

There was a visitor from Bennakora present, a rori of the Gongulobibi section, and, when Mederibwi had finished speaking, this man was called over to the circle of bara. Mederibwi told him to take Konyonomora's message to the people in the south when he returned home, and to tell in particular Girimalori, a man, as someone commented, "who understands the word well". The visitor was then given a second briefing, to the same effect, by Kaulosir.

Meanwhile, L. had been found, hiding in the bush nearby. Since it would take him some time to obtain a cow (his settlement's herd had already been taken to its daily grazing), the whole party made for a shady spot, close to water, where they could wait out the heat of the day. For part of this time a discussion (not a formal debate) took place, which consisted mainly of a dialogue between Mederibwi and Kaulosir, the upshot of which was that they should not rely on the Gongulobibi rori to take such an important message south: the people there would not listen to a "lusi". They would therefore have to go themselves - Mederibwi, Kaulosir and a few other bara - to discuss the matter with the older men of the southern sections.

At about 3 o'clock p.m. a message came that L. was ready with his animal - a young bull - and everyone returned to his settlement, entering his father's compound on arrival, where the rori's withies were still lying on the fireplace. After the animal had been killed and eaten, and L. smeared in its blood and chyme (by two bara and four rori in turn), there followed four speeches, the first two of which, made by the rori who had spoken in the morning, brought the cleansing rite proper to an end. With this matter duly concluded, one of the bara¹ rose to introduce a wider issue - the holding of a bio lama. In a five-minute speech, he said that such a ceremony should be held soon, before clearing started at the Omo, so as to improve the health of the cattle before they were taken to their

1. No. 40, Fig. /2 .



a) L. is "washed in blood and chyme. Note the withies on the ground, to the left.



b) The rora (foreground) and bara wait for meat to be cooked in the compound of L's father.

dry-season pastures in the Elma Valley. He was followed by ^a/rori, who told the bara to go and see the Priest, and ask him to hold a bio lama.

There was some urgency about this call, because the move to the Omo was already in people's minds. Once this move was made, and the cattle settlements had broken up, there would be no opportunity to hold such a large-scale ceremony as a bio lama until the Omo crop had been planted, in about three months' time. When I asked, on the 7th September, whether a bio lama would indeed be held in the near future, I was told that Mederibwi "carried the word", and that the bara would be visiting Konyonomora soon. Meanwhile, they were trying to obtain a goat, of a certain colour, which they would have to provide for sacrifice on the first day of the ceremony. Konyonomora had an opportunity to make public his thoughts on the matter of a bio lama on the 10th September when, his cold having cleared up, he attended another "cleansing" ceremony.

This was also the result of a fight which had occurred the day before, this time between a man and the wife of his half-brother, at a beer drinking. The incident was witnessed by a patrilineal kinsman of Konyonomora, who was also a member of his settlement, and it was the subject of a discussion at this settlement on the evening of the 9th. The next day, the procedure I described above was followed first at the settlement of the man in question (which was also that

of Mederibwi), and then at that of his half-brother (No. 6, Map 3). There were four speeches after the first sacrificial animal had been eaten, one of them made by Mederibwi. They were concerned with the particular incident which had given rise to the ceremony, and with the problem of how to ensure that all such incidents were followed by "cleansing" ceremonies, especially when most of the married men had moved to the Omo to help their wives with clearing and planting. The unmarried rora, who would be responsible for the cattle in the Elma Valley, were exhorted to see that tradition was observed in this respect.

Later, at settlement 6, there were four more speeches which were concerned with the general state of blood pollution which had been caused by the duelling contests in the south, and with the question of a bio lama. Mederibwi made the first of these speeches, and Konyonomora, who spoke for the relatively long time of fifteen minutes, made the last. He appeared to put paid to any hopes of an early bio lama, by saying that, since his land at Alaka dried out relatively quickly after the flood had receded, he had to begin clearing there as soon as possible. He could not therefore prolong his stay at the cattle camps long enough to hold a bio lama.

This speech was not taken at its face value, however, and it was presumably not intended to be, since I was told afterwards that it was "just a priest's way of talking". Thus, on the 18th September, Mederibwi and three other elders went to see Konyonomora

at his settlement, in order to discuss the question of a bio lama. But he had gone to the Omo with his wives, who were taking grain to store at Alaka in readiness for their impending move there. He returned to his cattle settlement the same evening, however, and was visited the next morning by Mederibwi, Saba Ramai and two members of his own settlement, Aholi and Aritilohola (Figure 10). Mederibwi took a bag of coffee beans, from which Konyonomora's wife prepared bunna.

The purpose of this visit being to persuade the Priest to hold a bio lama, his visitors put to him the conventional arguments used on such occasions: that the people depended equally on cattle and on sorgham; that without cattle they cannot survive; that the cattle, however, are dying; and that unless the Priest "gathers the cattle" and "kills a goat for them", the people also will die. This session was held in private, in Konyonomora's hut, and at the end of it he gave Mederibwi and the others the conventional instructions concerning the preparations for the ceremony. Boys would have to go to special areas to obtain a supply of various coloured clays, and to cut leafy branches from two particular species of tree. (The clay, mixed with water, would be used to daub every member of the congregation, while the leaves, placed on a fire, would create smoke to "attract the attention of tumwi".) The bara would have to construct a circle of stones at the Priest's settlement, within which

the fire would be kindled and the goat sacrificed, and, most important of all, they had to provide him with a goat of the right colour.

By the evening of the 23rd September, all these preparations had been accomplished: the clay and the branches had been placed within the circle of stones and the goat which had been provided by Aritilohola was tethered in Konyonomora's compound. Thus, nearly a month after the idea was first publicly mooted, the bio lama was ready to begin. The four-day ceremony, at which virtually the whole human and stock population (amounting to just under two thousand people, and about the same number of cattle) of the Mara section was present, took place between the 24th and the 27th September. It is not necessary to describe the ritual involved, but only to note that on each day but the third the proceedings were brought to an end with speeches, the dominant theme of which was the Hamar^g and Bodi threat.

Now that the dry season was approaching, the Hamar^g once more posed a problem, since they would be able to cross the Mako. Once the bio lama was over, the married men would want to make for the Omo to start clearing and planting before the land there dried out, following the flood. In normal circumstances, the unmarried men would take the cattle, at the same time, to the Elma Valley, due to the poor state of both the grazing and water supply in the vicinity of the cattle settlements, which would thus be abandoned. Such was



Photograph 24:

The cattle are blessed by Kon-
yonchura at the Bio Lama,
September 1970.

the procedure which the rora, in general, wished to adopt this year, but the older men advised against it because it would expose the cattle to the risk not only of Hamer^a but also of Bodi attacks. An uneasy peace had been maintained with the Bodi over the wet season (although there had been a nasty moment at the end of July when some Mursi youths had killed and eaten a stray Bodi cow, which was with calf) but as soon as they had sufficient ammunition, the Mursi would have to raid the Bodi for cattle, to avenge the murder of last June, and they knew that this would lead to a period of all-out war.

But if the cattle did not go to the Elma, they would soon have to be taken right into the Omo bushbelt to find water, such was the state of the water supply in the Omo's westward-flowing tributaries. Thus, they would not only lose the benefit of the young grass that was beginning to grow in the Elma Valley, after the burning off of the old, but they would also be subjected to the onslaught of tsetse flies, harboured by the Omo bush. Several speakers therefore passionately insisted that the risk of possible attack from the Hamer^a and Bodi, if the cattle were taken to the Elma, should be preferred to the risk of certain attacks from tsetse flies if they were not.

The eventual consensus was summed up by Saba Ramai in one of the last speeches on the final day. He said that the intestines

of the animals that had been slaughtered during the bio lama indicated that raiders were bound to come. It was therefore necessary to make contact with the traders in the Jinka area in order to exchange cattle for ammunition. Meanwhile, since they could not realistically envisage taking on the Bodi until the Mako had risen again to protect them from the Hamer^a (which it would not do until the following April), they should try to avoid provocative action towards the Bodi. The move to the Elma should be delayed until the sorgham had been planted at the Omo, so that there would be more men available to guard the cattle. The Priest would provide ritual protection for the cattle against sleeping sickness. Despite the continued protests from some rora (whose stubborn insistence that they would take their cattle to the Elma, come what may, may have reflected more their frustration at not having cut better figures in debate than their disagreement with Saba Ramai's summing up), this was the course of action which was adopted.

I have now provided the reader with all the ethnographic detail that is necessary to enable me to present, in the next chapter, some general conclusions about the relationship between the leadership roles of priest and jalaba.

Chapter 10: Priests and Influential Men

I have taken for granted, in all that I have written in the last three chapters, that in speaking of priests and of jalaba I am speaking of two distinct types of leader. In this chapter I wish to show that this is a distinction which exists not only at the level of ethnographic observation (in the sense that priests and jalaba are observed to do different things), but also at the level of functional adaptation (in the sense that the leadership functions they perform are mutually exclusive). Briefly, my aim in this chapter is to show that the priest's is an essentially religious role which precludes its occupant from exercising significant secular leadership. I said earlier, quoting Goody, that indeterminacy in the rules of priestly succession made "some allowance for achievement as well as ascription", but that I would defer consideration of this factor from the point of view of those who seek office, until I had provided an account of the exercise of influence in general (See above, pp.262-3). Having now provided such an account, I return to this question, since it provides a convenient starting point for what I have to say in this chapter.

I wrote above (p.279) that a jalabai is "an authority" rather than "in authority", because he owes his position to his "personal history and achievements", and not to a set of rules which

determine who has the right to issue commands, and in what context. According to this use of terms, a priest must be thought of as being "in authority" or (and I consider these to be synonymous) as occupying an office. Goody (1966, p. 170-171) favours a definition of office as "a superordinate role, entry to which is restricted, selective", and finds it useful to consider succession to office as an example of the allocation of scarce resources. But all positions of public leadership are "scarce resources" in the sense that they can be filled by only a limited number of individuals at any one time. Thus, although Mursi political doctrine states that every man who has reached the bara grade possesses the qualities of a successful leader, it is clear that leadership is, in fact, in the hands of a small number of bara who play a leading part in public decision-making. In this sense, Mederibwi, for example, may be regarded as having gained access to a resource equally as scarce as that of any priest. It is not so much the element of restrictedness or selectivity that distinguishes office from other leadership positions, as the means by which the selection is made. I consider that Goody's definition could be improved thus: "a superordinate role, entry to which is restricted by a definite set of rules".

how many?

The rules of priestly succession among the Mursi incorporate that minimum degree of indeterminacy which is necessary in order to avoid, on the one hand, the "two central problems of Prince

Hal and of the wicked uncle" and on the other, the difficulties of "a dynastic merry-go-round" (Goody, 1966, pp. 34-5). While this indeterminacy obviously gives scope for individual achievement - shown especially by the requirement that a priest should be publicly installed after what amounts to a "probationary" period - it seems that, in practice, this scope is fairly limited. Thus, while all the members of the Komorte clan are referred to as "priests", the office is, in practice, confined to the members of two particular descent groups within it. It is the members of these descent groups (and of the priestly descent groups of the Bumai and Garakuli clans) who constitute the "eligibles" where the office of priesthood is concerned. As far as I can gather, however, from the limited amount of information at my disposal, the rules of seniority in patrilineal descent are, other things being equal, adhered to, notwithstanding temporary reversions to a collateral line, and I have no evidence to suggest that competition among the eligibles is a significant factor in priestly succession. This impression is supported by a consideration of the ritual performance which accompanies the burial of a priest. The following is a simplified version of an account given to me in 1970 by a half-brother of Konyonemora, then about thirty years old, who had been present at the burial of his father, the last priest but one, around August 1961.

When a priest dies, his body is taken into his hut, and his eldest son, "who will later be the Priest", stands outside the entrance to the hut and blows on an oryx horn trumpet (joro). As the people begin to arrive, the heir's senior wife climbs onto the roof of the hut, holding a stick. The classificatory sisters' sons of the priestly descent group try also to climb onto the hut, but they are driven back by the wife of the heir, while the latter remains standing at the hut's entrance. The sisters' sons are attempting, unsuccessfully, to capture the menengi ("soul") of the dead man, and to carry it off as their possession.

All the cattle of the local community are driven to the scene, including those of the dead man, which are said to "weep" for him. Several animals are killed and eaten, and a grave is dug. The corpse is placed at the edge of the grave, and the heir climbs down into it. As he crouches in the grave, a goat is held over him while its throat is cut with a spear, so that the blood falls on the heir but not on the corpse. While the heir remains crouching in the grave, the corpse is manoeuvred so that it is half in and half out of the grave, feet first, and is washed in water. Thus, the water, containing the dead man's sweat, falls over his heir, who then comes out of the grave. The corpse is buried, sewn in a cow-skin, with its head facing that point on the Omo at which the Mursi made their first crossing from the right bank - namely, Dorl.

Thus, the burial ceremony of a priest is also the occasion of the first public recognition of his successor, who is ideally his eldest son. But this does not amount to a formal installation in office: this is achieved by means of a further ceremony which may take place several years later, and which is held at Dorl. Konyonmora's elder brother did not survive his father long enough to undergo this ceremony, and I spoke to no one who could give me a detailed first-hand account of the last occasion on which it was performed. The significance of this ceremony, however, in relation to that just described, is indicated by the way in which the Mursi refer to it: they say that at Dorl the people "take hold of" the priest. Thus, the role of the heir at the burial of a priest symbolises the continuance of the office within a single descent group, while the later installation ceremony symbolises the interdependence of priest and people. It also demonstrates that the priest's is, so to speak, an authority of service, in that his occupancy of the office has to be publicly approved, although there would obviously be a strong presumption in favour of an eldest son who took the part of heir at his father's burial.

This latter role, however, does not seem to me to represent, principally, a demonstration of the claims of a particular individual against other eligibles, though such an element is presumably present. I consider that the true significance of the part played by the heir

at a priest's burial is that it demonstrates the priestly status of a particular descent group - in other words, of all the eligibles. Thus, the symbolic attempt to rob the heir of succession, by "capturing" the dead priest's menengi, comes not from other eligibles, but from the descendants of the "residual siblings" of the priestly descent group, who are therefore, by definition, ineligible. Thus, what is emphasised is not the special claim of an individual, but the special status of a group, and this leads us to an obvious reason why a system in which a man may hold office, while his children may not, does not, in this case, have the "explosive results" which Goody envisages (See above pp. 264-7).

For all the members of a priestly descent group are, in principle, capable of performing the functions of the "official" priest. Indeed, it is evident from the fact that a priest begins to perform public rituals before he is formally installed, that the installation ceremony is not considered to endow him with powers which he did not previously possess. Thus, between the 5th and 8th November, 1970, a bio lama was held at Bennakora, which was attended by the Biogolokare and Mako section, and at which the seventeen year-old grandson of the priest from whom Konyonomora's father inherited the office, officiated. This boy was living with his elder married full-brother at Bennakora (settlement 49) but the latter could not officiate at this or any other bio lama because he had killed a

fellow Mursi - his own half-brother - and was therefore in a permanent state of blood pollution. This incident demonstrates the need of a local community for the services of a priest, for although Biogelokare and Mako are linked, under the common name of Dola, with Mara, they are more closely associated with each other, through contiguous settlement, than either of them are with Mara. It seems possible, therefore, that this boy may eventually be "taken hold of" (after he has married) by his local community (he is a member of the Biogelokare section) and officially installed as "their" priest.

It can be seen therefore that a priest is no less of one, from the point of view of his embodiment of absolute power, because he has not been publicly installed in office, or because he is not the recognised heir of the previous office-holder, and this must mitigate against the development of competition between eligibles. Such reasoning, however, ignores the possibility that this office may be a means to the exercise of other than purely religious leadership, and that it may therefore be an object of competition among those seeking secular influence, whether they are theoretically eligible for it or not. In the light of the discussion in the preceding two chapters, this may be phrased as follows: can the holder of priestly office use his position to gain dominance in public decision-making, and can an ambitious and influential man "routinize" his "charisma"

by gaining access to the same office, thus converting himself from the status of "an authority" to that of being "in authority"?

In a recent article, Beidelman has suggested that Evans-Pritchard gave insufficient attention to precisely these possibilities in his writings on Nuer priests and prophets. According to Beidelman, "priestly Nuer sometimes seek to augment their power and influence through charisma both in terms of political manipulation as expressed by spokespersonship and leadership in raids, and through claims to more diffuse supernatural powers" (i.e., those of a prophet), and "non-priestly Nuer possessed of certain political or supernatural advantages sometimes attempt to legitimate these powers through becoming priests" (1971, pp. 388-389). He suggests that Evans-Pritchard's account of leopard-skin priests as not normally belonging to the dominant clans of their districts (which enables them to act as effective mediators between local groups) is not representative of Nuer tribal groups as a whole, and quotes Lewis's suggestion (1951, p. 83) that in areas where priests were of the dominant clan they were able "to make political capital out of their priestly roles" (Beidelman, 1971, p.387). He concludes that "the office seems to offer an excellent vehicle for a politically ambitious person" (1971, p.388). Whatever the truth of this in relation to the Nuer, I hope to show that such a statement could not be applied without considerable qualification to the office of priesthood among the Mursi.

One could, in theory, tackle the problem I am here discussing both by empirical induction and by logical deduction. The first method would require observation of instances in which priests have become influential men in the secular world, and vice versa, while the second would require an examination of the logic of a priest's, and an influential man's situation. Beidelman is forced to adduce some rather thin empirical evidence in his attempt to adopt the first approach, despite his tribute to "the richness of the Nuer data", and finds himself phrasing many of his conclusions in terms of the second.¹ I also am forced to rely heavily on logical deduction, firstly because, although I observed no priest who exercised significant secular influence, this could have been due to the fact that two of the three priests who were active while I was in the field were only of the rora age grade, while Duli, who was of the karo grade, was dying of tuberculosis and was therefore incapable of the physical exertion which the exercise of influence involves. This negative empirical finding cannot, therefore, be made to carry much inductive weight. Secondly, I have no empirical evidence that

1. Thus: "One would probably also be safe in assuming that such men were never mere youths but rather older men, more skilled in the tactics of moderation and lobbying" and "it seems reasonable to assume such factors might lead to the development of factions" and "skillful and tactful mediation and the explication of a wide range of kin affiliations would seem of great value in conducting such affairs" (1971, pp. 386-387).

it is possible for a man of a non-priestly descent group - or, in the case of the Komorte clan, of a non-priestly clan - to gain priestly office. But the existence of priestly descent groups in non-priestly (in the sense described on p. 242) clans suggests that this might have occurred at some time in the past and that it is therefore a factor which should be taken into account in the interpretation of the present situation. Indeed, I think it should, but, since the facts are irretrievable, it is only possible to do this by means of a study of the logic of the situation in which priestly and secular leadership is exercised.

(I intend now to argue that) the role of priest among the Mursi is an essentially religious one, not because it is characterised by the performance of public rituals, but because it is incompatible with the rigorous pursuit of secular influence. Firstly, I compare Mursi priests with those of the Nuer in order to show that, unlike the latter, they do not perform "politico-religious functions" (Evans-Pritchard, 1956, p.200). Secondly, I consider the nature of a priest's power in order to show that it cannot accurately be designated as even potentially "political", and that the significance of his role is therefore wholly religious, in the sense that he is the principal means whereby the Mursi make "the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant" (Berger, 1969, p.28). From which I conclude both that an individual priest cannot make significant "political capital" out of his priestly role,

and that Mursi religion, unlike that of the Nuer, is "intrinsically" a priestly one.¹

Evans-Pritchard sees the leopard-skin priest, first and foremost, as a sacralised mediator, who "has a central position in the social structure rather than in religious thought" (loc. cit.). It is not his ability to perform sacrifices that gives his role special significance in the community, but his ability to act as a mediator, principally in cases of homicide, but also apparently in lesser disputes (1940, pp. 163-164). Evans-Pritchard writes of his "traditional role of mediator" and relates it to the "sanctity" of his person, to the assumption of his neutrality, and to the feeling that a man can give way to a priest without loss of dignity. The more serious the dispute, the more significant these factors presumably become, and it is in relation to homicide cases that he plays (presumably in the eyes of the people as well as of the anthropologist) "his essential and distinctive role" (1956, pp. 299-300). For these are situations in which "groups of kin and local and political groups are in a state of violent opposition to each other" and in which therefore the mediator "could not carry out his functions unless during their performance his person was sacrosanct" (loc. cit.).

1. cf. Evans-Pritchard, loc. cit.: "The Nuer have priests who perform politico-religious functions, but their religion is not intrinsically a priestly religion."

The fact that lineages of leopard-skin priests are dispersed about Nuerland and are not normally members of the dominant clans of their areas, is also related by Evans-Pritchard to their role as peace-makers, for this requires that they be unattached to the local groups which are in conflict. He concludes that "the presence of a priesthood adds nothing to the dominant ideas of Nuer religion. It is rather these ideas which give to a political role its necessary attributes" (loc. cit.).

Nuer priests are therefore closely associated with the maintenance of harmonious relations between individuals and local groups. So also are Mursi priests, though in a wholly symbolic way. By declaring a state of pollution to exist, should blood be spilt in anger, and by prohibiting donga contests between different territorial sections, a Priest gives public expression to the need for unity and harmonious social relations at particular moments of crisis. But he is not responsible for seeing that his orders are obeyed, nor for seeing that harmony is restored and pollution removed when they are not, and nor is he necessarily involved in the procedures which have this latter effect. All this is clear from what I have written in the previous chapter: Bule actually cooperated with the teru in their insistent demands for donga contests, even though he had previously banned them, while Girmalori continued his efforts to see that they did not take place; Konyonomora

was not present at the first "cleansing" ceremony described above, and although present at the second, he took no part in the smearing of the participants in chyme and blood. As I have already said, a Mursi priest should not be thought of as a "ritual expert" - he is not "called in" to provide ritual services as is a leopard-skin priest in, for example, cases of incest between close relations (Evans-Pritchard, 1956, p.298). He plays indeed a somewhat passive role, which I have earlier described as "aloof", and which also led one to see him as a "conductor" of absolute power, rather than as an expert in certain ritual techniques. It will have been noted that he does not even have to make a formal announcement for it to be understood that a state of blood pollution exists (that "the land carries blood"): he merely confirms what is already assumed to be the case.

It will be clear from previous chapters that a priest plays no official role in the settlement of cases of homicide, either in the negotiations which take place between the principals or in the ceremonies of reconciliation and atonement which bring them to a successful conclusion, and that he does not act, in his role as priest, as a mediator in lesser disputes. Those conflict situations which provide an occasion for the assertion of a priest's powerful supernatural sanctions are not typically of a type which causes any serious or lasting breach in relations between neighbours - as the examples I have given in the previous chapter show, they may be

extremely trivial. I therefore conclude that the contribution made by a priest to the maintenance of harmonious social relations is wholly symbolic, and that the conduct of his specifically priestly affairs is not significantly affected by "skillful and tactful mediation and the explication of a wide range of kin affiliations", which Beidelman sees as "of great value" to a leopard-skin priest (1971, p.387). I come now to the second part of the argument of this chapter, which is to consider the nature of a priest's power.

If power is "the production of intended effects" (Russell, 1960, p.25), then a Mursi priest certainly possesses it, as the phrase "Konyomora's rain" (See above, p. 257) aptly demonstrates. But the question I am concerned with here, of course, is whether he has political power, which "is distinguished from power over nature as power over other men" (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1952, p.75). Despite his control of literally awful supernatural sanctions, a priest is not able, through their use, or the threat of their use, to "affect the policies of others", and therefore cannot be said to exercise power, as this word was defined above (pp. 268). Indeed, it is because his power totally transcends the contingent human world that it is not an apt means of affecting human policies. His sanctions do not work, so to speak, selectively and through the conscious performance of some ritual act (that is, by means of a curse) but indiscriminately, suddenly, and without his having to perform any particular ritual

action - and even, it seems, regardless of his state of mind at a particular moment.

I have already given an example (p. 257) of the indiscriminate way in which a priest's sanctions are considered to operate, and have commented that they draw attention to the common dependence of men on the forces of nature, rather than to relations between individuals and groups. Once absolute power is let loose into the contingent world it works itself out, so to speak, after its own inscrutable ways. The physical dangers which an indignant priest is considered capable of letting loose on the community are as inevitable concomitants of the human condition as is the failure of men to live together in total harmony, which is the ultimate cause of a priest's indignation. From which there follows the paradox that the orders of a priest are "more honoured in the breach than in the observance". His power, in other words, is much more readily confirmed through its negative than through its positive manifestations.

For, provided a sufficiently wide time span is adopted, there will always be some public misfortune or other available to attribute to the just indignation of a priest, while a positive intervention by him on behalf of the community must have a relatively immediate effect in order to be judged successful. Thus, Duli's efforts at rain-making in 1969 were judged a failure when, rain having failed to materialise within a fortnight, Konyonomora was called upon to

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hold his own ceremony. Eula's indignation at the murder of his kinsman, however, was seen to be having its effects over a period of twelve months, during which the murderer and two of his brothers died, the rains failed, and raiders came in force. The same considerations apply to the donga contests held at Bennakora in 1970. Once these were underway, the passionate warnings with which such men as Girimalori had sought to prevent them taking place, turned to a sanguine acceptance of the inevitably dire consequences for the whole community. There was, of course, no danger that prophecy would fail and that the "power" of the priest would not be gloriously upheld. The contests were a recognition of the fact that perfect social harmony is an unattainable as the perfect satisfaction of material needs: they were as inevitable as the natural disasters they were considered to entail. They were also, however, through the events that led up to them, an affirmation of the need to go on striving for such harmony (as were the two "cleansing" ceremonies described above) and of the assumption that if only it could be achieved, all else (i.e., material satisfaction) would follow.

The power of a priest is therefore proclaimed more by the public misfortunes which are attributed to his just indignation, and of which, given the level of technology, there is never likely to be any lack, than by the benefits that can be attributed to such positive acts of intervention as a rain-making ceremony. It follows that if

the indignation of priests is to provide a satisfactory explanation of such inevitable public misfortunes as disease, drought and hunger, then he must be constantly indignant. Which, indeed, in his public "persona", he always is. A priest's public speech is, characteristically, an irritable and indignant sounding catalogue of the various ways in which people are failing to conform to an ideal model of social behaviour - such as the "growing tendency" of men and women to drink beer together, or of young men to go off dancing when they should be listening to a debate. I am not suggesting that the main significance of the role of priest lies in the explanation of misfortune. What I am suggesting is that a priest represents a standard of social harmony, as expressed in conformity to tradition, which men can never achieve, but to which they must constantly aspire, and that, through their priests the Mursi find the ultimate explanation of public misfortune to lie in the failure of men to get on together in society.¹

Through their priests, therefore, the Mursi attempt the central task of religion. "Religion implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion

1. cf. Douglas, 1966, pp. 9)-91: "The vital questions in any theistic world view . . . are not phrased primarily to satisfy man's curiosity about the seasons and the rest of the natural environment. They are phrased to satisfy a dominant social concern, the problem of how to organise together in society."

is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant" (Berger, 1969, p.78). It is not just that a priest can convert an otherwise arbitrary phenomenon like rainfall into a pattern that can be explained in relation to human behaviour, but that he represents a complete identification of the natural and the social orders. In his person the social order is identified with reality as such. What Lienhardt neatly says of the Dinka "free divinity" deng may also be applied to a Mursi priest: he "represents an integration of political and moral experience with experience of nature in a single image" (1961, p.162). Finally, through their priests the Mursi fix responsibility for public misfortune on bad social relations. Hence the special need to control these relations in times of public crisis.

I therefore consider a Mursi priest to be an essentially religious figure, and Mursi religion to be an "intrinsically" priestly one. I mean by this not only that a priest performs only religious, and not "politico-religious" functions, but also that the logic of his situation precludes him from the single-minded pursuit of secular influence, and this entails an interdependence of religious and secular leadership. Since a priest represents the twin goals of perfect social harmony and perfect satisfaction of material needs, he cannot also become involved in those activities which, by their very necessity, demonstrate that these goals are unattainable - namely, the practical, everyday business of reconciling conflicting individual

interests and of formulating public policy in the face of the inescapable constraints imposed by the natural and human environment. For these are not "givens" for a priest: they are not constraints within which he is obliged to work, since his absolute power transcends them. Thus, it is by keeping out of these activities, by leaving other men to grapple with the difficulties which flow from the fundamental dilemmas of contingent existence, that he preserves his claim to absolute power, and to a "kingdom" which "is not of this world".

A priest may, as far as I know, become recognised as a jalabai, and I was told that he may also mediate a dispute - as a private individual, not qua priest. It must be assumed that his priestly status would be an asset in both these endeavours. I consider, however, that, such is the logic of a priest's situation, he cannot gain noticeable secular influence without doing harm to his priestly status in the eyes of the community. The only empirical evidence I have in support of this contention concerns the priest Duli, who played a fairly active part in debates during the first three months of my fieldwork, before his tuberculosis got the better of him. Duli was spoken of with a noticeable lack of respect by many people, and he was said to be an ineffective priest whose people were suffering as a result. (His unsuccessful rain-making ceremony in 1969 did not, of course, help). When he died in 1970

he was not given the ceremonial burial I described above and the reason given was that he was simply a "bad priest". I think Duli's low standing as a priest may have been due to his ambitions in the direction of secular influence. It is certainly expected that a priest will have little to say in public meetings and discussions, because he is barari (See above, p. 3/3).

Even when a priest issues what amounts to an ultimatum (such, for example, as Konyonomora's demand that sacrifices should be made, section by section, by the young men who had been involved in the donga contests) he appears almost indifferent to the outcome. It is as though he said "this is the situation, now make up your own minds". It is the jalaba, as has been seen, who descend into the hurly-burly of public debate and argument, and who spend much time and energy endeavouring to "make up" the community's "mind" in accordance with traditional norms and practices. It is they who not only attempt to translate a priest's specific orders into collective action (or inaction, as the case may be) but who also attempt to give substance, at the level of practical, everyday affairs, to the values he represents. It is they who "persuade" a priest to carry out the public rituals upon which the well-being of the community depends. Thus, Konyonomora seemed quite ready, in September 1970, to put his own interests before those of the community, when he announced that he would not be able to hold a bio lama because he needed to get his sorgham^u planted immediately.

This interdependence of secular and religious leadership has obvious advantages, from the point of view of social control, for a transhumant people who have no permanent settlements and who are forced by their physical environment to maintain a clear geographical separation between their agricultural and pastoral activities. The absence of any well defined and formally established roles of secular leadership means that, under whatever circumstances a public meeting is held, a decision can almost always be reached. For no particular individual or group has to be present to arbitrate between competing views, or to legitimise the decision, once it has been arrived at. No one is indispensable where public decision-making is concerned. This is what I meant earlier when I wrote that an essential feature of public decision-making among the Mursi is that those who exert influence (jalaba) do not form a bounded group. The informality of the proceedings themselves, and the fact that influence is not exercised through the use of sanctions, helps to ensure that the maximum use is made of the group's leadership potential. Indeed, the Mursi seem to have provided themselves with a form of leadership, the merits of which are constantly being urged by management consultants but which modern business organisations are never able^{as} fully to adopt.

The institution of priesthood, with its formal rules of succession, transcendent power and symbolic identification of the

natural and social orders, provides a focus of group sentiment, a reference point for group norms and traditions, and a means of fixing responsibility for public misfortunes on bad social relations, without which the extreme informality of public decision-making could hardly avoid breaking down into anarchy.

At the level of individual actors, the interdependence of secular and religious leadership is best seen in the relationship of certain especially prominent jalaba to a priest. Although all jalaba are public guardians of the values and traditions which a priest represents, it is evident from what I have written about Mederibwi that a priest is likely to take some jalaba more into his confidence than others and to use them as "spokesmen". Such men clearly gain prestige from this "special relationship" to a priest and it is presumably therefore a sought after status. It is not surprising, in view of what I have written in this thesis about the significance of affinal relations, to discover that certain particularly influential men are related, through women, to one or more priestly descent groups.

Thus, Mederibwi's father's sister was the second wife of Konyonomora's father, which makes Mederibwi the classificatory mother's brother, not of Konyonomora himself but of his half-siblings. He is thus not only a member of a descent group from which Konyonomora's father took a wife, but also a potential affine of Konyonomora (since as was explained in Chapter 4, marriage into the descent group of a

mother's co-wife is a recognised and particularly favoured means, other things being equal, of reinforcing an affinal link made in the preceding generation, while avoiding the prohibition on mother's brother's daughter marriage). Girimalori's mother was a member of Bule's descent group, to the members of which, therefore, he stands in the relationship of a classificatory sister's son. One of his daughters, furthermore, has married the eldest son of the Garakuli priest, Turku, while another has married a close patrilineal kinsman of Konyonomora. Kaulosir's second wife is a full sister of this same member of Konyonomora's descent group, while his father's brother married a sister of Duli's father. The land which his wife was cultivating at Kuduma in 1969-70 was, in fact, provided by Duli, whose descent group owns the cultivation rights there.

I assume that the existence of such links is a significant factor in allowing a man to assume the role of "spokesman" for a priest, such as Mederibwi has been shown to have occupied in 1970, and significant also in the achievement of jalabai status. For all men who are thus designated are seen as guardians of the norms and values which a priest represents. Just as the whole class of jalaba are dependent on the priesthood to provide a reference point for tribal norms and traditions, especially in times of public crisis, so particularly influential men are dependent on their special relationship to individual priests. The links which they

utilize may not, of course, have been consciously forged by them - in the case of Mederibwi, they cannot have been - and neither is it the case that all men who are related in this way to priestly descent groups, are influential. Mederibwi, for example, has two living full brothers who rarely participate in debates and who would certainly not be regarded as jalaba. It is not the mere existence of these links, therefore, which gives a man status, but the use which he makes of them in the arena of public decision-making (See above, p. 302).

Finally, it should be noted that a man who is related through marriage to a priestly descent group, or descended from a woman of such a descent group is, by definition ineligible for priestly office, while the patrilineal relatives of a priest are all priests themselves. Thus, the most influential men in the society are likely to be "ineligibles" where the office of priesthood is concerned, and it is precisely these men, of course, who have a principal say in determining succession to the office through their ability to form and give expression to public opinion. The fact that it is the classificatory sisters' sons of the priestly descent group who attempt to "capture" a dead priest's "menengi" may therefore be seen as a symbolic expression not only of the corporate nature of the priestly descent group, but also of the tension existing between two distinct but complementary forms of leadership.

Conclusion

The maintenance of social control in societies lacking centralised administrations and, indeed, formal leadership roles, has long been a classic subject for anthropological enquiry. Mursi society is a particularly interesting case for such an enquiry because of its virtually complete independence of overriding external authority and because of the highly "public" nature of its decision-making processes. By this I mean that leadership is exercised by means of public discussions in which every adult member of the society is, in principle, able to exert as much influence as any other. The only explicit sanctions wielded in the field of public affairs are those of the priest which, I hope I have demonstrated, are too diffuse and indiscriminate to provide a basis for political power, as this has been defined above. Nevertheless, one would hardly be justified in devoting a whole thesis to such a hoary anthropological problem as the maintenance of social control in a "chiefless" society unless one considered that, in the particular society under study, the problem could not be satisfactorily solved through the application of general principles and propositions which form part of the existing corpus of anthropological theory.

If there is any sense in which a "balanced opposition of segments" may be said to characterise Mursi society, then the segments in question are defined by criteria of territory and not

by criteria of descent. However important it may be in the domestic context, patrilineal descent does not provide a framework for the analysis of Mursi society as a whole. Indeed, just as affinity has often been described, by Africanist anthropologists, as a negative or centrifugal force, in relation to descent, so descent, in this society, may be described as a negative force in relation to those extra-domestic groupings which form the basis for day-to-day economic cooperation and public decision-making: 'buranyoga. Since the redress group which seeks compensation or revenge if the rights of its members are infringed at the hands of another Mursi is defined genealogically, and since patrilineal ties are subject to a high rate of dispersal, it follows that individual disputes cannot lead to conflicts between local groups. Infringement of personal rights can only lead to limited conflict, can be mediated by neutral "referees" in the immediate vicinity, and cannot involve groups capable of collective action on a large scale, over a long time.

The territorial components of Mursi society, which I described in Chapter 2, are of a type which Dyson-Hudson, writing of the Karimojong group of peoples, has termed "replicate"¹, and which he has described as being "held together" about the two "axes" of clanship

1. Cf. 1966, p.259: "The organisational form of the Karimojong political community . . . lends itself to a process of replication, whereby territorial components of the main body separate spatially and take up independent existence as units organisationally identical with, and equivalent to, the parent group."

and age. I have not found it useful to think in this way about Mursi society, for two main reasons. Firstly, the relatively small size and geographically distinct borders of the country make the question of how its territorial components are "held together" largely redundant. Secondly, and even if this were not so, to have concentrated on such structural factors as territory, age and descent would, in my view, have resulted in an artificially static, and therefore misleading, picture of Mursi society being presented. The age organisation, for example has, at least in principle, unifying, educative and security functions, and it has been shown that role differences based on age are also relevant to the provision of leadership in public decision-making.¹ Together with the segmentary territorial system it provides the institutional framework within which day-to-day economic and political activity takes place. Territory and age are two of the "givens", in the face of which individual choices are made. But while it is therefore necessary to be aware of such institutional constraints, the "stuff" of social life is made up of the decisions of individuals and of the actions flowing from these decisions - actions which, given the institutional framework, might have been otherwise. Thus, in Parts II and III, I have concentrated on two areas of social life in which there is scope for the operation of individual choice, and

1. It may well be speculated, however, in view of the accumulation of actual divergences from stated norms detailed in Chapter 3, that the age organisation is going through a period of long-term change at the moment.

which are highly relevant to the subject of social control in this society - marriage and the individual exercise of influence.

In my account of marriage and of the relationships which arise from it I have tried to explore what Levi-Strauss, ~~in his~~ (1965: Huxley Memorial Lecture, identified as the most significant area for "the future of kinship studies": the application of alliance theory to complex kinship systems and, in particular, to those of the Crow-Omaha type, which seem to stand half way between the elementary and the complex. The marriage prohibitions of the Mursi, and the rules governing the distribution of bridewealth, were interpreted as achieving a compromise between two opposing forces: the dispersal of new affinal ties and the maintenance of existing ones. The significance of this in everyday life, it was argued, lay in the organisation of productive activities and in the provision of neutral "referees" to mediate conflicts between locally resident individuals. Consideration of those comparatively rare occasions on which such conflicts require public settlement led to the question of how individual men achieve positions of outstanding influence in public affairs, which was taken up in Part III.

Here, I tried to go some way towards correcting what I suspect is an overemphasis, in existing accounts, on institutional and normative constraints on individual ambition in East African pastoral societies. Writers of these accounts seem, in general,

to have been reluctant to question the egalitarian ethic of the peoples they have studied. They have tended to accept "conscious" models of the influential and respected individual, between which and the observed facts there is bound to be some degree of coincidence. Especially in studies of so-called "age-based" societies, recourse is frequently had to a virtually undifferentiated category of "elders" to account for the organisation of collective action in relation to public policy making and dispute settlement, with perhaps the rather grudging admission that "the influence of a few locally dominant men is . . . considerable" (Spencer, 1965, p.182) or that "in particular circumstances some elders may be seen to wield greater effective authority than others" (Dyson-Hudson, 1966, pp. 221-22). Very little space is devoted by these authors, however, to the elucidation of how certain men are able consistently to exercise more influence than others in public affairs. One must assume, therefore, that they did not consider that the answer to this question would have shed much light on the issues, albeit "political" ones, with which they were concerned. But such a view is sufficiently surprising to warrant more, by way of justification, than the few pages which Spencer, for example, devotes to it in his chapter, "Elderhood and the Curse". Here, in four pages, he argues, against Leach, that on the evidence of Samburu society, it is neither "necessary" nor "justifiable" to assume "that a conscious or unconscious wish to gain power is a very general motive in human

affairs" (1965, p.181). He quotes Homans's point about a leader being the least free member of a group to support his argument that the ideal behaviour pattern for elders precludes their being involved in competition with each other for power and influence. Such competition would apparently be regarded as rather vulgar by Samburu standards. But just because elders conduct themselves in a calm and dignified manner, it does not follow that there is no competition among them for influence.

If there is such competition, then it is clearly an oversimplification to account in the way that Spencer does for the reaching of consensus in public discussions among the Samburu: "The discussion continues until one man, usually one of the more influential men present, sums up what has been said and suggests a course of action which will be acceptable to them all" (1966, p.177). What is needed here is information concerning the social and personal characteristics of particular influential men, while all we are given is a catalogue of ideal qualities, such as "placidness", the ability to compromise, and a reputation for "worthiness". Dyson-Hudson also fails to devote more than seven pages (1966, pp. 221-27) to this issue of individual influence in the course of a 270 page study of Karimojong "politics". He writes of the "universal quality of elderhood", and even describes the elders as occupying a "corporate office; in so far as authority is exercised by each elder representatively and not as an

individual" (1966, p.212). The picture which emerges is of a detached, selfless, and indeed faceless class of elders, cooperating effortlessly to provide the community with the requisite amount of leadership in public affairs. It is a picture that would not disgrace the highest ideals of the British civil service, but which does not seem to bear much relation to politics.

The Mursi are far from unique, ^{gl} among East African pastoralists, ⁵² in the use they make of speechmaking and public discussion to achieve group goals. It seems to me that if writers on these societies had devoted more space to an examination of the factors involved in this kind of public decision-making, and to the provision of biographical details concerning individual influential men, a very different picture of political organisation would have emerged from their accounts. It is not difficult to imagine why this sort of investigation has been largely ignored, in favour of a more static, institutional approach: it presupposes that the investigator is already familiar with the structure and activities of the society in question, and sufficiently fluent in the language to cope with the allusive and archaic turns of speech which appear to be characteristic of public discussions in small language communities. Thus, by the time an anthropologist has acquired sufficient familiarity with the society and fluency in the language to make this sort of study feasible, he will probably have come to the end of his field-work period and will be turning his thoughts to writing up. He thus

falls back on the uncovering of "structural principles", such as territory, age and descent, constructing in the process an unconvincingly static and homogeneous model of the society in question. I have tried to avoid this pitfall. I recognise, however, that further prolonged research among the Mursi, of the type just mentioned, would be necessary in order to avoid it completely.

Appendix 1: The Census

The census is based upon a total enumeration of the married male occupants of all Mursi cattle settlements in 1970. It also includes 20 married men who continued to live at their cultivation sites throughout the 1970 wet season, a figure which does not, however, exhaust this category. I have explained in the Introduction that the population shows its greatest degree of spatial concentration and residential stability during the wet season months, and this is especially so after the June or July harvest, when men with few or no cattle are likely to take up residence for a month or two in the cattle settlement of a relative. Between June and September 1970 therefore I visited every cattle settlement in the country (51 in all) and obtained information concerning all their married male occupants, who numbered 369.

The information I sought to obtain had to be limited to what I knew from experience that I could reasonably expect a man to provide during the course of a short conversation. The formula I adopted contained the following basic items:

Personal name

Name of clan, sub-clan and descent group

Name of territorial section

Name of mother's clan and descent group

Estimated age

Location of cattle settlement in 1970

Relationship to other married male occupants
of this settlement

Number of wives

For each wife:

- Rank
- Father's clan, descent group and territorial section
- Children by sex, birth order and marital history
- Dry season cultivation area
- Wet season cultivation area

Since the married men who do not move in cattle settlements at any time during the wet season are in a small minority, I consider that the information contained in the census provides a reliable guide to a limited number of demographic features of the population. I have therefore made use of this information at various points in the thesis in order to illustrate general statements. In order that the reader might have the possibility of checking these statements for himself, however, and also to limit the amount of personal detail about individuals that it was necessary to incorporate in the text, I have decided to include here a computer print-out of the total census.

In order to help the reader interpret this print-out, the column numbers of the coding sheet have been printed between each entry. These numbers have been arranged in seven blocks of 1 to 9, separated by asterisks. These asterisks represent, from left to right, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70. Thus, the number 5 after the first asterisk represents column 15 on the coding sheet, while number 8 after the sixth asterisk represents column 68. Information relating specifically to the wives of respondents was punched on separate cards, one card for each wife. Thus, the top line of each entry on the print-out represents the respondent's own card, giving details of his clan, section, age etc., while succeeding lines represent his wives, in descending order of seniority. It was sometimes necessary to use two cards for a wife, due to the number of her offspring. I now explain the code used, beginning with the respondent's own card, on the top line of each entry.

<u>Column Number</u>	<u>Description of Variable</u>
1, 2, 3	Index number
4, 5	Clan:
	1 Komorte 10 Bongosi
	2 Juhai 11 Chermani
	3 Garakuli 12 Galnai
	4 Bumai 13 Gumnai
	5 Kagisi 14 Kulgisai
	6 Mangwi 15 Isai
	7 Ngeriai 16 Maiyaiyai
	8 Gongwi 17 Gushumi
	9 Berneshe 18 Changuli
	19 Chachi
	20 Bodi

Column NumberDescription of Variable

6

Sub-clan:

Komorte	1	Nyatiti
	2	Nyachore
	3	Dowi
	4	Komorteti
Juhai	1	Koiyoi
	2	Ngogoloin
Garakuli	1	Bigidangi
	2	Bikibo
Bumai	1	Makul
	2	Sabachagi
	3	Kennomera
	4	Keriang
	5	Duli
Kagisi	1	Muri
	2	Tumuri

No other clans are so divided.

7,8

Descent group:

Komorte	1	Bidori	17	Konyonomora
	2	Bigo	18	Korhung
	3	Biobume	19	Mabo
	4	Bule	20	Malgoloin
	5	Bulugangiri	21	Mirohohu
	6	Chakturi	22	Nyew
	7	Charbwotcha	23	Uligushero
	8	Chorebibi	24	Uliholi
	9	Demi	25	Ulikibowheni
	10	Dogunolugo	26	Kulkoro
	11	Dumalo	27	Jaramai
	12	Galai	28	Arikonma
	13	Garana	29	Charuse
	14	Gidedang	30	Bigurai
	15	Gunakanaga	31	Donkoro
	16	Kenekare	32	Ulikwikwi

Column No.Description of Variable

7, 8

Descent group (cont.):

Juhai

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1 Arichagi | 13 Mirozugo |
| 2 Arimedere | 14 Muti |
| 3 Arthikibogidangi | 15 Ngokolu |
| 4 Balbong | 16 Tiorongodi |
| 5 Bedamari | 17 Tongokuri |
| 6 Bigidangi | 18 Tulla |
| 7 Bilemwe | 19 Tumuri |
| 8 Binyaninge | 20 Ulichude |
| 9 Bulukumo | 21 Yilbagai |
| 10 Dedep | 22 Bango |
| 11 Dorba | 23 Ero |
| 12 Gunatheno | |

Garakuli

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1 Badola | 10 Ulichakmedere |
| 2 Bichuri | 11 Moralulumi |
| 3 Birabi | 12 Arikorolorna |
| 4 Charkoro | 13 Kennodorosi |
| 5 Daura | 14 Guremedere |
| 6 Dorigesso | 15 Jaredogun |
| 7 Kainkuri | 16 Benyinyi |
| 8 Manyorla | 17 Wene |
| 9 Turku | 18 Bui |

Bumai

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Aholi | 15 Mederiholi |
| 2 Arihorogolonyi | 16 Mudani |
| 3 Arigidanga | 17 Rege |
| 4 Aritilohola | 18 Sabakoro |
| 5 Bachuni | 19 Sirwai |
| 6 Bigidangi | 20 Tuku |
| 7 Bilugu | 21 Turebu |
| 8 Biochaga | 22 Ulinyagidanga |
| 9 Charaminyain | 23 Bichaga |
| 10 Dolete | 24 Ulibalagolonyi |
| 11 Donuge | 25 Dumar |
| 12 Duli | 26 Golcin |
| 13 Jarechakare | 27 Logito |
| 14 Jordomo | 28 Darikio |

Kagisi

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1 Bechakibo | 6 Jerongodi |
| 2 Chamea | 7 Kaulosir |
| 3 Chola | 8 Kedehu |
| 4 Doloma | 9 Orgomwin |
| 5 Gowa | |

Column No.Description of Variable

7, 8

Descent group (cont.):

Mangwi	1	Baduren	10	Nyomanihuli
	2	Charguntul	11	Saba Ramai
	3	Donoso	12	Tugul
	4	Ejobe	13	Tullabane
	5	Gelka	14	Ujesha
	6	Kirinogoloin	15	Ulitherali
	7	Kwothi		Wheni
	8	Latha	16	Luguloinmedere
	9	Luduli	17	Welu
Ngeriai	1	Arigolonyalorna	6	Dumuloi
	2	Bethibe	7	Lemugidangi
	3	Bibala	8	Ulibwi
	4	Biobitheno	9	Ulinyalora
	5	Bisabaholi	10	Boloi
Gongwi	1	Mederiholi	3	Mirobe
	2	Dede	4	Bangadi
Berneshe	1	Elmo	3	Hologonoi
	2	Babukwe		
Bongosi	1	Bone	4	Maldoguno
	2	Nyambaro	5	Kangachu
	3	Lobok	6	Lubanoi
Chermani	1	Bicharinya	3	Mirobiley
	2	Loiyakabarigolonya	4	Ngikoro
Galnai	1	Bawochu	4	Bilingo
	2	Hurai	5	Mirokoro
	3	Dari		
Maiyaiyai	1	Bale	3	Butai
	2	Baiga		
Changuli	1	Dologo	5	Zilogolonyi
	2	Jonoiny	6	Dologo
	3	Koromari	7	Mederikoro
	4	Kwez	8	Tomai

<u>Column No.</u>	<u>Description of Variable</u>
9, 10	Territorial Section:
10 Mara	30 Biogolokare
- 11 Makaro	40 Ariholi
- 12 Ambio	50 Gongulobibi
- 13 Rum	
20 Mako	
- 21 Kennokoro	60 Bedi
- 22 Ambio	
- 23 Dergutu	70 Chachi
11, 12	Mother's clan
13, 14	Mother's descent group
15, 16	Age:
	1 20-25 7 51-55
	2 26-30 8 56-60
	3 31-35 9 61-65
	4 36-40 10 66-70
	5 41-45 11 71-75
	6 46-50
17, 18	Number of wives
19, 20	Cattle settlement number (1 to 51)

Succeeding lines which relate to the respondent's wife or wives are coded as follows:

<u>Column No.</u>	<u>Description of Variable</u>
4, 5	Rank (1 = seniormost)
6	Alive(1)/Dead(2)
7	Own(1)/Inherited(2)

Column No.Description of Variable

8, 9

Dry season cultivation area:

(Where appropriate, the name under which a particular cultivation site has been subsumed on Map 5 and Table 1 is shown in brackets; see note to Table 1).

1	Alaka	39	Jamaru (Golai)
2	Aliyu	40	Jonegolonyi (Golai)
3	Aridoko (Bishangoro)	41	Kennokoro
4	Baru	42	Kiliki
5	Batheni (Golotha)	43	Kiritho (Kennokoro)
6	Beleabiony (Ngorjuey)	44	Koibatha (Alaka)
7	Birege (Behu)	45	Kolabilecho (Makaro)
8	Bishangoro	46	Kubiria (Tibili)
9	Bongo	47	Kuduma
10	Buloi (Gushigalo)	48	Kure (Kennokoro)
11	Bunguro (Ngorjuey)	49	Kurum
12	Chen	50	Loma (Golotha)
13	Chogi (Tibili)	51	Luan (Bongo)
14	Chini (Kurum)	52	Magi (Aliyu)
15	Dagja	53	Makaro
16	Dehu	54	Makul (Bongo)
17	Denga (Dehu)	55	Mana (Ngorjuey)
18	Dingithe (Bishangoro)	56	Mara kido tugo (Kuduma)
19	Dir (Gushigalo)	57	Marath
20	Dub (Alaka)	58	Me'en
21	Dulu	59	Merkule (Kuduma)
22	Durum	60	Ngangani (Nyaure)
23	Garni (Golai)	61	Ngorjuey
24	Goba	62	Nguchu (Golotha)
25	Gogtigolonyi (Nyaure)	63	Nyagolonyi (Bongo)
26	Golai	64	Nyaure
27	Goladi (Shiri)	65	Nyeli (Kennokoro)
28	Golati (Makaro)	66	Rum
29	Golotha	67	Shangoro
30	Goro (Dulu)	68	Shiri
31	Gumgum	69	Shulbi (Goba)
32	Gushigalo	70	Tibili
33	Gutulu (Kurum)	71	Tureholi (Bongo)
34	Haha (Kennokoro)	72	Ullugu (Nyaure)
35	Minihai (Ngorjuey)	73	Warga (Golotha)
36	Halagi (Bongo)	74	Dede (Goba)
37	Ilithey	75	Barath (Bishangoro)
38	Ilile (Kurum)		

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001 51 510 219 4 210

124716 11840 4212 4 1144111

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111

122816 3 310 5121

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002 51 720 2 1 3 210

111471619 410 2231

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125316 61211 2211

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123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*

003 731710 422 3 217

11144 2 42110 5231

141

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141

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12 1 3 9 130 4111

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004 131710 5 7 5 511

121 1 41130 3131

241

141

211 123 41710 3731

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311 123 41813 1231

12 123 41710 3212 412389121

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12 12319 4112 417167212 4 3 5111

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005 43 31019 8 3 111

11158 2 11730 0

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006 42 91118 4 3 219

11153 2 61210 2231

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1253 219 70 2211

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007 42 41119 8 3 111

11145 2 61112 0

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008 6 1310 4 3 5 219

111582320 60 5231

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211582319 8 3131

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009 43 310 7 5 419

11158 219 3232 614128231

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21158 2 61210 1131

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41158 2 61210 0

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1111019 2 510 6232 313 132 412 232 1 3 232 121 231 131
2214719 21010 6132 313 131 141 241 241 241
3214719 2 410 5131 131 131 131 231

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01220 110 612 7 316
11147 8 7 730 5232 210105232 1 3 9723 231 131
21147 8 2 510 4131 131 131 231
31147 8 2 610 1131

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013 9 130 311 4 212
11147 2 61010 3231 231 231
21153 2 61212 0

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014 44202116 1 4 2 2
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2114719 11110 2131 231

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015 21 110 7 6 4 5 9
111471919 4231 131 231 231
2114719 7 810 2131 231
3114719 4 411 5231 231 131 131 131
12471919 5 4231 231 131 231
124719 4 411 5231 131 131 231 131

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016 21 110 7 6 3 1 9
1114719 41710 0

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017 411413 610 9 313
11166 1 21730 4232 127 232 212177131 131
21166 1 12840 4231 231 131 131
31166 1 112 3232 117379131 231

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018 7 810 8 1 4 1 9
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019 7 810 3 1 9
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020 211110 4 8 5 2 3
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021 211110 4 9 4 2 3
111281612 50 5231 231 131 131 231
2112816 5 730 2141 131

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022 6 1410 422 4 2 9
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023 7 42018 3 5 1 3
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024 7 32019 9 3 1 3
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025 21 510 5 5 4 115
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026 11110 4 1 2
1114719 4 810 2231 231

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027 411710 210 6 315
11147 8 6 310 5131 232 2 5 25231 231 231 23
21147 8 125 6141 231 231 231
31147 8 2 410 3231 131 231

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023 7 420 9 210 2 6

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031 7 420 220 4 1 6

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036 411710 6 9 3 9

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124419 61010 4212 2 1 16111 231 231

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037 52 312 111 4 214
11164 1 3 650 1231
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038 9 212 7 7 2 114
11144 6 6 110 0

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039 43 812 111 3 114
111 1 6 2 510 3231 231 231

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040 9 212 117 8 314
121 1 6 7 7 5232 110 132 6 1 3823216 1 231 231
211 1 6 4 810 7131 131 231 131 131 231
40 2 131
311 1 6 42310 3231 231 231

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041 411510 6 311 114
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042 6 211 415 3 218
1112823 4 911 1131
211282319 7 1231

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04319 670 610 3 118
111 2319 2231 231

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211452311 422 0

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045 211611 412 3 118
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046 211611 412 3 118
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1112023 7 420 5131 231 131 231 231

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2114719 61210 2141 231

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050 52 112 211 4 414
121 6 5 0
21161 610 550 0
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051 3 310 4 9 3 118
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052 3 310 4 4 4 118
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053 3 310 9 218
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111 2 1 41210 2111 111

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221 1 192170 2232 417 231
311 1 2 5 730 5232 4 4 7131 131 131 231
12 115 4132 412 56232 5 1 49231 131

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05918 410 6 120
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060 42 911 10 618
11153 218 4 814 242 2 13219 6141 241 141
60 1 141
21153 119 5131 131 232 2 1 131 241
321 19 3242 231 131
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51153 2 3131 231 131
124723 11710 3111 211 241

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061 14211219 4 214
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062 6 112 8 214
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063 431110 117 5 221

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064 21 410 415 6 321

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066 411813 215 3 113

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1114719 4 540 4131

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2114719 917 3231

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3114719 41510 2231

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074 21 61016 1 8 3 8

11147191922 513219

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211471919 7 2131

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31147 8 4 710 223220

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075 52 910 614 5 120

1114719 41210 4131

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07619 740 2 6 6 314

1114916 11440 3232 6 2 42131

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2114916 1 340 4131

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3114916 13040 1131

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12137 3 21830 1141

21137 3 11730 6132 616246232 2 3257232 4 3 232 219259131

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31137 3 1 740 4132 219175131

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4114719 4 330 6131

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078 7 420 7 4 7

121 311 4232 221

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211 6 41230 2231

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311 6 42310 0

411 9 3 0

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079 8 110 610 8 2 7

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080 8 111 610 9 2 6

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22153 1 41710 3131

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08 8 111 310 4 1 6
11128 1 3 310 1131

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08212 110 3 310 1 6
1114719 21230 6232 211 84130 231 131 131 231

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083 211110 4 9 4 1 6
1112819 7 420 1231

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084 21111015 6 1 6
111471912 110 5231 231 131 131 131

123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*

085 411710 2 5 6 215
1114419 11110 6141 141 241 231 231 231
2114419 61112 3131 231 131

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086 411510 2 6 4 215
111 119 61012 1231
211441911 122 1231

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087 12 31010 1 3 117
11147 8 4 911 1131

123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*

08810 150 3 5 217
121 9 8 1 310 3131 231 131
231 9 8 129 1131

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089 42 411 11 311
11128 1 6 310 6132 125 90141 231 131 131 231
21128 219 8 6132 611 7131 131 131 232 211 231
31128 1 2 6232 5 1 241 231 232 111 131 141

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090 42 411 6 3 3 1 0
11128 1 12540 5131 131 231 231 131

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091 21 110 417 4 3 9
1114719 41210 1131
2114719 41130 1131
311 4 911 0

123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*

092 411710 205 2 1 9
1114719 6 310 1231

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093 411710 206 4 2 9
111471919 2231 131
2114719 125 0

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094 6 311 411 7 2 9
12128 129 1 4132 417 71131 232 417 131
21128 1 41510 3131 131 141

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095 21111015 7 2 3
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2112816 41510 3131 231 231

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096 7 410 5 1 3
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097 12 310 419 8 317
111471910 150 4132 4 9 232 4 8 98231 131
2114719 4 330 3231 231 131
311471920 60 2131 231

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098 43 810 612 3 117
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099 411710 7 3 2
121 10 350 323 232 117 231
2114719 61010 4131 131 231 231
3114719 2 110 2131 231

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10010 150 120 3 131

111 9 3 21350 0

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10110 150 312 4 131

111 919 12050 2131 131

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102 7 420 411 3 1 8

111 21010 0

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103 7 420 2 1 7 3 8

121 411 113

21129 6 3 6 0

31129 6 3 0

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10420 110 7 317

111 7 7 0

211 2 5 0

311 19 2 6 0

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107 12 340 417 5 1 1

111491915 3231 131 231

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108 11114010 2 7 1 1

1111319 41710 1131

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109 6 410 420 7 2 9

11147 6 5 730 6141 231 131 231 131 131

2114719 41130 6232 5 7187132 5 7110131 131 131 131

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110 6 410 411 3 1 9
1114719 5 730 1231

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111 411510 5 711 2 1
1116119 61523 6132 212 232 2 9 132 313112131 232 211 95221
2116119 21350 3241 141 232 9 1142

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112 411510 615 3 1 1
1316119 318 2131 131

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113 211520 7 5 3 226
11166 619 4 3131 241 131
2116816 8 2 1141

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114 2115201911 9 522
1116116 7 520 0
211611618 3 3131 131 131
12 16 120 0
12 41813 0
12 42010 0

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115 2115201911 5 222
111611619 2 0
2116116 4 411 0

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11619 41016 1 4 126
1114415 11710 7231 131 231 131 231 13
116 3 231

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117 221010 4 2 7
11128 6 2231 231
21128 6 7 420 1131

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118 411613 215 4 119
11142 2 61310 3231 131 131

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11916 210 219 4 1 3
11160 1 7 2 1131

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120 31 950 7 3 2 222
11174 314 22 1131
21143 6 5 112 0

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121 451211 7 5 3 121
11147 1 2 822 2231 131

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122 45121114 8 221
11147 1 7 5 7132 2 8121232 2 4 6423216 3 131 131 131
122 1 231
22147 119 9 4141 131 241 231

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123 7 320 414 4 222
111431611 122 0
2114316 21830 0

123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*123456789*

124 7 320 3 122
1114316 9 3 1131

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125 7 710 2 4 5 321
11128 2 4 411 2231 131
21128 2 21010 2231 131
31128 2 2 110 0

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26 21 110 417 3 1 9
1114719 7 730 1231

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27 22102111 3 7 2 7
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21143 114 22 4131 131 241 231

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157 241 231

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181 7 730 218 4 246
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18213 130 4 246
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197 31 95019 6 2 0
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2111218 9 130 5231 231 231 131
311121819 2 1231
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20311 122 210 5 239
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105 132050 9 2 6 236

111 3 8 221 3231

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211 315 50 0

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106 0 350 5 136

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107 19 540 114 4 247

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21149 3 4 640 0

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208 19 540 114 5 248

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211 211230 4 8 5 241

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11162 31927 4132 4 2216231

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21817 130 5 149

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219 13 440 4 347

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1 49 3 0

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223 132050 9 237

111 9 10 50 0

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224 451230 115 4 249

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225 8 321 2 3 4 138

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226 21123014 4 144

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228 221830 4 344

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229 8 221 8 243

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231 41 222 615 4 239

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232 9 122 7 3 3 139
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233 21123019 5 251
11137 31929 523219 188231 131 231 131
21137 3 41130 3131 131 131

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23410 230 121 4 137
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235 14214013 5 237
11149 319 140 3231 231 131
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23613 122 6 9 3 128
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11112 319 240 523211 131 131 131 131

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239 3 85010 5 4 129
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240 3 223 7 4 6 226
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211 812 9 130 3241 231 231

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242 431 30 616 5 243

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244 7 730 219 4 144

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247 6 630 4 8 3 240

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251 431130 3 6 6 245

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252 21 930 4 151

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253 11 74019 1 7 251

11149 3 5 730 3131 231 131
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254 5 730 219 5 144

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255 21 33014 3 143

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256 7 730 219 3 144

11124 3 21830 3131 231 231

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257 21 330 7 3 6 246

11137 312 50 4131 231 231 131
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258 52 630 2 146

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259 221830 411 2 144

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260 43 330 8 540

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1224 3 11110 5232 211 232 124 131 231 231
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261 7 630 218 2 144
11133 3 21930 2231

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262 3 230 419 5 244
111 8 3 9 130 3131
211 8 3 7 320 1231

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263 2 350 1 5 236
11135 3 3 550 4131
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264 3 550 7 2 5 136
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266 3 550 2 7 3 134
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267 3 550 2 7 3 134
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268 18 250 3 5 3 134
111 9 4 21350 1131

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269 32 65018 2 4 234
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271 132050 113 7 331
111 9 310 350 3131 131 131
211 9 319 1 5131 131 131 231 231
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27212 350 222 9 231
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27312 350 7 231
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2113527 12050 5231 131 231 131 131

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274 22183019 7 7 344
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21124 310 150 3231 231 231
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27513 30 5 251
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276 411530 615 5 144
11133 3 21230 3241 231 231

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277 41 640 121 3 147
111 2 3 61522 1131

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27810 250 121 4 237
11138 3 61210 1131
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280 22185010 2 4 129

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286 10 550 210 8 236

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11163 3 41510 4131 131 131 231
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294 12 25012 5 2 130
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297 12 15010 5 4 231
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317 411940 1 3 7 133
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320 8 123 313 3 126

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321 8 123 126 4 1 0

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333 431 130 2 143
111 21230 0

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334 11 74019 1 2 148
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2116118 8 120 2241 231

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111681818 323 1231

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341 21 82211 1 3 139
1116818 4 222 1131

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342 1 131
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11168 3 6 920 4131 131 131 231
21168 3 3 310 2232 7 1 131

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345 211122 4 8 3 128
111241813 2231 131

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346 7 522 314 7 127
1216818 21350 2131 131

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347 7 522 2 7 6 127
11124 3 31030 4232 8 4 231 231 131

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350 41 223 615 3 126
11112 9 21520 2131 231

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353 7 523 5 7 4 226
1114112 21923 4231 231 231 231
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354 2119231918 3 126
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35516 123 219 2 126
11121 1 7 920 1131

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35616 123 219 3 126
1114112 3 550 4131 131 231 131

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111411216 120 4231 131 131 231
2114112 21520 3131 231 131

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359 442023 213 4 226

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362 21142319 3 126

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363 3 223 419 3 126

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364 221023 422 3 126

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1117318 41510 6131

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2117318 4 222 1131

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11124 3 21830 3131

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369 21 82214 5 144
11137 3 5 730 2131

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370 21 82214 6 144
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372 21112214 5 128
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376 41 222 210 4 139
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377 211423 9 226
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378 211923 10 126
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383 451211 7 170

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384 411710 5 114

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385 412510 7 223

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386 41221118 3 3 170

111 1 6 310 1131

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387 7 25018 3 3 1 0

12129 315 50 1131

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388 221810 8 222

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389 451211 2 6 1 170

1253 1 11710 3111

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Appendix 2: List of 1970 cattle settlements with their occupants

<u>Settlement</u>	<u>Census index numbers of occupants</u>
1	107,108,111,112,140,142,161,162,163,290
2	14,26,99,151,152
3	20,21,23,24,95,96,119,155
4	148,149
5	30,106
6	28,31,80,81,82,83,84,129,136,150
7	29,78,79,117,127
8	73,74,102,103
9	15,16,18,19,22,35,36,71,91,92,93,94,109, 110,126,139
10	1,2
11	3,4,5,7,72,89,144,145,146,167
12	13,138
13	17,66,67,68,69,70,134
14	37,38,39,40,41,48,49,50,56,57,58,61,62, 76,164,384
15	25,27,32,33,34,85,86,105,343
16	11,12
17	87,88,97,98,104,135

SettlementCensus index numbers of occupants

18	42,43,44,45,46,47,51,52,53,60,132,137, 154
19	6,8,9,10,77,118,128,133
20	54,55,59,75
21	63,64,65,121,122,125,168,238,382
22	114,115,120,123,124,319,323,349,388
23	130,385
24	240,318,320,324,326,327,330,348,352,352, 354,355,356,357,358,359,360,361,362,363, 364,377,378
25	113,116,200,325,342,350
26	351
27	346,347
28	209,236,237,344,345,365,372,375
29	239,280,302,314
30	171,283,292,293,294,295,296
31	100,101,222,272,271,273,297
32	298,299,300,301,305
33	284,287,291,317
34	266,267,268,269,270
35	303,304
36	205,206,263,264,265,286,374
37	204,223,234,235,245,278,279,368,373
38	225,281,282
39	179,180,189,201,203,230,231,232,328, 331,339,340,341,366,376

SettlementCensus index numbers of occupants

40	173,215,247,260
41	212
42	194
43	172,229,242,255,332,333
44	131,169,174,175,176,177,178,183,185, 186,187,188,190,191,192,193,196,202, 226,227,228,243,244,246,254,256,259,261, 262,274,276,367,369,370,371
45	241,251,306,307,308,309
46	181,182,198,199,257,258,311,312,313
47	141,170,207,219,220,277,285,288,289, 315,316,329
48	208,221,334
49	184,195,210,211,213,214,216,217,218, 224,310
50	322,335,336
51	165,233,248,249,250,252,253,275,337

Appendix 3: Kinship Terminology: Reference
and Address Systems

<u>Terms of Reference</u>	<u>Terms of Address</u>	<u>Relationship Categories</u>
<u>Shoone</u>	<u>Dada</u>	F, FB, FZ, FFBS
<u>Jone</u>	<u>Mama</u>	M, MZ, MBD, MFBD, FBW
<u>Gwodine</u>	<u>Name</u>	B, FBS
<u>Ngone</u>	<u>Name</u>	Z, FED
<u>Kogine</u>	<u>Name</u>	FF, FFB, FFZ, FMB, FMBS, MF, MPB, MMB, MMBS
<u>Ohine</u>	<u>Kaka</u>	FM, FMZ, FMBD, FMBW, MM, MMZ, MMBD, MBW
<u>Wene</u>	<u>Name</u>	MB, MBS, MFBS, MBSS
<u>Ngothoni</u>	<u>Ngothoni</u>	ZS, ZD, FZS, FZD, FBDS, FBDD, HZD, HZD
<u>Ashai</u>	<u>Name</u>	DS, DD, SS, SD, EDS, BDD, BSS, BSD, ZDS, ZDD, ZSS, ZSD, FZSS, FZSD, FZDS, FZDD
<u>Yangnun</u>	<u>Name</u>	MZS, MZD
<u>Wheni</u>	<u>Name</u>	S, D, ES, ED, FBDS, FBDD, FBSS, FBSD
<u>Maine</u>	<u>Name</u>	H, HB
<u>Galnen</u>	<u>Name</u>	HZ
<u>Nyangnen</u>	(Avoidance)	HM, WM, WMZ
<u>Mogonen</u>	(Avoidance)	HF, HMB
<u>Nga</u>	<u>Name</u>	W, BW

<u>Terms of Reference</u>	<u>Terms of Address</u>	<u>Relationship Categories</u>
<u>Kwonon</u>	Name or <u>Lang</u>	SWF, ZH, WB, WZ, SMM, WF, WBS, WBD, DHF, WZS, WZD, DH, DHM
<u>Mero</u>	(Avoidance)	SW, ZSW
<u>Kobanen</u>	Name	WZH
<u>Dangunen</u>	Name	ZDH, SWF, SMM, DHF, DHM, WMB
<u>Lomunen</u>	Name	HEW

Appendix 4: Chronology of Research and Exploration
in the Lower Omo area, 1888 to the
present day

- May 1888 Count S. Teleki and L. von Hohnel camped at the northern end of Lake Rudolf and observed the Omo (which they called Niaman) in flood.
- July 1895 A.D. Smith arrived at the northern end of Lake Rudolf from the east and attempted to follow the course of the "Niaman" northwards. Actually he followed it only for a short distance and then took the course of the Mako. This led him to conclude, mistakenly, that the Niaman was not the lower course of the Omo.
- April 1896 A.H. Neumann, coming from the south travelled north along the "Niaman" as far as its junction with the Mako.
- July-August 1896 Vittorio Bottego, with an Italian Geographical Society expedition, travelled southwards through Mursi country, following the left bank of the Omo as far as Lake Rudolf, and thus established the identity of the Omo and the Niaman.
- March-April 1897 H.S. Cavendish followed the Omo northwards from Lake Rudolf as far as the Mako and mentions (1898) a tribe called the Murutu (presumably the Mursi) whom he describes as numerous, strong and rich.
- 1897-98 A.K. Bulatovich, a Russian military adviser to the Emperor Menelik II, travelled south with the Ethiopian army that took Jimma and Maji and established a fort at the northern end of Lake Rudolf. He mentions (1900) the "Idenic" (presumably Yidinit, or Kwegu).
- March 1898 M.S. Welby reached the north-eastern corner of Lake Rudolf, having started from Addis Ababa. He continued south along the west shore of the lake, being probably the first European to do so.
- Sept.-Oct. 1898 H.H. Austin explored the Kibish River and the area to the north-west of Lake Rudolf. He was told that the country had recently been raided, presumably by the Ethiopian force which Bulatovich accompanied.

1899-1900

A.D. Smith made a second journey to the north of Lake Rudolf, and reported (1900) that the "Rusia" (Dassanetch) had almost ceased to exist. The "Mursu" on the other hand had escaped the raiders and were in a flourishing condition.

July-August 1899

Count N.S. Leontiev led an expeditionary force, on behalf of Menelik from Addis Ababa, down the Mako Valley to Lake Rudolf.

February 1900

J.J. Harrison reached the north-eastern corner of the lake and found the Omo almost dry.

April 1901

H.H. Austin made a second journey to Lake Rudolf from the Sudan. He tried, but failed, to enter into communication with the "Murzu".

June-July 1902

R. de Bourg de Bozas travelled from Addis Ababa to the junction of the Omo and Mako, and then followed the right bank of the Omo to Lake Rudolf.

1902-3

An expedition led by Capt. P. Maud triangulated the border of Ethiopia with the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, between Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie.

Feb.-March 1909

A border delimitation expedition led by C.W. Gwynn explored the Omo as far north as its junction with the Mako.

Dec. 1909

C.H. Stigand made contact with the Kerre, where an Ethiopian post had been established.

April-May 1919

L.F.I. Athill visited Maji, the Kibish Valley and Lake Rudolf.

1923-27

Arnol Hodson was British consul in south-western Ethiopia, stationed mainly at Maji, from where he made several trips into the Omo Valley.

1932-33

The French archeologist C. Aranbourg mapped north-west of the lake and studied the fossiliferous Omo beds, west of the Omo delta.

1934

The Lake Rudolf Rift Valley Expedition led by V.E. Fuchs carried out mainly geological work at the northern end of the lake, but was not allowed to enter Ethiopia.

- May-Aug. 1938 M. Marchetti visited the area between the Kibish and Maji and collected information concerning the "Tirma", "Tio" and "Zilmamu".
- 1939 F. Rizzetto made a brief journey into "Tirma" country from Maji.
- 1940-41 The R.A.F. flew partial aerial photography of the Lower Omo.
- 1952 E. Haberland, with an expedition from the Frobenius Institute of Frankfurt University spent a few days in Bodi country before lack of supplies and the death of his mules forced him to return northwards.
- 1967-71 An international Omo Research Expedition was jointly organised by L.S.B. Leakey, C. Arambourg and F.C. Howell, and carried out archeological, palaeontological, and ecological work over a succession of summers.
- 1968-70 Uri Almagor, of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, carried out anthropological fieldwork among the Dassanetch (Geleba), concentrating on the relationship between ecology and social relationships.
- 1970 cont. Serge Tornay, of Paris University, is carrying out research on the social organisation and oral traditions of the Nyangatom (Bume).

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