



ABOUT THIS BOOK

Professor Gluckman deals with an important topic in modern anthropological studies: the great complexity which develops in relations between human beings, a complexity arising from human nature itself and exaggerated and complicated by the customs of society. In these lectures, he examines the social organization of African societies having no governmental institutions but possessing a system of conflicting allegiances which promotes an established pattern of order and morality. His central theme is that men quarrel in terms of certain of their customary allegiances but are restrained from violence through other conflicting allegiances also imposed by custom — those who are made enemies in one set of relationships are made allies by other relationships, and so the social order is preserved through a series of checks and balances.

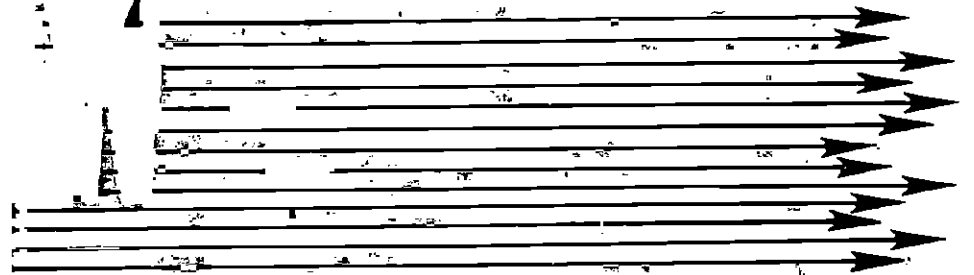
In Africa, these conflicting allegiances can be seen in personal and tribal feuds, in rebellion against authority, in estrangements within the family, in witchcraft accusations and rituals, and even in the color bar of South Africa. However, Professor Gluckman makes the point that in many ways men in primitive societies reason much as men do in highly developed national states, and our industrialized Western society embodies contradictory principles and processes which involve constant conflict.

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Custom and Conflict in Africa Gluckman

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Max Gluckman



CUSTOM AND CONFLICT IN AFRICA

I

THE PEACE IN THE FEUD

WHENEVER an anthropological study is made of a whole society or of some smaller social group, it emphasizes the great complexity which develops in the relations between human beings. Some of this complexity arises from human nature itself, with its varied organic and personality needs. But the customs of each society exaggerate and complicate this complexity. Differences of age, sex, parentage, residence, and so on, have to be handled somehow. But customary forms for developing relations of kinship, for establishing friendships, for compelling the observance through ritual of right relations with the universe, and so forth—these customary forms first divide and then reunite men. One might expect that a small community, of just over a thousand souls, could reside together on an isolated Pacific island with a fairly simple social organization. In fact, such a community is always elaborately divided and cross-divided by customary allegiances; and the elaboration is aggravated by what is most specifically a production of man in society: his religion and his ritual. In his *Notes towards a Definition*

of Culture, Mr. T. S. Eliot saw the importance of these divisions. He wrote: 'I . . . suggest that both class and region, by dividing the inhabitants of a country into two different kinds of groups, lead to a conflict favourable to creativeness and progress. And . . . these are only two of an indefinite number of conflicts and jealousies which should be profitable to society. Indeed, the more the better: so that everyone should be an ally of everyone else in some respects, and an opponent in several others, and no one conflict, envy or fear will predominate. . . .'

'I may put the idea of the importance of conflict within a nation more positively', he goes on, 'by insisting on the importance of various and sometimes conflicting loyalties.' This is the central theme of my lectures—how men quarrel in terms of certain of their customary allegiances, but are restrained from violence through other conflicting allegiances which are also enjoined on them by custom. The result is that conflicts in one set of relationships, over a wider range of society or through a longer period of time, lead to the re-establishment of social cohesion. Conflicts are a part of social life and custom appears to exacerbate these conflicts: but in doing so custom also restrains the conflicts from destroying the wider social order. I shall exhibit this process through the working of the feud, of hostility to authority, of estrangements within the elementary family, of witchcraft accusations and ritual, and even in the colour-bar, as anthropologists have studied these problems in Africa.

All over the world there are societies which have no governmental institutions. That is, they lack officers with established powers to judge on quarrels and to

enforce their decisions, to legislate and take administrative action to meet emergencies, and to lead wars of offence and defence. Yet these societies have such well-established and well-known codes of morals and law, of convention and ritual, that even though they have no written histories, we may reasonably assume that they have persisted for many generations. They clearly do not live in unceasing fear of breaking up in lawlessness. We know that some of them have existed over long periods with some kind of internal law and order, and have successfully defended themselves against attacks by others. Indeed, they include turbulent warriors who raided and even terrorized their neighbours. Therefore when anthropologists came to study these societies, they were immediately confronted with the problem of where social order and cohesion lay.

I myself have not had the good fortune to study in detail such a society, in which private vengeance and self-help are the main overt sanctions against injury by others, and where this exercise of self-help is likely to lead to the waging of feuds. Both my own main fields of research have lain in powerful African kingdoms, where the processes of political control are akin to those patently observable in our own nation. But this lack of personal experience of a feuding society does enable me, without vanity, to bring to your attention what I consider to be one of the most significant contributions which social anthropological research has made to our understanding of social relations. Anthropologists have studied the threatened outbreak of feuds—I say 'threatened outbreak', because nowadays the presence of European govern-

ments usually prevents open fighting. But these anthropologists have been able to see the situations which give rise to internecine fights, and, more importantly, to examine the mechanisms which lead to settlements. The critical result of their analysis is to show that these societies are so organized into a series of groups and relationships, that people who are friends on one basis are enemies on another. Herein lies social cohesion, rooted in the conflicts between men's different allegiances. I believe that it would be profitable to apply these analyses to those long-distant periods of European history when the feud was still apparently the main instrument for redress of injury.

But the analysis of feuding societies does not exhaust its interest when we see feud working as a specific institution where there is no government. As I have said, I myself have done research in African kingdoms; and I found it greatly illuminated my analyses of these kingdoms, when I sought in them the processes which my colleagues had disentangled from feuding. Underneath the patent framework of governmental control which organized the state, I found feud and the settlement of feud at work. Permanent states of hostility, like feuds, existed between sections of the nation. These hostilities were redressed by mechanisms similar to those which prevent feuds from breaking out in perpetual open fighting. The same processes go on around us within our own nation-state, and in international relations. I am going in this first lecture to look at how feuding arises and is restrained in African societies which have no governmental institutions. I shall also indicate this evening, what value this analysis has in helping us to understand our own

society. In my other five lectures I shall develop the lessons I set out in examining 'the peace' which is contained in the feud.]

The working of the threat of private vengeance and the feud has to be exhibited in a detailed analysis of a single society. Our first study of this situation in Africa was made by Professor Evans-Pritchard among the Nuer, a pastoral people of the Upper Nile region. He himself did not organize his analysis primarily to present the argument in which I am interested now, so I am going to describe the Nuer with a slightly different emphasis from his own.

The Nuer dwell in the vast plain which lies around the main rivers in the southern Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This plain floods in the monsoon rains until it is a great lake, which compels the Nuer to retreat with their cattle on to patches of higher ground where they build their permanent villages and cultivate a hazardous crop of millet. After the rains, the flood falls, and young people spread widely with the herds on the exposed revived pastures, since watering the beasts is easy. But the waters drain away rapidly, and the plain then becomes a dry, scorched waste. The Nuer and their cattle in these most arid months have to congregate again at those low-lying spots where water is retained, either in pools or in the dried-up beds of rivers. Thus groups of Nuer move in rotation between wet-season and dry-season homes. Groups which are separated by miles of flood in one month, some time later may be camping together at a single water-hole; and to reach this they may have had to drive their cattle through the territories of yet other groups. It is therefore essential for these various

groups to be on some sort of friendly terms with one another, if they are to maintain their cattle, and themselves, alive. These ecological necessities force people to co-operate; and this helps to explain how the Nuer can be organized in tribes of 60,000 people and more, without any kind of instituted authority.

The Nuer have a very simple technology. Their country lacks iron and stone, and has few trees to provide wood for manufactures. They not only depend on their cattle for much of their food, but also they make important goods from cattle-skins, horns, and bones. Since rinderpest reduced their herds, they live at best just above subsistence. 'It is wistfully related in one of their stories', writes Evans-Pritchard, 'how once upon a time man's stomach led an independent life in the bush, and lived on small insects roasted by the firing of the grasses, for (Nuer say) "Man was not created with a stomach. It was created apart from him." One day Man was walking in the bush and came across Stomach there and put it in its present place that it might feed there. Although when it lived by itself it was satisfied with tiny morsels of food, it is now always hungry. No matter how much it eats it is soon craving for more.' This tale must suffice to show how near the Nuer live to starvation. Food supplies are always short. Particular households and even small areas may suffer severe shortage because of cattle disease or loss of crops. They have to turn to others for help. Again, custom requires that when a man marries he gives forty cattle to his bride's relatives; thus his own family may become short of cattle. He has to turn to others for help. The narrow margin of subsistence, and natural and social vicissitudes which

cause crops to fluctuate in quantity and cattle in numbers, drive Nuer to associate with others if they are to live. But lest you picture a depressed and down-trodden people I must add that the Nuer were fiercely independent warriors, who resisted the advance of the Dervishes and whom the British in the end subdued by bombing their cattle from the air, while the Nuer were themselves steadily invading the territories of other tribes and raiding these for cattle. They are as bellicose among themselves.

The narrow limits of Nuer economy thus force them to associate in fairly populous groups for the production and distribution of food. In these groups they form hamlets and villages, residing in districts whose inhabitants must for most of the time be in some sort of peace with one another. Between some districts there must also be sufficient ties of friendship for their members to cross each other's areas in their moves between flood-season and dry-season homes. The ecological needs for this friendship and peace lessen as the distance grows greater, until, between districts at the extreme ends of a tribe, it hardly exists. Between the different tribes big rivers or wide stretches of uninhabitable country form natural obstacles and political boundaries. Evans-Pritchard brings out strongly the close relation between the political organization of the Nuer and the lie of their land and the way in which they exploit that land.

There are no chiefs in Nuerland, but in each tribe there is an agnatic clan of aristocrats, a large number of men related to one another by genealogical descent through males from a common founding ancestor. Not all the members of a clan dwell in the tribe where

they are aristocrats, and each tribe contains members of many clans. The various districts of a tribe are held to be linked together by their place on the clan genealogy. It works this way. Two neighbouring districts are associated through two long-dead brothers, while another three neighbouring districts are associated through another set of three brothers, whose father was brother to the father of the first set. In this way, the various districts of a Nuer tribe link up in larger and larger sections by being grouped with more distant ancestors of the tribe's aristocratic clan. If one district is involved in fighting, those related to it in brotherhood unite with it against its enemies, who will be joined by their brother-districts. But if one of them is involved in fighting with a more distant section all these districts may join up with one another. While they are thus allied, feuds among themselves fall under truce. These large districts are therefore composed of sections which may at times be hostile to one another, but unite against a more distant enemy. Ultimately all Nuer tribes are united against foreigners; when foreigners are not involved, they split into feuding primary sections, which may, when not fighting each other, split into smaller hostile sections, and so on. The process is not dissimilar from the groupings of nations which in European history have allied against enemies, and then split apart after victory.

In this process of what Evans-Pritchard calls *fusion* of sections against larger groups, and *fission* into sections when not involved against those larger groups, the Nuer recognize certain changes in the rules of war. Men of the same village fight each other with clubs, not spears. Men of different villages fight each other

with the spear. There is no raiding within the tribe for cattle, and it is recognized that a man ought to pay cattle as compensation for killing a fellow-tribesman, though this is rarely done. Nuer tribes raid one another for cattle, but not for women and children who must not be killed; nor must granaries be destroyed. When raiding foreign people, women and children and even men can be captured, women and children can be killed, and granaries can be destroyed.

This is all I am going to say about the large-scale political system of the Nuer. Here fighting can go on, and injuries need not be recompensed, because the groups live far apart. The feud can be waged. Peace is not necessary to preserve life. But in more limited areas, because of the crossing of cattle-drives and so forth, men have to be friends if they are to survive. Yet we know only too well, from our own experience, that the necessity of friendship of itself is not enough to achieve friendship. Men quarrel over many things—cattle, land, women, prestige, indeed over accidents. (I've seen two Zulu lock in armed combat because one bumped into another in the excitement of a war-dance.) Or if men don't quarrel, they have differences of opinion about the rights and wrongs of a contract, and these differences have to be settled by some rule other than that of brute force, if social relations are to endure. Often, difficulties in dispute arise not over what is the appropriate legal or moral rule, but over how the rule applies in particular circumstances. This is true even of most disputes in our highly developed legal system. In effect, both parties may claim to be in the right, and agreement has to be reached on which is in the right and how far he is in the right. Nuer

have an established code of law which sets out, for example, what a man should pay in cattle to get a bride from her father, and what he should pay to his cuckold, or to the kin of a man whom he has slain, or for other offences. They have rules controlling the division of inheritances and of cattle received from the husbands of their kinswomen. That is, they have a code of law, as a series of conventional rules about what is right action, and what is wrongful action. But they haven't any legal procedures or officials, in the sense that there are no authorities charged with summoning disputants, listening to their cases, and enforcing the rules of law against wrongdoers. And as most men tend to feel that they are in the right when the dispute is obscure, and plenty of men are ready to evade their proper obligations if they can, we may well ask how friendship is maintained despite quarrels. It is here that customary ties are important, and the enforcement of those ties by beliefs in ritual punishment. Certain customary ties link a number of men together into a group. But other ties divide them by linking some of them with different people who may be enemies to the first group. For the Nuer, like all peoples, do not exploit their land in haphazard lots of associates, but in organized groups which are broken by relationships which cross-link their members in other relationships.

The most important tie among the Nuer is that of agnatic kinship—kinship by blood through males. I have described how the larger districts are associated together by the idea of this bond of brotherhood and fatherhood. In much smaller groups, the men descended through males from a nearby ancestor form

a closely knit corporate unit. They own and herd their cattle together. They inherit from one another. And, above all, if one of their members is killed they must exact vengeance for him against the killer or one of the killer's vengeance group, or they must obtain blood-cattle in compensation for the death from this vengeance group. This is the theory. But in practice, it seems that among the Nuer this group of agnatic avengers does not always reside together—it is not a local community. In fact, the vengeance group may well be widely scattered. Nuer move about frequently for many reasons. They may quarrel with their fellows at home, and so go elsewhere, perhaps to a maternal uncle. Or they may just go to rich maternal uncles. A man's mother may go in widowhood to be a concubine to some man in a distant village, and there her sons grow up, though all of them belong to the dead husband, even if he did not beget them. And the like. This scattering of some vengeance groups means that a conflict arises between the loyalty of close agnates, the tie which above all demands solidarity, and the ties which link a man with his local community, which he must also support by custom as well as from interest. For though vengeance should be taken by the agnatic group, the fellow-residents of this group mobilize in a battle behind it. Now if the vengeance group is scattered it may mean, especially in the smaller districts, that the demand for community solidarity requires that a man mobilize with the enemies of his agnates. And in the opposite situation such an emigrant member of the group which has killed may be living among the avengers, and be liable to have vengeance executed upon him. I suggest

(because Evans-Pritchard does not mention this point) that his exposure to killing exerts some pressure on his kin to try to compromise the affair. In addition, whether he remain where he is or escape home, he is likely to urge his kin to offer compensation, since he has many interests in the place where he resides. Conversely, if a man of the group demanding vengeance resides among the killers, he has an interest in securing that his kin accept compensation instead of insisting on blood for blood. Dispersal of the vengeance group may lead to a conflict between local and agnatic loyalties, and divide each group against itself.

Divisions of purpose in the vengeance group are created above all by marriage rules. Practically every society in the world insists that there should be no mating within the family of parents and children. I think the only exceptions are certain royal families. Many societies extend the bans on marriage outside the family itself, to more distant kin. This is the rule anthropologists call 'exogamy'—marriage-out. Among the Nuer, the rules forbid, under penalty of disease, accident, and death, a man to marry any woman of his clan, or any woman to whom relationship can be traced in any line up to six generations. The first rule, banning marriage in the clan, compels the men of each agnatic vengeance group to seek in other agnatic groups for their own wives, and for husbands for their sisters. The rules banning marriage to other sorts of kin compel the members of each group to spread their marriages widely through, one assumes, practically every agnatic group in the local community. To marry thus requires first of all some kind of friendship with those other groups. Some African peoples say of groups other

than the one to which they belong, 'They are our enemies; we marry them'; but after marriage there is a sort of friendship, though it differs from the main blood-tie. More than this, when a man has got a wife from another group, he has an interest in being friends with that group which his fellow-agnates do not have, though they too regard his in-laws as relatives. Their wives make them friendly with other groups. It's not just sentiment. A woman remains attached to her own kin, and if her husband quarrels with them she can make life pretty unpleasant for him. But her ancestors are also able to affect her and her children, and hence her husband's well-being. A man's brother-in-law is maternal uncle to his children, and by custom is required to assist them in many critical situations. He can bless his nephew, and his curse 'is believed to be among the worst, if not the worst, a Nuer can receive, for, unlike the father, a maternal uncle may curse a youth's cattle, as well as his crops and fishing and hunting, if he is disobedient or refuses a request or in some other way offends him. The curse may also prevent the nephew from begetting male children.' So for the welfare of his family, and the prosperity of his children, each man is led by his interests, and compelled by custom, to seek to be on good terms with his wife's kin. And he has, as the child of a woman from yet another group, an interest in being on good terms with his own mother's kin. Again, this interest is supported by customary rights to get help, and by the danger of suffering mystical retribution if he does not conform with these customs. The fact that men of a single group of agnates have mothers from different other groups, and marry wives from still

other groups, strikes into the unity of each vengeance-group. The loyalty of agnates to one another, so strongly enforced by custom, conflicts with other customary allegiances to other groups and persons. Some members of each warring group have an interest in bringing about a settlement of quarrels. And these differences of loyalty, leading to divisions in one set of relationships, are institutionalized in customary modes of behaviour, and are often validated by mystical beliefs. Thus where custom divides in one set of relationships, it produces cohesion, through settlement of quarrels, in a wider range of social life.

Underlying these customary divisions, which put pressure on the parties to settle a dispute, is the constant pressure of common residence. For common residence implies a necessity to co-operate in maintaining peace, and that peace involves some recognition of the demands of law and morality. It also involves mutual tolerance. These demands are backed by the constant intermarriages which go on in a limited area, since men do not commonly seek wives from afar. Hence the Nuer as individuals are linked in a wide-flung web of kinship ties which spreads across the land; and new meshes in this web are constantly being woven with each fruitful marriage. These webs of ties, centring on individuals, unite members of different agnatic groups. And always local groups have common local interests.

These common local interests are represented by a category of arbitrators, who may be called on to help settle disputes. The arbitrators are ritual experts who are called 'men of the earth'. They have no forceful powers of coercion. They cannot command

men to do anything and expect them to obey; but they are political as well as ritual functionaries. If a fight breaks out, the 'man of the earth' can restore peace by running between the combatants and hoeing up the earth. The slayer of a man is defiled with blood, and can neither eat nor drink until the 'man of the earth' has let the blood of the dead man out of his body. If the slayer resides near the home of the man he has killed, he will live in sanctuary with the 'man of the earth' to avoid death at the hands of his victim's kin. The 'man of the earth' will then negotiate between the two groups, and try to induce the deceased's kin to accept compensation. This they are bound in honour to refuse; but eventually they will yield when the 'man of the earth' threatens to curse them. Evans-Pritchard himself never observed this process; but he collected tales of the dire effects of such a curse.

He found that 'within a village differences between persons are discussed by the elders of the village and agreement is generally and easily reached and compensation paid, or promised, for all are related by kinship and common interests. Disputes between members of nearby villages, between which there are many social contacts and ties can also be settled by agreement, but less easily and with more likelihood of resort to force.' Between sections on extreme sides of a tribe, chances of settlement are less. Hence, Evans-Pritchard says, 'law operates very weakly outside a very limited radius and nowhere very effectively'. But he shows that there is a law, and as we see it is represented in the person of the 'man of the earth'. This functionary also represents the need for communal peace over a certain area. Customary practices here

again divide men, by emphasizing the disturbance after a homicide: the kinsmen of killer and victim cannot eat or drink together, and they may not both use the dishes of third parties. It sounds as if some husbands and wives might not be able to eat together. In fact, to conceal that one has killed a man is a dreadful offence because it is believed to put the whole district under threat of mystical disaster. Clearly people cannot go to their gardens or pastures in any security. Some adjustment must be made. It is here that the 'man of the earth' acts, through his connection with the earth. It seems that for the Nuer, as for many African societies, the earth has a mystical as well as a secular value. The secular value of the earth lies in the way it provides for the private interests of individuals and groups within the larger society. They make their living off particular gardens, pastures, and fishing-pools; they build their homes, make their fires, and eat their meals on their own plots of ground; they beget and rear their children on the earth. Their ancestors are buried in the earth. Men and groups dispute over particular pieces of earth to serve these varied ends. But men live, work, dance, breed, die, on the earth in the company of other men. They obtain their rights to earth by virtue of membership of groups, and they can only maintain themselves by virtue of this membership. To live on the earth they require friendship with other men over a certain area. The earth, undivided, as the basis of society, thus comes to symbolize not individual prosperity, fertility, and good fortune; but the general prosperity, fertility, and good fortune on which individual life depends. Rain does not fall on one plot, but on an area; locust swarms and blights

and famine and epidemics bring communal disaster, and not individual disaster alone. With this general prosperity are associated peace and the recognition of a moral order over a range of land. In West Africa men worship the Earth, and in this worship groups who are otherwise in hostile relations annually unite in celebration. In Central and South Africa kings, who symbolize the political unity of tribes, are identified with the earth: the Barotse word for king means 'earth'. And in some African tribes there is a dogma that the king must be killed when his physical powers decline, lest the powers of the earth decline simultaneously. Among the Nuer, the ritual expert who is connected with the earth, in its general fertility, and who therefore symbolizes the communal need for peace and the recognition of moral rights in the community of men, acts as mediator between warring sections.

What emerges, I think, is that if there are sufficient conflicts of loyalties at work, settlement will be achieved and law and social order maintained. It is custom which establishes this conflict in loyalties. Men are tightly bound by custom, backed by ritual ideas, to their agnatic kin. Ritual ideas sanction the customary ties to maternal kin. As we follow Evans-Pritchard's analysis, working outwards from the individual Nuer into the larger Nuer society, we see that at every point each man is pulled into relations with different men as allies or enemies according to the context of situation. A man needs help in herding his cattle: therefore he must be friends with neighbours with whom he may well quarrel over other matters—or indeed over the herding of cattle. The herding of

cattle demands that certain separated groups at some seasons be in amicable relations. A man cannot, under stringent taboos, marry his close female relatives: this means that he must be friendly enough with other people for them to give him a wife. He marries her in elaborate ceremonies and transfers cattle which he collects from all his kin and gives to all her kin. These elaborate ceremonies and payments of cattle establish friendships for him. And through his wife he strikes up alliances with relatives-in-law which are inimical to a whole-hearted one-sided attachment to his own brothers and fellow-members of his clan. His children have close ties of sentiment with the kin of their mother. Custom supports these ties with obligations and mystical threats. A man's blood-kin are not always his neighbours: the ties of kinship and locality conflict. And all these ties, I repeat, are elaborately set in custom and backed with ritual beliefs.

These allegiances, and a man's allegiance to his community and its sense of right-doing, create conflicts which inhibit the spread of dispute and fighting. There is a conflict between a man's desire to serve his own material ends, ruthlessly, and his recognition of a code of law and right-doing under that code; and this conflict appears in his kinsmen's willingness or unwillingness to support him in a quarrel. There is a conflict between the assertiveness of each individual and kin-group and the interests which induce them to come to terms with their neighbours. This is the conflict which is resolved through the ritual curse of the 'man of the earth'. Custom lays down the code of law which establishes the nature of right-doing, and custom ordains that men shall recognize ties of varying kinds

of kinship, or of locality, or of several other sorts. But custom is effective in binding the Nuer into a community which maintains some kind of order—what Evans-Pritchard calls 'ordered anarchy'—because the obligations of custom link men in different kinds of relationships. Over longer periods of time and wider ranges of society the conflicts between these relationships become cohesion.

I may have given the impression that I am arguing that vengeance is never taken and the feud is never waged. I don't want to do this. Feud is waged and vengeance taken when the parties live sufficiently far apart, or are too weakly related by diverse ties. Even when they are close together, hot-headedness and desire for prestige may lead to vengeance and constant fighting. But where they are close together, many institutions and ties operate to exert pressure on the quarrellers to reach a settlement. Again, this is not to say that settlement of quarrels is always achieved. We must remember that quarrels arise out of the very ties which link men—ties with one's wife's kin or one's own kin or one's neighbours. There is only pressure towards the establishing of peaceful relations—or, rather, the re-establishing of peaceful relations after a breach. This pressure is exerted by common interest in a modicum of peace over a certain area, which is necessary if men are to live in any kind of security, and produce food, marry into one another's families, or deal with one another. The conflicts between the loyalties held by a man thus, in a wider range of relations, establish order and lead to recognition and acceptance of obligations within law. A man's several loyalties strike at the strength of his loyalty to any one

group or set of relationships, which is thus divided. Hence the whole system depends for its cohesion on the existence of conflicts in smaller sub-systems. Each vengeance group of agnatic kinsmen is divided by the different maternal and conjugal and local attachments of individual members.

Clearly the primary source of division in the groups of kin which are characteristic of primitive society, is the rule that men must not marry their clanswomen and other near relatives. But many societies by custom prefer marriage with certain sets of kin, and therefore these show a different working of the political process. In one society, that of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, marriage is allowed within the vengeance group itself by Islamic law. The analysis of the resulting situation, and its connection with habitat, will be a good test of the above argument. Dr. Emrys Peters is at present occupied with this study. We know that there are societies where feuds occur in comparatively small areas; but none of these have been subjected to adequate anthropological analysis in terms of the many ties established by custom.

Later studies have supported the main points made by Evans-Pritchard about Nuer society. I make brief reference only to one study. Evans-Pritchard himself emphasized the positive aspects of ties linking members of agnatic vengeance groups to other groups: I have myself argued that they have a divisive effect within the group, and this is where the emphasis was placed by Dr. Elizabeth Colson in her study of the Tonga of Northern Rhodesia. I can't present the beauty of her study, but I give a summary statement of a case she recorded—this is the clearest case of the working

of the vengeance threat which we have from Africa. A man of the Eland clan killed a man of the Lion clan. The murderer was arrested by the British and sent to gaol: but the Lions broke off all relations with the Elands who lived nearby. Eland men in Lion villages, and Lion men in Eland villages, told Miss Colson that in the past they would have fled home: as it was, the Lions ostracized their Eland fellow-villagers. Eland women living with Lion husbands among the husbands' kin were subject to insults and threats—which upset the husbands. The Elands proffered compensation through joint in-laws of themselves and the Lions; peace was made, and blood-cattle promised to compensate for the homicide. The Elands were slow in paying. Eventually, a son of an Eland woman by a Lion man fell ill and died: the diviner said that the murdered man's spirit had killed the child because cattle had not been paid. The women again began to exercise pressure on male kin to settle the matter. The dispersal of the vengeance group, and the marriages of its women with men of other vengeance groups, produced divisions in the ranks of each group, and exerted pressure for settlement. The death of a child, which custom blamed on the vengeful spirit, created the situation compelling a meeting, at which other relatives of the two parties acted as intermediaries.

The general principle I've been stating has been long recognized by many scholars, but others have overlooked its significance. In their great *History of English Law* Pollock and Maitland wrote that in Anglo-Saxon times 'personal injury was in the first place a cause of feud, or private war, between the kindreds of the wrongdoer and of the person wronged'. The

Shorter Cambridge Mediaeval History says that feud 'produced a state of incessant private warfare in the community, and divided the kindreds themselves when the injury was committed by one member against another of the same group'. I doubt this. The Anglo-Saxon vengeance group, called the *sib*, which was entitled to claim blood-money for a dead man, was composed of all his kindred, through males and females, up to sixth cousins. But the group which resided and worked together seems to have been some form of patriarchal joint family: again we find that the vengeance group did not coincide with the local group. And if you trace each man's kin up to his sixth cousins, they form a widely scattered grouping which could not mobilize. Each man, with only his full-brothers and full-sisters, was the centre of his own *sib*; and every individual was a member of the *sibs* of many other people. Indeed, I venture to suggest that in a long-settled district, where there had been much intermarrying, almost everyone would have been a member of everyone else's *sib*. Hence where vengeance had to be taken, or redress enforced, some people would have been members of both plaintiff and defendant *sibs*. They would surely have exerted pressure for just settlement. This is the position among the Kalingas of the Philippine Islands who have a similar kinship system. Feuds may have been prosecuted between *sibs* in separated districts, or as battles between local communities mobilized behind noble families. But we must not take sagas and tales of feuding as evidence, for they may, like the tales of the Nuer 'man of the earth's' curse, stand as warnings. Or even as historical records they may have been better

warnings. There was only one lot of Hatfields and McCoys in the Kentucky and Virginia hills. Generally, over a limited area, there is peace as well as war in the threat of the feud.

This peace arises from the existence of many kinds of relationships, and the values attached to them all by custom. These ties divide men at one point; but this division in a wider group and over a longer period of time leads to the establishment of social order. In separated districts men can quarrel. The smaller the area involved, the more numerous the social ties. But as the area narrows the occasions which breed quarrels between men multiply; and here it is that their conflicting ties both draw them apart, and bring them into relationship with other people who see that settlement is achieved. In this way custom unites where it divides, co-operation and conflict balancing each other. At the widest range, cohesion is stated in ritual terms—supported by mystical retribution—where values are unquestioned and axiomatic. Hence ritual reconciliation and sacrifice often follow the settlement of a quarrel, and ritual methods are used to reach adjustment.

The social process of the feud and threat of feud may seem very distant from us, but in fact it is present on our doorsteps. The application of this analysis to international affairs would overlook many complicating factors: is there a single moral order, for example, as among the Nuer? Can nations allow their members to recognize external conflicting ties of loyalty? There is clearly, as in Nuerland, an increasing technological necessity for some kind of peace over all the world. That I leave aside. I would, however, argue that it is

useful to look at our own national life in these terms. If we examine the smaller groups which make up our vast and complex society, it is easy to see that divisions of interest and loyalties within any one group prevent it from standing in absolute opposition to other groups and to the society at large. For men can only belong to a large society through intermediate smaller groups, based on technical process, on personal association, on locality, on sectarian belief within a larger cult, and so forth. Schools which are organized in houses cutting across forms, and Universities which have colleges cutting across departments and faculties, exhibit more cohesion than amorphous schools and universities. Tight loyalties to smaller groups can be effective in strengthening a larger community if there are offsetting loyalties.

The feud is, according to the dictionary, 'a lasting state of hostility'. There is no society which does not contain such states of hostility between its component sections; but provided they are redressed by other loyalties they may contribute to the peace of the whole. One group of workers, bound together in a particular process and not immediately involved in a dispute with a factory's employers, may oppose another group's going on strike. Indeed, there is a conflict in the loyalties which operate on each worker and each working-group because of familial and national ties, so that man and group are inhibited from moving into violent action. Every worker has an interest in keeping the factory working at all costs, in addition to an interest in getting as high wages as he can. Or if work stops, he wants it to begin again. Similar divisions

exist between employing-groups, and within the ranks of management inside a factory. Nowadays the significant groups in British political life are largely functional groups—trade unions, employers' and trade associations, educational interests, religious sects, and the like. It is these which exert pressure on Parliament, but it is not interest-groups which elect members to Parliament. We therefore get a high degree of national representation because most members of Parliament are elected by amorphous constituencies which contain many of these interest-groups. The Member of Parliament is supposed to represent all his constituents, whatever their party affiliation; and this system of representation cuts clean across the important political pressure groups. He is like the Nuer 'man of the earth'.

Again, I am not suggesting that divided loyalties and interests will always prevent a dispute arising, or prevent social dislocation and change. Loyalties and interests are not thus beautifully balanced. What I am saying is that these conflicting loyalties and divisions of allegiance tend to inhibit the development of open quarrelling, and that the greater the division in one area of society, the greater is likely to be the cohesion in a wider range of relationships—provided that there is a general need for peace, and recognition of a moral order in which this peace can flourish.

I have hinted at where the process of the feud, with its war and its peace, can be detected in Britain. Many people have so detected it; but as many are reluctant to accept the reality of social life—that quarrels and conflicts exist in all groups and cannot be wished out of existence. They must be redressed

by other interests and other customary loyalties, so that the individual is led into association with different fellows. The more his ties require that his opponents in one set of relations are his allies in another, the greater is likely to be the peace of the feud.

II

THE FRAILTY IN AUTHORITY

WHEN Macbeth was tyrannizing over Scotland, Macduff in desperation fled to England to beseech Malcolm, the son of murdered King Duncan, to lead an army of liberation against the tyrant. Malcolm feared that Macduff might be enticing him into the tyrant's hands, so to test Macduff he described himself as a most arrant villain, saying he had no saving graces. He compared his character with that of the ideal king, thus:

the g-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, persévérance, nobility, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courtesy, fortitude,
I have no relish of them.

There's a list of virtues few human beings can attain. True, they are the virtues of a monarch. But in lesser degree such virtues are required of all leaders. Thus, in another sphere, professors should be learned and scholarly, original research-workers, inspiring teachers, tolerant with students, good administrators.

It follows, therefore, as positions of leadership carry high ideals, and as most men are, well, only men, there develops frequently a conflict between the ideals of leadership and the weakness of the leader. This is the frailty in authority. For it is likely that as a leader exhibits his weaknesses—natural human weaknesses