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Any paper on the concept of elderhood in Africa should have a relevance for the analysis of society generally, and hence no genuine comparison within that sphere need be too far fetched. My reason for comparing this topic with caste in India here is simply that Louis Dumont's model has suggested certain parallels, despite his claim for the uniqueness of the Hindu system and the fact that his own attempt at cross-cultural comparison focuses primarily on the contrast between Indian and Western, homo hierarchicus (HH) and homo aequalis, leaving all the other homines elsewhere uncertain of their place in his scheme.

Here, I propose to use comparison as an analytical tool in its own right, and to suggested how a number of essential component parts of Dumont's model, rather like pieces of a jigsaw, can be rearranged, with the addition of some new pieces, to form a different model which is intended to portray a very different type of society that prevails among the pastoralists of Eastern Africa, where age organisation is as important to an understanding of society as varna and caste are in India.

Initial comparison provides a contrast of ideal types. As a first approximation, caste in India entails a system of stratified groups characterised by perfect immobility - everyone is constrained during his lifetime to remain with his group at the level into which he was born; whereas age organisation entails a system of stratified groups with perfect mobility - everyone (or at least every male who lives long enough) is promoted systematically from the lowest group at initiation to the most senior, rather as classmates in a school are systematically promoted through successive grades as an undifferentiated group. To use an analogy, each age-set may be seen as passing in a queue up a ladder, and each rung or succession of rungs is identified with a certain status or age grade (warrior, elder, etc). It is when one turns from the fundamental contrast between caste and age systems to the elaborations of each system, that one may also discern some intriguing parallels. The argument, then, is not that age organisation in East Africa should be regarded as a 'caste' system, but rather that it is an alternative type of hierarchy in which man ascends in his own lifetime, and it deserves as full a consideration in its own right as others have devoted to the caste system.

In the first instance, one may compare varna - the basic divisions of the Hindu hierarchy - with age grades among certain East African societies. For Dumont, varna is an ideal type, a model that is universal throughout India and provides the ideological firmament upon which the caste system developed with regional and local variations. Its structure is expressed through a set of ascending binary oppositions that distinguishes each level from its superiors: the Untouchables were outside the classical varna and their superiors were all inside; at the next level, the Shudras featured in the classical system, but contrasted with their superiors in having no 'dominion over animals' and not being 'twice born'; at the next level the Vaishyas enjoyed these privileges, but had no 'dominion over men', and so on (HH 106).

Age grades in East Africa may be similarly characterised by a ranked series of oppositions. Uninitiated boys are dangerously outside the age system, and only place their foot on the bottom

rung of the age ladder at initiation (Spencer 1976: 153). Dyson-Hudson (1966: 198-9) has provided a striking example for the Karimojong where an extended delay in initiations led in 1956 to a serious build-up of lawlessness among 'boys' who could not be controlled by their seniors. It was this crisis that precipitated the initiations that brought them into the system and more firmly under the control of the elders. They were now actually on the ladder. Among the Maasai, whom I will take as my central example here, boys are despised as thieves, liars and lacking in the basic requirements of decency and respect; they are moral outcasts whose vagrancies pose a serious problem for their fathers and other elders (Spencer forthcoming).<sup>1</sup> No boy would be allowed to control the cattle he inherits from his dead father until his initiation into warriorhood as a moran (or warrior). From this point, he is at least on the lower rungs of the age ladder, he is under the more direct control of the elders, and may manage his own inherited stock. Associated with the glamour of warriorhood, he is expected to cultivate a certain finesse and a sense of responsibility. In Dumontian language, a moran enters fully into the system, and he acquires a qualified 'dominion over animals' which is denied to boys. However, he is still structurally opposed to the elders on the higher rungs, who may marry and shoulder domestic responsibility. As a warrior, a moran remains a bachelor associated with the bush and he avoids the elders' villages in specific ways. Further elaborations of the system expressed as a series of structured oppositions will become self-evident in the course of the argument. At this stage, I would simply note that the more elaborate ceremonies for which the Maasai are renowned may be regarded as transitional rites that mark promotions up the ladder and a transformation across some binary opposition: boys leave boyhood on initiation to become moran, and so on.

Dumont's analysis hinges on the Hindu concept of purity as the ideological base of the caste system. The Maasai concept of purity does not provide the ideological base for their age system, but it does have an oblique relevance. Among adult Maasai men, and especially among moran, there is a general distaste of domestic filth associated with married women. Women are felt to contaminate meat when they prepare it in their huts, and they are allocated certain cuts which are generally despised by men. Child-bearing women in particular are thought to smell, partly because of the fat that they smear on their bodies, but especially from the excreta of their infants which foul their cloths. In the months following birth, this pollution is exaggerated by the custom which prohibits mother and child from washing, and this practice is repeated in the months following initiations (for either sex). In this state, they are what may be described as 'ritual weaklings', especially vulnerable to certain dangers, and yet enjoying a unique closeness to God and a divine protection. There is a vague belief that to wash during this period would wash away this protection and expose them to unnecessary danger. Thus at the most polluted end of a scale of purity, one has the notion of weakness, vulnerability, and ritual separateness. At the other end, the extreme of purity, may be placed the moran. The association of the moran with the bush is partly expressed as an avoidance of the pollution of married women and ritual weaklings, especially in so far as eating meat is concerned. Moran would not eat meat even seen by a married woman, and wives are required to avoid areas where they might stumble across a group of feasting moran. Girls may accompany the moran as sexual playthings, but they must keep their bodies and their cloths fresh and uncontaminated from the sort of organic by-products that pollute married women. It is sometimes said that the mere smell of a married woman would make a moran want to vomit.

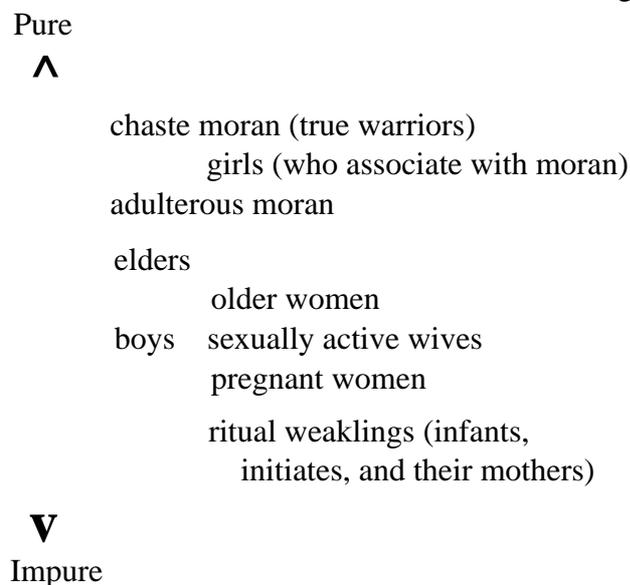
There is, however, an underlying contradiction in this ideal of purity associated with the moran: they have a predilection for adultery and hence for the most intimate bodily contact with married women. This is a controversial issue, thoroughly disliked by the elders, and despised by

the girls who resent this hypocrisy among their men-folk, and will spurn them if they find out. Not every moran indulges in this polluting pastime, and those who wish to display what are regarded as the supreme virtues of warriorhood avoid married women in every respect, and even avoid less fastidious moran, claiming that they can smell the bodily contamination of their adulterous colleagues. These pure or chaste moran prefer to keep their own sweet smelling company, and even try to avoid intimate contact with their girls, sleeping together, but separated by a log. They associated their chaste and unadulterated purity with virility in war. The romantic self-gratifying adventurer cannot at the same time sport himself as the supreme, renouncing warrior.

With the advent of elderhood, when men marry and reconcile themselves to a measure of domestic pollution, those with more pride never quite relax into this condition, and all of them retain a certain aversion for meat cooked by women. However, they can no longer claim the purity of warriorhood nor its physical supremacy ever again.

The complete profile for each sex can be represented diagrammatically with reference to a scale of 'purity'.

Figure 1



In this diagram, the path along the pure-impure scale for either sex in the course of a lifetime would trace out a series of loops (from infancy to boyhood, back to initiation, up to warriorhood, and so on). In terms of relative status at one point in time, there is a clear pattern whereby purity is associated with physical strength. Those moran with the strongest claims to warriorhood are at the summit; and at the other extreme are the weakest and most vulnerable sectors of society who are treated as ritual (as well as physical) weaklings.

This scale is reflected in a variety of associated beliefs. With reference to Maasai concepts of health and disease, there is a prevalent notion that illness can be cured by purgatives and emetics to discharge the polluting substance from ones inner system. In this way, invalids, another weak and vulnerable sector of society, are felt to have some impurity that has to be discharged. At the other end of the scale, the moran are highly regarded for maintaining their inner systems in a constant state of expurgation by means of various roots they put into their soups; they are regarded as the most evacuated and uncontaminated sector of society. Expressed in religious terms, this scale is reflected in a widespread convention in warfare that extends through many

language groups in the area and probably is unique in its extensiveness in the region. This is a tenet that no warrior should kill a ritual weakling, that is any initiate or a nursing mother and her child or any women who might be pregnant. To do so would be to face the threat of unending disaster; they are protected by God. It is once again an opposition between the dangers of the bush, primarily associated with the warriors and indeed with pastoral production where the herds have to be protected and the protection of the village to which ritual weaklings and human reproduction tend to be confined. At a very pragmatic level, one has a cluster of beliefs that serve to protect the weakest sector of society on whom the future rests, and to keep amorous moran away from receptive wives. It is the elders, with most to gain from peace and warrior chastity, who are the principal guardians and propagators of these traditions.

In the present exercise, we are primarily concerned with the upper left-hand portion of Figure 1, which relates ageing among men with a descent from the physical supremacy of warriorhood, and it is this rather than the concept of purity that I wish to consider. The strength of the position of the moran is expressed by the Maasai with reference to certain privileges of warriorhood that they alone display as symbols of their physical prime. Only they may place certain patterns on their shields, put dark-wood in the hafts of their spears, wear certain hairstyles, make assertive grunts before entering a hut, yelp at night in the bush, perform certain dances, go on lion hunts, wear thigh bells associated with raiding, assume patronage over all unmarried girls, and abscond with their mothers to form separate warrior villages (*imanyat*) without regard to any protests from their fathers. If boys dare to assume any of these privileges, or even walk into the middle of a village when moran are around, they will be beaten by the moran.

Inevitably sooner or later, the boys grow into moranhood and the moran become elders. According to Maasai tradition, the classic way in which the privileges of moranhood are handed over is when young initiated youths, having unsuccessfully attempted to filch the privileges from time to time as boys, eventually become strong enough and numerous enough to beat the moran. They then usurp the privileges, and the reigning moran, with or without a decisive fight, retire humiliated to elderhood, while the youths can claim to be reigning moran, physically supreme, fully able to defend the country, and sporting the privileges as a token of this supremacy. In practice, the more usual mode of transition has been for the elders to prevail on the moran to save face by retiring slightly before the youths can effectively challenge them; in other words, to climb up the age ladder voluntarily as befits an elder, in order to avoid being forced to climb down from the supreme pinnacle of warrior virtuosity. They can then always claim that they retired as undefeated champions and are still in a position to take up arms again to beat their juniors if they misbehave themselves and abuse the privileges; and the new moran who succeed them can never quite boast that they actually took over the privileges in a classic coup.

Evidently, one has here two sets of values associated respectively with warriorhood and strength, and with elderhood and responsibility. Military prowess is primarily associated with past glories (although it retains a contemporary relevance in relation to the popular reputation of the Maasai). It is useful, therefore, to assess the significance of warriorhood in its true historical perspective, economically and politically. Economically, there were two modes of production, which one may term a predatory mode dependent on cattle raiding, and a pastoral mode dependent on peaceful husbandry. So far as the pre-colonial scene was concerned, there is little doubt that the Maasai were successful predators; however peaceful husbandry would appear to have been a far more efficient manner of increasing their herds. At a guess, each moran would have had to

acquire 20 cattle each year to compare with the more successful years of peaceful breeding, where it would have been a quite outstanding moran who managed to acquire even half that number by raiding in his whole career.<sup>2</sup> In fact, most of our knowledge of the Maasai at the height of their military might, concerns their civil wars during the nineteenth century, when the gains on one Maasai tribe would have been the losses of another, and the overall benefits of warfare for the Maasai as a whole would have cancelled each other out. Altogether more significant would have been the role of the moran as watchful defenders of their territory and herds, and it is this role that is constantly stressed today. Thus, one can argue that the predatory mode of production, especially perhaps at times of drought and territorial expansion, would have cast the moran as controllers of the means of production and would have diminished the status of elderhood. Certainly, at times of unrest, the elders had less than firm control over the moran. However, in terms of its material promise, it appears to have been the pastoral mode of production, through peaceful husbandry, that was dominant. In this sphere, it was clearly the elders who asserted their control both as stock owning household heads and as the puppeteers of the age system. The moran, it is true, regarded their defensive role as vital in this mode; but the elders' ready response was (and is) that they too had fulfilled this role in their time, and without them there would now be neither territory nor herds to defend. If the moran could claim to share in the 'dominion over animals', and even to have a commanding position when it came to other peoples' animals, it was the established elders who had sole claim to 'dominion over all creatures'. In the hierarchy of symbolic oppositions, this places them on a par with the Kshatriyas and Brahmans of the Hindu system (HH 107). Thus, just as it is not possible to equate Maasai concepts of purity with Hindu purity, so one must avoid equating Maasai moran parading their privileges as a token of conquest with the Kshatriyas as an equivalent warrior stratum whose legitimacy to rule rested on superior force. It was (and is) the Maasai elders and not the moran who formed the ruling elite with judicial authority, wealth, and control over the dominant mode of production to an extent that the moran with their subsidiary mode only rivalled in legend. Whatever the articulation between these modes may have been in the past, it is pertinent to note that it remains a central theme of the major age ceremonies of the Maasai, noted previously as rites of transition. In other words, age ceremonies tend to focus on the unquestioned ultimate power of the older men, and the irrepressibility of young men in their physical prime, who have to be tamed by degrees into elderhood. There is a moral boundary between the two modes as between rungs on the age ladder which is bridged through ritual.

In considering parallels between the two societies further, it is necessary to extend the discussion from age grades to age-sets, and from varna to caste (HH 112). Indeed, it is a reasonable approximation to point out that:

age-set is to age grade as caste is to varna.

So far, the Maasai system has been presented primarily as a succession of age grades, rather as rungs on a ladder up which every male progresses, unless his life is cut short. Most societies have some form of age grading. Where there are age-sets, then this implies that people (males in this instance) pass up from rung to rung as groups in succession, and not as individuals, separately and perhaps at different paces. It is the existence of age-sets among the Maasai that makes them so readily comparable with the castes of the Hindu system; and beyond this there are the corresponding divisions into sub-age-sets and sub-castes.<sup>3</sup>

One may first consider the distribution of power. Dumont notes that a man can only hold uncontested authority in relation to inferior castes. Within a caste, there is total equality to a

degree that encourages the factionalism noted in various Indian studies (HH 207, 228-9). The premise of equality is also basic to the concept of age-set unity among the Maasai, with an emphasis on sharing food especially in moranhood and even extending in elderhood to certain sexual rights in each other's wives. Factionalism as such is not a marked characteristic of elderhood, but among the moran at least, there is a certain competition for prestige and an element of feuding. However between age-sets, as between castes, the senior can always claim authority.

This authority, however, may never be wholly conceded between adjacent age-sets and a residual rivalry between such age-sets may be compared with local rivalry between adjacent castes in India. It is this aspect which Gulliver has revealed in his analysis of the agricultural Arusha Maasai (1963), and his model can broadly be extended to the pastoral Maasai tribes. Unlike the caste system, there can be no question of one age-set jostling its seniors for position, but a similar ambiguity exists. It is as if they are kicking at one another from different positions on the ladder for moral advantage and for possession of the rungs rather than seeking to draw level or to overtake. Boys trying to harry the moran for the privileges of moranhood is a good example of this, with the youths after initiation on the lowest rung, the privilege they covet attached to the second rung, and the moran who sport the privileges refusing to be harried for as long as possible.

When they retire as outworn warriors who are not yet at their political prime, the former moran enter what may be described as a period of latent elderhood, turning to cattle herding and rearing families of their own. They cannot transfer from the material impoverishment of moranhood to the affluence of elderhood, which presumes a large herd coupled with a large family, except through years of patient husbandry in both senses. Similarly, they do not acquire the ritual skills or the wisdom for which elders are renowned except through years of close association with older men. A vital aspect of their socialization into elderhood only begins once they have ceased to be moran.

The rivalry with their successors who have elbowed them out of the limelight does not end at this point, however, and their young wives become the centre of further controversy between the two age-sets. Because moran respect their immediate predecessors less than more senior men, they are less discreet in making sport with their wives. Suspicion and fury build up among the latent elders who become increasingly aware that their successors are still harrying them by trespassing on their privileges.

Rivalry between adjacent age-sets persists into elderhood. At the same time as the latent elders seek to keep their adjacent juniors and their own wives apart from one another, they challenge the authority of their adjacent seniors. By customs, these are the moral and ritual guardians of the erring moran, two age-sets their junior, and if in the rhetoric of debate, doubt can be cast on the competence of these guardians to control the moran, their legitimate authority can be challenged. This becomes especially acute during the period when one age-set of youths are poised to challenge their predecessors for the privileges of moranhood, and their respective guardians battle over political (as opposed to physical) supremacy, using each incident of lawlessness among the younger men as an excuse to discredit one another. The outcome is inevitable since time is always on the side of the younger men. The ability of the mature elders to play a physically active political role, mustering their numbers, travelling considerable distances by foot to attend important discussions among the elders, retaining their mental vigour in debate and their ability to absorb and interpret the cross-currents of gossip and rumour, reaches a peak in their mid-fifties, and then begins to wane. The only question, as with the battle over privileges, is

precisely when will the seniors retire gracefully and even with considerable credit, as opposed to being humiliated into senior citizenship? The fewer the wounds they have to lick at this stage, the easier it is for them to bask in the revered status of old age. The importance of their role as moral guardians over maturing younger men diminishes as old age begins to claim them, reducing them in number and mentally taxing them; and their interests turn increasingly to their large and growing families which now begin to extend into the third generation. As ageing men, they are still capable of making their experience felt in debate, but they are without the energy to pursue a point relentlessly and act as respected individuals rather than as an age-set. Before this point is reached, individual elders of adjacent age-sets may be close friends as neighbours or kinsmen, but between their age-sets there is always a tension that tends to erupt during their debates. Once they accept that they are past their political prime, however, there is nothing further for adjacent age-sets to compete over, and they all join the diminishing band of survivors, accorded a position of enhanced status, so long as they maintain their dignity.

Thus, while age-sets do not degenerate into factionalism after moranhood, they do not exactly lead a tranquil existence until their members relax into retirement. In this way, throughout the most active span of their careers, there is between adjacent age-sets an overt respect for the senior, but in a relationship tinged with suspicion, jealousy and barely concealed abuse, typified by gossip over sorcery. A pattern that was established when the boys first filched the privileges of moranhood and the moran reacted by beating them, persists over the decades. As youths they eventually snatch the privileges of moranhood from their seniors; as moran they seduce their wives; and then as elders they still regard themselves as more virile, able to outstrip their seniors in any feat of physical endurance (and their way of life gives plenty of scope for this). When they assert themselves against their seniors, they tend to resort to expressions associated with a warrior idiom, since they are always closer to warriorhood, implying that their seniors lose control of situations, especially control over their moran wards. At the same time, they cannot afford to cross the boundary from a show of respect to one of outright disrespect for their seniors, since this would serve to demonstrate their own immaturity in the eyes of other men. Their seniors, too, tend to respond with two voices, asserting themselves forcefully in debate and displaying a virility that suggests a certain clinging to warrior ideals and a refusal to be hustled into retirement, at the same time their rhetoric is couched in terms that assert a superior respect to establish their worthiness to hold a higher position on the ladder.

These two idioms reflect the ideologies of the two modes of production. The idiom of warrior assertiveness is associated with the predatory mode, and implies health, vigour, distaste of the impure, but above all virility. The self-effacing idiom of respect is associated with the mode of peaceful husbandry in so much as this has to rely on the widest consensus and courtesy in handling each ruffle in the daily routine following a code laid down by Maasai tradition. It is a contrast between body and mind - the bodily fullness of youth and a spiritual maturity that is cultivated as the body degenerates.

The idiom of respected elderhood as opposed to virile warriorhood is expressed in a variety of domains. Ritual belief points to the power of age seniority associated with a potent curse, but also to the vulnerability of old age and avoidances that are haunted by the fear of premature senility. In gossip, there is on the one hand the constant grumbling at the gross disrespect shown by 'boys' and 'moran' as terms that may be applied disparagingly to any male younger than the speaker. On the other hand, there is a recurrent joke depicting some trivial incident in which the butt is

imitated with a high piping voice, like some bewildered old man, losing control, losing his head, and hence losing face. These two idioms are the thesis and antithesis of daily life, and apply at all active levels of the age ladder.

Paraphrasing Dumont: 'Each [age-set] will try to manipulate this situation to its own advantage, but other [age-sets] may be of a different opinion.' (In other words, they still switch to the appropriate idiom as it suits them.) While with regard to the total pattern: 'It can be seen that a fundamental opposition which is conceived as the essence of a whole series of concrete distinctions really underlies the hierarchical order.' [HH 95-6]. The present analysis takes the argument one step further by extending the principle of opposition beyond a focus on a single polarised ideology (HH 81) to a model in which there is an interplay between two ideologies of this kind that are themselves opposed as inversions of one another. It presents a pattern which among the Maasai highlights the contradictions of old age on the one hand, and of youth on the other. Richard Burghart (1978) has elaborated Dumont's model of the Hindu system indicating an interplay between three separate hierarchical principles, each with its own ideology.<sup>4</sup>

The principal thrust of Dumont's argument relates to the separation of status and power in the Hindu system (HH 114). The Brahmanic priests rise above the jostling for power at lower levels, and in this respect they may be compared with the oldest Maasai men who retain a venerable status as the prime repositories of Maasai tradition and have the most potent general blessing, and an informed detachment that often gives an air of absolute wisdom to their advice. Maasai is a society where one can speak of the charisma of old age. Just as Dumont suggests that the Brahman transcends the administration of this world and by detaching himself from power and the murk of politics, legitimising his own superior status (HH 212-3), so the oldest Maasai men, who have retired from active participation in local affairs, enjoy a similarly enhanced status. No matter how old or senile, they at least should not be the butt of any joke. The parallel fits quite neatly. It is slightly more complicated in the Maasai case in that it also describes to some extent the relation between the elders and the moran. To the extent that the moran are involved in the use of naked force as a political instrument, the elders transcend such activities and the need for resort to physical force. It is rather as though in the division of labour, the moran are left to do the dirty work, although unlike members of low castes, this does carry its own prestige. It is not because they lack prestige that the moran are looked down on by elders, but because they are still 'children', and their tendency towards delinquency and in-fighting is seen as just one aspect of this.

Thus while Dumont is insistent on the separation of power and its subordination to status as though it is one of the unusual features that characterises the caste system, it can at least be asserted with equal insistence that this feature also applies to the Maasai and indeed to other age systems in East Africa. To Dumont's argument, one might perhaps add that at each level, the seniors seek to maintain a status superiority over their juniors, only to find themselves obliged to fight a power struggle which belies their claim to pure status superiority, but at least affirms their superior power; and only when they finally and irrevocably lose in the struggle for power with the onset of old age do they incontrovertibly acquire a superior status.

Returning, then, to the ideological base of the Maasai system, one may say that their concept of purity is closely associated with the predatory mode of production in which the moran have a commanding role, and while this may not have been the dominant mode traditionally, it retains its glamour. In so much as the pastoral mode of production was dominant, one has to turn to a

different ideological base that underpins the primacy of elderhood over all other sectors of Maasai society and it is this mode, reaching its peak in old age, that bears the more striking comparison and contrast with Dumont's analysis. One has to take the male age categories shown in Figure 1, and to straighten out the succession of loops within the development cycle, so to speak, so as to progress lineally from birth to old age. If it is necessary to begin with the ideological premise of purity in order to understand the Hindu varna (HH 38), then with equal insistence, it may be claimed that one has to begin with the premise of respect to understand the dominant Maasai system. The Brahman transcends the remainder of society by having greatest purity, while the older men among the Maasai have the most respect. This is no mere façade of 'respectability'. Rather it is envisaged as an ingrained 'sense of respect' which leads older men in particular to respect one another and their social obligations generally, and envelops them in an aura of greatness that elicits the respect of all other sectors of society. To say in Maasai that an old man has 'respect' (enkanyit) is almost synonymous with saying that 'he is great' (e-kitok) (cf. Spencer 1965: 134-6). The two poles of the Indian system of extreme purity and extreme impurity are associated with the Brahmans and the Untouchables respectively (HH 84). In the African example, the two poles of extreme respect and extreme disrespect are associated with gracious old age and untamable boyhood. The two intellectual systems which in other ways have so little in common are in a sense pegged down firmly at these two extremes, while the dynamics of day to day existence, the political and economic realities, which are secondary for Dumont, take place somewhere in the uncertain middle ground (HH 115). One is reminded of Andre Gunder Frank's analysis of underdevelopment in South America, in which the system of exploitation is perpetuated by the power of international capitalists at the top and the sheer impotence of impoverished peasants at the very bottom, and fruitless struggle in the middle between classes who can never surmount the basic system of inequality.

Given this close parallel between the two systems, it is not perhaps surprising that various approaches that have been attempted in the analysis of one have their parallel in the approaches to the other. Thus various writers who have emphasised the de facto power of the 'dominant' caste in any area in terms of brute force (HH 113, 206, 245) may be matched with Merker's repeated insistence that 'might is Right' in his classic account of the Maasai (1904). One may compare Bailey's analysis of the struggle between rival castes (1957) with Gulliver's perceptive analysis of a similar rivalry between Arusha (agricultural Maasai) age-sets. Just as Bailey has been criticised for failing to appreciate the significance of the ideological basis of Hindu society (HH 115), so Gulliver's concern with group constraints and the machinations of men in mid-career has been criticised for losing sight of the fundamental gerontocratic premise of their society (Spencer 1976: 167).

A further step in the same direction leads one to Beidelman's analysis of the caste as a system of exploitation which has been criticised for its one-sidedness in emphasising the unequal distribution of the means of production and ignoring the broader system of ritualised interdependence that ensures a measure of security for the lower orders absent in a fully exploitative system (HH 145). With regard to a corresponding analysis of age organisation, one may turn to Rey's discussion on the 'lineage mode of production' in traditional African society which he could without difficulty have extended to the Maasai as he did to their Sonjo neighbours (Rey 1975: 63-70). The argument portrays the collectivity of elders as a class that exploit the juniors by constantly reinforcing their dependence. Here too, there is no consideration of the ritual aspects of these societies which reinforce age differences, and yet at the same time

provide the juniors (ie. the moran) with an increasing stake in the system. Certainly, moran are denied early marriage in deference to their seniors, and in the past their war gains were automatically claimed by their fathers; however, this is not to deny the increasing stake that they have in the age system and in their fathers' herds as they climb the ladder. Thus, the task of the Maasai elders as I understand it, is to use ritual to establish their own moral authority over the physically more powerful moran, concentrating their efforts especially on the period following circumcision to convert a rabble of jubilant rebellious boys into a disciplined and overawed force of warriors who are already beginning to accept that they have more to gain by accepting the system than by rejecting it (Spencer 1965: 139f, 256f; 1970: 130). The question of ritualised interdependence is examined later.

Again, one may note the parallel in the holistic criticism of studies that have asserted the total independence of kinship from caste on the one hand, and from age organisation on the other (HH 134 cf. Spencer 1976: 171-2; Leach 1960: 7 cf. Gulliver 1955: 11n).

Another approach that has parallels in both systems is the attempt to explain irregularities by assuming degeneration from some precise pristine formula that once obtained. In this way, Blunt attempted to account for the discrepancy between the occupations attributed to each caste and the occupations actually undertaken by individual members in terms of a transition from a purer form of Hindu society; so Dumont's response is to suggest that such an approach confuses the ritualised aspects of Hindu society with its more purely economic aspects, whereas there may always have been a certain plasticity (HH 138). The scholarship on the Maasai offers no parallel, but for certain other East African age systems, similar explanations to Blunt's have been put forward. To account for a different type of anomaly, Thus Asmarom Legesse (like Blunt) has collected quantitative data to illustrate the discrepancy between the ideal and actual with reference to the qada age/generation system of the Borana, and has run a computer simulation to determine the date at which this system was first set up as an ideal type with its own internal contradiction that ensured that from that moment it would begin to break down (calculated as 1623 A.D., Legesse 1973: 154). With more caution regarding the use of statistics, Neville Dyson-Hudson applied the same logic in his analysis of the age/generation system of the Karimojong. He observed a massive discrepancy between the time at which there should have been a handover of power from one age/generation to the next according to the Karimojong ideal, and the time when this actually occurred, and from this inferred a breakdown of the system under modern conditions (Dyson-Hudson 1966: 198-9). Similarly, Monica Wilson's model of age villages among the Nyakyusa assumed a recent breakdown of a tidier (but also more problematic) traditional system (Wilson 1951: 39f). Each of these studies provides an invaluable contribution to our understanding of East African age organisations, and especially the process of handing over power to the next generation; yet none considers the more plausible possibility that the discrepancy between ideal and actual is an integral aspect of an essentially stable system, whose contradictions are resolved in the cyclical process of development as groups pass up the age ladder, and then inevitably reappear at the same phase in the next age cycle (Spencer 1975, 1976: 153, 1978: 142-3; Charsley 1969: 76ff).

One has, then, a number of analytical parallels between the Indian system on the one hand and age organisation in East Africa on the other, regardless of the fundamental contrast in their principles of hierarchy and stratification. There remain further themes that are so dissimilar as to suggest that comparison cannot be fruitfully pursued beyond this point. One cannot, for instance,

compare the ritualised division of labour of an Indian village with the rather obvious division of labour within a Maasai family implicit in Figure 1. There are, it is true, strong ritual overtones in this division that separate the sexes and the three major age grades of the Maasai. One might also note that herding among the Maasai has a ritually neutral position corresponding to agriculture in India which is accessible to virtually everyone because it has no association with impurity (HH 137). The small Maasai herdboys learning their craft among the calves close to the village, elderly men meeting their homecoming herds in the evening, and even women when necessity demands may all share in this domain. Nevertheless, there is an elaborate set of culturally determined categories in the Hindu system which contrasts with the natural bias in the simpler Maasai system, and in this respect, the Maasai are hardly different from so many other primitive societies. It is a contrast between an organic and a mechanical solidarity.

Again, there is no obvious similarity between caste endogamy and marriage rules associated with the Maasai age system which is characterised by a form of exogamy, linking age-sets through a web of marital ties. At the same time, one can discern in this a structure of ritualised interdependence based on the dominant notion of respect, and comparable with the division of labour in the caste system which is based on the dominant notion of purity. Once again, it is a matter of shifting comparison from the more superficial level to a deeper structural plain.

It is first necessary to explain in what way Maasai age-sets may be said to be exogamous, especially as women are specifically outside the formal age organisation, although each woman does have indirect links through a variety of men. As a mother, a woman is closely associated with the age-set of each son during his moranhood, she is a 'mother-of-moran'; but this may entail a link with a succession of two or even three age-sets for successive sons, and hence none of these is in any sense unique for her. Similarly, she may have brothers spanning two or three age-sets with no unique link. As a girl, the age-set of her moran lover has a special significance and she may be loosely identified with this age-set, but there is a prevailing acceptance that this is no more than one aspect of a children's game, and it is in no way comparable, for instance, with the lifelong bonds that are expected to build up among moran during this period. Even the link with her husband's age-set subsequently is less than unique, in that she may have successive husbands in several age-sets (although admittedly she is expected to settle down to a stable marriage before having any children). There remains the relationship with her father and his age-set, and this is unique: she is the daughter of just one age-set, and it is pertinent to add that the notion of sharing wives as an age-set ideal makes this a very real possibility in a biological sense also. All members of his age-set are precluded from marrying her: she is their 'daughter'. It is in this sense that one may speak of age-set exogamy among the Maasai. This is in fact a marriage restriction that is very widely reported in the age organisations of this area and not just among the Maasai.

The argument can be pursued much further, although I can only give a general outline of it here. An intriguing feature of sexual avoidances among the Maasai is a generally relaxed attitude towards certain forms of classificatory incest. Intercourse between a classificatory 'brother' and 'sister' arouses a sense of ridicule rather than horror; seducing the wife of a 'father' is thought to be dangerous because of his potent curse if he finds out, but not because it is a ritually dangerous act in itself; and moran may even have intercourse with their girl friends in the presence of their own mothers without inhibition. Admittedly incest with a true sister or mother would be repugnant, but at the same time almost, inconceivable. So far as classificatory incest between 'father' and 'daughter' are concerned, however, such a suggestion evokes horror, and the theme is

repeated in a variety of marked avoidances between 'fathers' and 'daughters'. It endows this relationship with a uniqueness for the Maasai, although in the anthropological literature generally, it has perhaps been taken for granted more than any other primary bond.

One is reminded in a curious way of Lévi-Strauss's treatment of incest and exogamy. This argued that to show less than complete sexual avoidance of the 'sisters' of ones own descent group threatens the exchange of women and the fundamental bonds of intermarriage within the wider society that form the basis of social solidarity; the horror of incest was thus viewed as an expression of outraged public morality moulded around these bonds (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 62). Lévi-Strauss has been accused of conflating incest and exogamy, and to this extent of confusing sex with marriage (Leach 1970: 103). Yet here, and quite unexpectedly, one appears to have an oblique confirmation of his theory. The Maasai have weak clan exogamy, no strongly corporate patrilineages, and 'brother'- 'sister' incest hardly concerns them.<sup>5</sup> The pattern of age-set exogamy as defined above, however, corresponds exactly with the intense horror of age-set 'incest', and this leads one to attempt to transpose the argument from the bonds that unite corporate descent groups into the wider system, to bonds that unite age-sets into the wider system. Basically the argument would run as follows.

In a society such as the Maasai where there is an exceptionally close and cordial bond between age mates and where men normally marry women much younger than themselves, there could be a natural tendency for members of an age-set to consolidate these bonds by bestowing one another with daughters as wives (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1969: 41). In such a system, older men would accrue large harems while younger men, who in any case begin with a late first marriage, would find themselves starved of first wives and many of them would have to wait even longer. The practice of age-set exogamy at least ensures that this situation does not arise, and indeed it provides a link between age-sets in a society in which those adjacent to one another in particular find themselves in a situation of perpetual rivalry. I have estimated that over one quarter of all marriages are in fact with daughters of an adjacent age-set. Following through his argument, Lévi-Strauss could no doubt have suggested that the horror of incest with a 'daughter' is an indication of the extent to which age-set exogamy provides the bedrock of social morality, the gift of women cementing the bonds which unite the age-sets into a system. It is a heady argument. Can it be sustained with facts?

I cannot here elaborate on the total Maasai age system which is highly complex, far more so than that of the Samburu (See Spencer forthcoming). However, I can at least cite some salient points in relation to men and their daughters. In the first place, it is a recurrent feature of the system that relations between moran and young elders of the next age-set reach a particularly embittered crisis over the excessive amount of adultery that occurs with the wives of these elders, and normally at some point these elders decide to withhold all their growing daughters from any future marriage with a moran. In particular circumstances, some daughters may already have been married to a moran, and these are promptly recalled by their fathers. The shortage of marriageable girls that ensues places the moran in an intolerable situation when they wish to marry and settle down, and leaves these elders with little choice other than to give their daughters to men who are actually older than themselves (ie. of more senior age-sets), which does occur in about 3% of all marriages but is still somewhat incongruous, or to marry off these daughters to neighbouring Maasai tribes, which again is unpopular. Inevitably, the moran and the young elders have to make up their differences, and the onus is on the younger men to make their peace with the offer of a

substantial placatory gift. Thus, through the marriages of daughters, one has the first rapprochement between the two age-sets since the time when they were first confronting one another over the privileges of moranhood. With elderhood, regardless of subsequent struggles, these daughter-wives provide a permanent link between them with all that this implies for affinal relations among the Maasai.

Secondly, one can consider the entry of moran into elderhood with regard to their own growing daughters. Throughout their moranhood and even at first as latent elders, young men have a casual abandon in their treatment of women. They tease the girls mercilessly, they regard every young wife as a potential object of their adulterous play, and when they too marry as young elders, they treat their own wives in a very high-handed manner and continue to show an interest in the young wives of other age-sets and even in unmarried girls. It is only when their wives bear them daughters that for the first time in their lives they encounter a female category that they should avoid. This is the first stage in their domestication, and it builds up over the years to the point when these daughters start to marry. Now, when they meet a young attractive woman whom they do not know, they cannot automatically assess her bedworthiness; she just might be a 'daughter' and they should avert their gaze, or at least address her distantly until they can ascertain that she is not a 'daughter'. With the acquisition of 'daughters, the notion of respect acquires a new dimension, and with it the formal reserve that characterises elderhood.

Thirdly, this avoidance does not entail an icy aloofness between true father and daughter. There is a hint of an unrequitable fondness between them. It is, for instance, claimed that a Maasai mother should only beat her daughter when the father is not around, for he otherwise may be overcome by his feelings for the daughter and rush in to beat his wife; he would rather not know. For her part, a daughter is said to have a craving to lavish hospitality on her father in her own hut after her arranged marriage to show her gratitude for all he has done for her. Within the limits prescribed by the avoidance, this is the fulfilment of their relationship (cf. Spencer 1965: 214).

Fourthly, one may consider the role of other women in this avoidance, and this is perhaps the most striking feature of all, for it is these women, and not the oldest men, who are the guardians of this particular avoidance. If an elder is held to have had an indecently close relationship with a 'daughter', even if this stops short of actual incest, it is the women who collect together to punish him, while other elders keep their distance, not wishing to interfere. In addition to a variety of degrees of incest, the same punishment is inflicted on a man and his wife if they have intercourse when she is pregnant; the implication seems to be that if the embryo is female then intercourse will bring the husband sexually into contact with a future daughter, and his action could lead to miscarriage (cf. Llewelyn-Davies 1978: 226). If a woman has a series of miscarriages, then the presumption is clear and the punishment is carried out. In any of these instances, gossip and anger build up among the women and they collect together in a mob, bent on punishment, seizing one of the elder's prized oxen, mobbing his wife if she is guilty, razing her hut to the ground, and mobbing him too if he has had the temerity to stay his ground. One of the most notorious legends in the area in which I worked was of an incestuous elder who had tried to prevent a mob of furious women from seizing his favourite ox. Details of their punishment, leaving him maimed for life, were recited with horror by my (male) informants. At the time of my fieldwork, the elders were speculating when the women would be provoked to sufficient anger to punish another man, a habitual drunkard with a habit of pawing at women and not always differentiating his 'daughters'

from others. In a third case, an elder migrated to another Maasai tribe rather than face the prospect of a punitive mob of women, and in this instance it was never firmly established that he was guilty of misdemeanour since the only evidence was purely circumstantial; but he preferred not to stay to argue his case.

Maasai is a society dominated by males and by the high respect of elderhood, in which the avoidance between an age-set and its 'daughters' appears to be the clearest expression of this sense of decorum. Yet it is the women's interpretation of any situation, their gossip and mounting anger that determines the outcome of the supreme humiliation of any elder leading to his lasting loss of respect. It is the women, who are outside the age system, economically dependent on men for food and protection, who at the same time through their marriages as wives and as daughters form a vital link between age-sets, and as a punitive mob are the guardians of the supreme moral virtue of respect in the defence of their sex.

Age exogamy and the horror of 'daughter' incest permeates the system. This is not a case of an analyst confusing sex and marriage, and the Maasai themselves would be one of the least likely people to make such a confusion. It is the negation of sex and marriage between specific categories of people that is conflated by their public morality: it is an emic social fact rather than an etic naivety. Lévi-Strauss's basic hypothesis appears well supported by an example that is quite different from those he originally considered, and other examples from this region could be cited (eg. Embu, Kipsigis, Nandi, Rendille, Samburu).<sup>6</sup> The transposition of his argument should perhaps be taken a stage further, for this is basically a system of hypogamy in which daughters are married downwards to men younger than their fathers. Thus, one can hardly write of the circulation of women between age-sets and symmetrical solidarity, but rather of the conditional endowment of women to future generations which ensures that the husbands will comply with the system and perpetuate it. Even if they hardly respect their own wives, they have to respect their own fathers-in-law, the fathers-in-law of their age mates, the age mates of all these 'fathers-in-law', and hence ultimately all older men; and they have to respect their own daughters, the daughters of their age mates, and the right of junior age-sets to marry these daughters. One is not therefore just concerned with the morality underlying social solidarity among men of all ages, but also with the reproduction of this morality that runs in parallel with the biological reproduction of society and hence with the reproduction of the age system itself.

## Conclusion

Comparison between any two societies inevitably draws attention to certain rather obvious similarities. The Maasai, for instance, despised the polluting occupation of their blacksmiths, whose separate endogamous existence compares very closely with the position of the Untouchables in India (cf. Merker 1904: 110). Similarly, the oldest men in Hindu society retained a dignity that kept them apart from the intrigues and dealings of younger men and they too can be compared with the oldest men within the Maasai age system (HH 229). However, these are very secondary characteristics of each society; and when attempting to compare caste in India with social stratification in East Africa, it is normal to confine the discussion to certain traditional kingdoms of the Interlacustrine Bantu, where distinctive ethnic groups were ranked hierarchically (eg. Fallers 1973: 69), Maquet 1970: 93).

There is, in fact, a tenuous historical link between these East African kingdoms and the Maasai: both share a tradition of the southward drift of tall, elegant, light-skinned pastoralists with

aristocratic features and manners, who then came into contact with dark-skinned Bantu agriculturalists. Those pastoralists who settled on the west side of Lake Victoria are thought to have set up kingdoms, such as Ankole and Ruanda, and became the ruling elites; while the Maasai appear to have been the most recent wave of pastoral immigrants into the area to the east of Lake Victoria, asserting their military superiority, but holding themselves aloof. Such links as they developed with their Bantu neighbours tended to be tenuous and sporadic rather than institutionalised.<sup>7</sup> Thus corresponding to the myth of some Indo-European invasion to account for the origin of caste in India (HH 64), East Africa also has its oral traditions, and with them the danger of seeking to explain the present solely in relation to an uncertain past, thereby evading the problem of explaining how the present reproduces itself to account for stability or fails to do so in the process of change.

Dumont himself criticises the historical quest for origins in certain analyses of the Indian caste system (HH 64-5), and yet has also reacted sharply to those who have criticised him for following precisely this path when he emphasises the persisting importance of the traditional ideology associated with status and dismisses the obvious fact of social change at a politico-economic level as of secondary importance, rather as he treats power as secondary to status (HH 265, Dumont 1980: xxiv). The forgoing analysis of the Maasai system with its notions of warriorhood in an area where endemic warfare has been abolished throughout this century may appear to have fallen into the same trap. Here, however, the analysis is less contentious, for virtually every visitor to the pastoral areas of Kenya is struck by the persistence of tradition, and the Maasai are just one striking example that has caught popular imagination. It is plausible to argue that remoter peoples are denied opportunities of change and are even exploited by those with a vested interest in their backwardness, while the modern economy of Kenya consolidates its hold elsewhere. Yet this does not account for the tenacity of these systems and their inertia towards policies that seek to encourage development. Underlying this disinterest is the dispersal of population and the lack of any real economic alternative in areas that are adapted to the very margins of human existence (Gulliver 1969, Spencer 1965: 312).

Beyond ecological considerations, a further explanation is suggested that relates to the internal dynamics of the age systems themselves. The cultural bias is towards tradition, but these are not traditional societies in any stagnant sense. Each age system exhibits a constant process of change that has its own inherent pattern of conflict and resolution in an endless cycle. It has its characteristic profile of development, in fact an age-set developmental cycle, typically of 15 years as among the Maasai but extending to perhaps 50 years or more among the Karimojong and Jie (Spencer 1978: 141). In the course of successive cycles among the Maasai, the individual male is first enabled to display the physical and athletic skills of youth in the pop-culture of moranhood, and then, after a period of latency, to cultivate political skills during a second climax in his career. In this way, conflict, aspiration and ambition (for males at least) are contained within the traditional system. This may be contrasted with areas most affected by recent change where there has been little incentive for the status quo within the dwindling traditional systems, and young aspiring men are more directly responsive to the ideology and opportunities of change elsewhere. Foremost are those who like entrepreneurs are still young enough to take risks, but wily enough not to be easily deceived. It is these mid-career skills that broadly correspond in age to latent elderhood among the Maasai, a trough between two crests in a society that offers little opportunity for the entrepreneur. This is to suggest that while in the more populated and developing areas, everyone is more directly involved in linear change towards modernisation at a macro-level, in the

remoter areas of East Africa, the process of cyclical change at a micro level may indeed be regarded as 'functional' in the sense that it is self-generating and self-insulating. It has its own self-contained dialectical processes, expressed in an irresolvable interplay of the two ideologies, the thesis and antithesis of Maasai politics. This is not a contrast between change and stagnation in different types of area, but between one sort of change whose future is unpredictable and another sort which is conscious, institutionalised and follows a pre-ordained pattern. As such, it is recognised and controlled to a degree that contrasts with the pattern of long-term cyclical change in Highland Burma inferred by Leach (1954). In other words, this change is not the unintended product of institutionalised contradictions, but is the focus of the institutions themselves.

The Maasai appear to provide an exceptionally useful system for this analysis, illustrating the various points better than any others known to the author. The Samburu have essentially the same system, but with less competition between adjacent age-sets in elderhood and a greater rift between moran and all elders; to this extent, the parallel with the jockeying for position between castes is less pronounced (Spencer 1976: 159). The Kalenjin-speaking peoples have a somewhat similar system to the Maasai, but those to the south about whom we know most had a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy, and recent changes have led to a transformation of their system. Enough is recorded about them to appreciate the applicability of this model, but not enough to develop it as far as is possible with the Maasai. There is also a certain parallel between the Maasai system and the Karimojong of northern Uganda where boys have to force their way onto the lowest rung, and a procession of generations (not age-sets) push one another up the ladder - and ultimately off the top rung (Dyson-Hudson 1966: 155ff). There is an elaboration and formalisation of this pattern among the gada systems of southern Ethiopia; some common features are shared with the Maasai, but the parallel is more tenuous, especially in those areas where the system has lost its earlier political significance (Legesse 1973: 50ff, Baxter and Almagor 1978 *passim*). Altogether in the north, it is generation in combination with age that determines men's status, and generational equality tends to be modified by age inequality leading to a more complex set of models and anomalies that lie beyond the scope of this paper.

The secondary theme of a predatory mode of production also appears to be quite widespread, and even dominant in certain situations. It seems likely that the predatory mode played an important role in the southward drift of the Turkana associated with the slackening of parental control, in the dry-season camps of the Nuer when they raided the Dinka, and in the rising influence of the Maasai diviners during the nineteenth century (Gulliver 1955: 7,189; Evans-Pritchard 1940: 125ff; Waller 1976: 542ff). Generally, in times of unrest, the future of each tribe may have shifted more to the activities of the warriors themselves and to this extent a fundamental aspect of age organisation, in which control normally lay in the hands of the elders, may have shaken out of their grasp for the nonce. Yet in every recorded case, so far as one can judge, it has been the elders, and hence the discipline associated with the age ladder, that has reasserted itself in order that the warriors can in their turn advance to elderhood. The concept of respect associated with the dignity and veneration of advancing age among men is very widespread throughout Africa (Spencer 1965: 134-6; La Fontaine 1981), and its institutionalisation into a ranked series of age grades and age-sets is just a very explicit and variable crystallization of this concept, rather as Dumont portrays the caste system with all its local variations as a crystallization of a much older concept of purity expressed through varna (HH 71,91,112).

There is adequate evidence, then, to suggest that the model presented here applies very

generally to many other pastoralist societies with age organizations in East Africa. Yet it is curious that regarding these societies, which so often are among the most resistant to change, we are normally told very little of the way in which each age system relates to other institutions, notably those associated with kinship. It is curious, because the very fact of stability suggests that here at least one may be faced with system whose parts articulate functionally to form a whole, or at least something as close to a functional whole as we are ever likely to find. Thus Dumont's plea for holism in the analysis of the caste system which he maintains has so often been lacking (HH 75), can be matched with a plea for holism in the study of East African age organizations (Spencer 1976: 171-2). Here, I have tried to show how the age system of the Maasai ramifies to incorporate every sector of the society, including the women, the institution of marriage, two separate modes of production and their associated ideologies. In all these, it is the route to elderhood that dominates, step by step, rung by rung, in an endless cycle.

## NOTES

1. This outline of Maasai age organization is based on field work undertaken in Kenya in 1976-7. It was financed by a research grant from the Social Science Research Council (London), supplemented by assistance from the School of Oriental and African Studies (London University) who also granted me leave of absence during this period, and by the Institute of African Studies (Nairobi University) who gave me hospitality as a Visiting Research Associate. I am indebted to each of these bodies, and of course especially to the Maasai.

2. Using data collected among the Samburu (Spencer 1965, 1973), I estimate that each fully active age-group of moran (ie. right or left-hand side) would comprise about 6% of the total population. With, say, about 12 cattle per person and a maximum growth rate through husbandry of about 10% p.a., the natural growth rate per active moran would be  $12 \times 10\% / 6\%$  or 20 cattle per year.

3. This division into sub-age-sets is general in East African age organizations. Here, in order to clarify presentation, the division of Maasai age-sets into right and left-hand sides is not discussed. It is more a feature of the northern Maasai tribes than of those in the south, and to have included it here would have been an elaboration that would hardly have affected the basic model.

4. As with Dumont's analysis, the exclusive focus on just one dimension in this paper is in danger of over-simplifying the Maasai system. A fuller account (see Spencer forthcoming) would take account of other ideological strands, among which the diviners (ilaibonok) play a prominent role, introducing a new dimension in the analysis rather as Hindu ascetics do in Burghart's analysis.

This claim is reinforced by comparing the Maasai with their cousins, the Samburu, who have strong corporate clans and sub-clans, and strong sexual avoidances within the sub-clan, as well as between fathers and daughters (Spencer 1965: 29, 74, 82).

See Saberwal 1970: 33 (Embu); Peristiany 1939: 39,108, Orchardson 1961: 76 (Kipsigis); Snell 1954: 32, (Huntingford 1953: 106 (Nandi); and Spencer 1973: 36 (Rendille); and Spencer 1965: 82,212-5 (Samburu).

The Hima, who were dispersed in small groups in the area to the north of Lake Victoria, may be regarded as an intermediate category, aloof but also associated with the local elites (Fallers 1956: 29)

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