

6

Movement, Warfare and Ethnicity in the Lower Omo Valley

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Introduction

In a 1985 article, Richard Waller describes East Africa, before the advent of colonial rule, as

....a frontier region where society was fluid, highly adaptable, and capable of absorbing outsiders easily. Labour, rather than land, was the scarce resource. This placed a high premium on the ability of pioneering groups of individuals to contract and manipulate effectively a wide range of kinship and other ties in order to mobilise the social and political resources necessary for colonization....as a result of the need for mobility, there were few barriers to the flow of population from one small-scale unit to another and the definitions of identity tended to be inclusive rather than exclusive (1985:348-49).

If there is anywhere in East Africa where this description may be said still to apply it is the Lower Omo Valley in southwestern Ethiopia. But it is not only the relatively weak exercise of government control which makes this an attractive area for the study of population movement, warfare and ethnic group formation. A second reason is its relatively small size (approximately 20,000 km²); a third is its great ecological

diversity, which supports several culturally distinct groups of agro-pastoralists. Fourth, changes in the level of Lake Turkana since the beginning of this century have had a clear impact on the human population (Butzer 1971:131-44; Carr 1977:254-300). Fifth, the people of this area have undergone, since 1971, a period of drought and hunger unprecedented in living memory, an experience which has both emphasised ethnic distinctions and brought into focus processes of movement and adaptation which in 'normal' times are barely visible because of the long time span over which they occur.

This chapter is based upon a limited comparison of the three main ethnic groups in the area, the Dassanetch, Nyangatom and Mursi. I have two objectives. The first is to arrive at some general propositions about population movements, warfare and ethnicity which may prove helpful in extending this comparison to a geographically wider region. The second is to attempt what I believe the first regional study of the peoples of the Lower Omo. I do not claim that my account is either exhaustive or definitive, but I hope it will at least have the merit of provoking others to improve upon it.

Agro-Pastoral Production Systems in the Lower Omo Valley

The economies of these three peoples are linked by their dependence on the River Omo, and yet the Omo forest and bush, being infested with tsetse flies, does not provide a safe environment for domestic animals. Its importance lies in its potential for agricultural, not pastoral, production. Pastoral exploitation of the Omo, therefore, implies a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy. Assessing the exact contribution to daily subsistence of agriculture in a society in which herding is given supreme cultural importance is, of course, a difficult matter, especially since age, sex and locality specific categories of the population are differentially dependent on these two resources. But this is a matter of great importance in attempting to understand the regional economic system of the Lower Omo and the inter-relations of the groups which make it up (See Map 6.1). Let me begin with the southernmost of these, the Dassanetch.

The Dassanetch

Dassanetch territory is a semi-arid plain lying immediately north of Lake Turkana and including the Omo delta. Mean annual rainfall is about 350 mm (14"), but rainfall varies greatly from year to year in timing, location and amount (Butzer 1971:23-26). More important for the Dassanetch than the erratic local rains is the annual rise and fall of the Omo which is controlled by the heavy rains falling over its highland

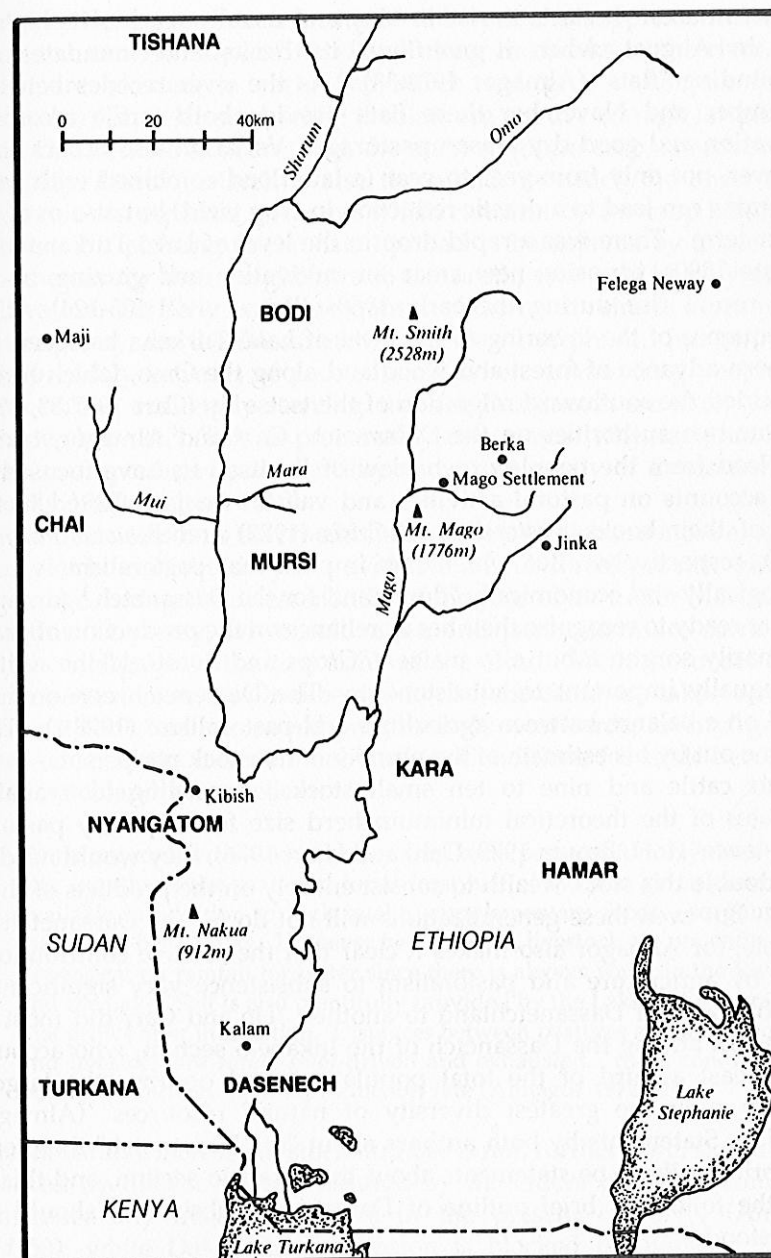


FIGURE 6.1 Peoples of the Lower Omo

catchment area. It starts to rise in May and usually reaches its highest level in August, when it overflows its banks and inundates the surrounding "flats" (Almagor 1978:38). As the river recedes between September and November these flats provide both fertile areas for cultivation and good dry season pasturage. Variation also occurs here, however, not only from year to year (a late flood combined with early local rains can lead to a drastic reduction in crop yield) but also over the longer term. There was a rapid drop in the level of Lake Turkana after the late 1890s, exposing new areas for cultivation and grazing, and a more recent rise during the early 1960s (Butzer 1971:105-124). One consequence of the lowering of the level of Lake Turkana has been the southern advance of forest and woodland along the Omo, which has in turn aided the southward migration of the tsetse fly (Carr 1977:88, 274).

Our two authorities on the Dassanetch, Carr and Almagor, taking their lead from the people's own view of themselves, have focused in their accounts on pastoral activities and values - as is reflected in the titles of their books, *Pastoralism in Crisis* (1977) and *Pastoral Partners* (1978), respectively. But while Carr implies that pastoralism is both ideologically and economically "dominant" for the Dassanetch,¹ Almagor is more ready to recognise their heavy reliance on the production of grain - primarily sorghum but also maize. "Crops and livestock", he writes, "are equally important to subsistence.... The Dassanetch economy...is based on a balance between agriculture and pastoralism" (1978:1). This is borne out by his estimate of the number of livestock per person - three to four cattle and nine to ten small stock. According to available estimates of the theoretical minimum herd size for a "purely pastoral subsistence" (L.H. Brown 1973; Dahl and Hjort 1976), they would need at least double this stock wealth to subsist entirely on the products of their herds. But even these generalizations will not do for the Dassanetch as a whole, for Almagor also makes it clear that the relative contributions made by agriculture and pastoralism to subsistence vary significantly from one area of Dassanetchland to another. He and Carr did most of their work among the Dassanetch of the Inkabelo section, who account for at least a third of the total population² and occupy "the largest territory with the greatest diversity of natural resources" (Almagor 1978:51). Statements by both authors about "the Dassanetch" therefore, tend principally to be statements about the Inkabelo section, and this is how the following brief outline of Dassanetch subsistence should be understood.³

The Dassanetch are alone among the peoples of the Omo Valley in their total reliance on the Omo flood for cultivation. The availability of large inundated flats, some distance from the river, for cultivation, means

that they do not have to rely on rain cultivation to supplement the yield from the narrow strips of floodland along the banks of the river. The latter are planted in early September and give a harvest in late December/early January, while the flats are not dry enough for planting until October/November. This, the main sorghum crop, is harvested in February/March. March is also the month in which the onset of the main rains is expected, an event which can destroy the crop before it is harvested if planting in the flats has had to be delayed by a late flood. So whereas for their neighbours to the north, who rely heavily on rain cultivation, the early and heavy onset of the main rains is a promise of future plenty, for the Dassanetch it is a threat of present hunger. Thus it is precisely in years of poor rainfall, when surrounding peoples are short of rain or literally starving, that the Dassanetch are likely to get a bumper harvest.⁴ This is presumably one reason why early travellers were so impressed by the fertility and productivity of Dassanetchland (Austin 1902; Stigand 1910).

Another reason is that the inundated flats (which are more extensive than can be cultivated by the available labour force) provide excellent pasturage during the driest months of the year - November-March. This is a time of plenty, when cultivation and pastoralism are carried out together, largely on the east bank of the Omo. With the onset of the main rains, and as the Omo begins to rise, the cattle are taken across to the west bank and are moved progressively westwards, to "dry" grazing areas as far as the international border. Conditions for cattle herding in Dassanetchland are excellent.

Cattle are confined to the poor dry west bank pastures for only three to four months of the year, and for at least half of the year green grass is available in addition to high quality supplementary foods - sorghum, maize and bean stalks. However bad the year, livestock are not entirely dependent on rainfall for water since there is always water in the River and the Lake. Salt is also plentifully provided by the Lake and the grass that grows after inundation. Distances between pastures are fairly short and livestock are rarely over-driven and exhausted... these conditions permit a relatively high reproduction rate (Almagor 1978:52).

The inexorable increase in stock number is not, furthermore, significantly checked by disease ("I was assured by the elders that they could not remember any major epidemics in the present century") (Almagor *Ibid.*:53), while Dassanetch expansion is blocked to the west by the international border, to the south by the Turkana, and to the east by the Boran. The resulting problem of how to keep stock numbers within the carrying capacity of available grazing is common, if in a less extreme

form, to many East African herders but the Dassanetch have an unusual solution: the regular, ritual slaughtering of surplus animals (Almagor *Ibid.*:52-58).⁵

The unit identifying itself as Dassanetch includes four other sections, which are in various ways marginal or peripheral to the Inkabelo; their numbers are smaller, together making up about half of the total population. They are seen as offshoots from, or accretions to the Inkabelo, and they occupy territory which is ecologically less favoured, in the sense of less diversified, on the outskirts of the Inkabelo "heartland" with which three of them share a common border. These are the Randal (estimated population 1,000) to the north, who are "exclusively pastoral", the Elele (1,500) to the north-west, who "mostly cultivate and fish" and the Naritch (1,800) to the south-west, who "appear to have much the same economy as the Inkabelo". Further to the south-west, around the north-eastern shores of Lake Turkana, are the Inkoria (2,000) who "are mainly pastoralists but also fish and cultivate a little" (*Ibid.*:14) and who do not share a common boundary with the Inkabelo, being separated from them by the territory of the Narich (see also Almagor 1972b:191).

Although "the sections are not mutually dependent for their subsistence" (*loc.cit.*) there is clear evidence that, together, they form a regional system based upon the exploitation of complementary ecological zones. Randal make use of Inkabelo watering and grazing areas on the east bank of the Omo during the dry season, and some Inkabelo send their animals to graze on Randal territory between October and December (Almagor 1972b:199). Although the Elele are mainly agricultural, they do keep some stock and it seems that they are only able to do this by making use of Inkabelo grazing areas, much of their territory being covered by thick tsetse infested bush. Economic inter-dependence is most marked between the Inkabelo and Narich sections. When there is a poor flood the Narich need to make use of riverbank floodland belonging to the Inkabelo and the latter need to graze their animals in Narich territory in the dry season, because the areas available for this purpose on the flooded flats of the east bank is reduced. Economic co-operation between the Inkabelo and the Inkoria does not involve the direct use of each other's resources, which is as one would expect from their geographical separation, but the fact that their harvests come at different times leads to some exchange of sorghum between them. This presumably consists mainly of purchases of sorghum by the Inkoria from the agriculturally better endowed Inkabelo, using cattle and small stock. It seems likely that there is greater economic co-operation between the Inkoria and the Narich, whose territories border each other.

Population movements between the sections are not only seasonal, a point which is of particular importance to the topic of this paper. There is an inflow of population from the Randal to the Inkabelo sections through the "expulsion" (Almagor 1972b:193) of pregnant Randal girls, and there has been a southward movement of Elele into Inkabelo territory, associated with the lowering of the level of Lake Turkana since the late 1890s. This both uncovered a wider area for agricultural and pastoral use in the delta and reduced the agricultural potential of the Omo banks further upstream. Inkabelo and Narich may settle permanently in each other's territory, thereby changing, after the passage of "many years", their section affiliations. Long-term population movement between the Inkabelo and Inkoria sections are not described, but one imagines that they may occur indirectly, through the "intermediary" Narich section. Almagor places considerable emphasis on the institution of bond partnership as a mechanism for bringing about the short-term equalization of the human population and available natural resources. It may be that the key factor by which long-term adjustments in the size of sections are brought about is intermarriage.

Marriage within the territorial section is subject to far greater restrictions than marriage outside it. Members of the same territorial section may only marry if they belong to the same moiety, but this rule does not apply when a couple belongs to different sections. A man may not marry a wife from the same clan in his own territorial section but he can marry a woman from a clan bearing the same name if she belongs to another territorial section. Inter-territorial section marriages are fairly common. Hence the primary tie linking members of the different territorial sections is one of affinity (Almagor 1972b:192).

The picture that emerges is of a system of contiguous local groups, the distinctive identities of which are based upon the occupation of more or less different ecological zones. Their common identity as Dassanetch is based not only on their sharing a common (Eastern Cushitic) language and various other social institutions (such as an age system) but also on seasonal economic interdependence and on long-term movements of population, mediated by inter-marriage, which seem to have led to a new inflow to the ecologically most favoured Omo delta region. This accords with the view the Dassanetch have of themselves as people "descended from a motley collection of ancestors who came to the Omo from 'far away placed beyond mountains and lakes'". (Almagor 1978:15). I shall return to the question of oral traditions of migration in the second part of this chapter. For the moment I only wish to underline the point that the Dassanetch are an economically heterogeneous collection of local

groups between which, notwithstanding their distinct territorial borders, there is a constant movement of population, both in the short and the long term. It is a picture which we see repeated when we consider the northern neighbours of the Dassanetch, the Nyangatom.

The Nyangatom

The Nyangatom are one of the "Karimojong cluster" of peoples and speak the same (Eastern Sudanic) language as the Turkana. They have been studied by Serge Tornay who has published a number of articles on various aspects of their social and economic organization (e.g. Tornay 1975, 1981, 1982). Unless otherwise stated the following information is taken from Tornay (1981).

There are three ecologically distinct areas of Nyangatom settlement, lying roughly on an east/west line, between the west bank of the Omo and the Moruankipi mountains in the Sudan. The largest concentration of population is in the central or Nakua area along the Kibish River, which here forms the boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan. This concentration is explained both by the ecological diversity of the Nakua region itself and by its central location in relation to the other two areas of settlement, which further extends the range of resources available to its inhabitants. Tornay calls this the "pastoral region" and its inhabitants the "pastoral Nyangatom", to distinguish them from those who live permanently at the Omo and depend wholly on cultivation. It is among the pastoral Nyangatom that he did most of his work and just as Almagor's and Carr's accounts of the Dassanetch concentrate on the ecologically most diverse territory of the Inkabelo, so Tornay's account of the Nyangatom refers primarily to those based in the Nakua area (*Ibid.*:147).

The Kibish River provides permanent water and areas for flood and rain cultivation along its banks. During the wettest months of the year - approximately between March and June - cultivation and herding can be carried on from the same settlements close to the river, but from July to February there is sufficient grazing in the immediate vicinity of the river to keep only milch animals at the main settlements. The remaining animals are taken progressively further from the river by the young men until, at the height of the dry season (December/January), they are found one hundred or so kilometres to the west, at the foot of the Moruankipi mountains in the Sudan. In September, as the Omo flood recedes, there is a movement, predominantly of women and girls, from Kibish to the west bank of the Omo, where the recently inundated land is prepared for cultivation. Similar preparations also take place along the Kibish at this time, although the flood here is smaller and less reliable than at the Omo

(*Ibid.*:145). Tornay offers no estimate of Nyangatom stock wealth, nor of the size of the contribution made by agriculture to the diet of the "pastoral" Nyangatom. While it seems reasonable to suppose, however, that they depend more heavily on pastoral products than on grain to meet their total energy requirements - simply because their agricultural resources are limited and unreliable - it is evident that cultivation makes a vital contribution to the overall viability of their economy.

Around 1,000 Nyangatom live permanently at the Omo, where the tsetse-infested forest and bush makes cattle herding impossible but where there is a greater agricultural potential than at Kibish. The Omo flood is more extensive and reliable and in a particularly good year they are able to cultivate "swamps" (Almagor's flats) away from the immediate banks of the river (*Ibid.*:146). There are also, presumably, more extensive areas available for rain cultivation in the Omo forest than at Kibish. The existence of this small, permanent population of "agricultural Nyangatom" at the Omo is clearly important for those who are based at Kibish. Tornay speaks of "numerous exchanges" taking place between them, "based on kinship ties, alliances and contractual friendship" (*Ibid.*:146). Items exchanged include dried fish, honey, grain and tobacco from the Omo and meat, butter, hides and small stock from Kibish. It is presumably also the existence of these social ties which makes possible, or at least facilitates, the seasonal occupation of the Omo banks for flood cultivation by the Kibish people. Finally, it seems that the Omo Nyangatom represent a "sloughing off" of surplus population from the predominantly pastoral economy of Kibish since Tornay describes them as "Nyangatom who have lost their livestock" (*Ibid.*:141). There is also a long term movement of Nyangatom from the Kibish area to the Western "transhumance area" in the Sudan, where the bulk of the local population are Toposa. The Toposa and Nyangatom speak mutually intelligible languages and it seems likely that this movement, or drift, is mediated by inter-marriage. Tornay has little to say about it, except that it represents a "trend", partly brought about by "fear of the Dassanetch". Another factor may be population pressure on the fixed agricultural resources at Kibish and the Omo.

During the early 1970s, the Nyangatom were involved in a series of armed clashes with the Dassanetch and the Kara (a small agricultural group living on the east bank of the Omo), which resulted in their losing 400-500 people (around 10 percent of their total population) in a period of five years (Tornay 1979a:111). This represented a dramatic deterioration in Nyangatom-Dassanetch relations since the late 1960s when Almagor and Carr were doing their fieldwork. Almagor has nothing to say about these relations in his monograph, presumably

because of his focus on the Inkabelo section, but notes that he "observed no active warfare" during his stay in the area. Carr writes that

The Nyangatom and the west bank Dassanetch have lived closely for many years now, and although they rarely inter-marry, much economic and social interchange occurs; they also sometimes share a couple of settlement areas ... although the Nyangatom and Dassanetch have for the most part maintained friendly relations, there have been periodic hostile outbreaks (e.g. about 1948 and again in 1972)(Carr 1977:10).

When Tornay first arrived in the area, in 1970, Dassanetch and Nyangatom settlements were grouped together at Kibish, the Dassanetch (presumably of the Randal section) watering their cattle at Nyangatom water holes. The first observable signs of friction appeared in 1971, after a disastrously poor harvest had ushered in a period of drought and hunger unprecedented in living memory. By the following year relations had broken down entirely. The Dassanetch withdrew from Kibish and the killings began (Tornay 1979a:104).

The picture of Dassanetch-Nyangatom relations that emerges from this account is of lengthy periods of peaceful co-existence and economic co-operation (not, however, involving significant intermarriage), interspersed with shorter periods of all-out war, precipitated by extreme pressure on ecological resources. Relations between the Nyangatom and their northern neighbours, the Mursi, were also hostile during this period though, being separated by the Omo (the Mursi cultivate on the left bank, opposite Nyangatom cultivation areas), they are not in direct competition for the same resources and the conflict between them remains at the level of retaliatory killings, a few on either side (Tornay 1979a:105). At other times there appears to exist what might be called a watchful peace between Nyangatom and Mursi, with some economic exchange - for example of Mursi pots for grain - between individuals. These contacts are regular and close enough for some Mursi to have learned to understand (if not speak) Nyangatom and, presumably, *vice versa*. In general it seems that whereas the Nyangatom are under pressure from their southern neighbours, the Dassanetch, the Mursi are exerting pressure on their northern neighbours, the Bodi.

The Mursi

The Mursi number about 5,000 and live in an oblong of territory, clearly defined on the west by the Omo and on the east by its tributary, the Mago. They divide themselves into five main territorial sections, the boundaries of which may be thought of as running at right-angles to the Omo. These sections are, from north to south, Mara (the name of a

river), Mako (another river), Biogolokare ("red-eyed cattle"), Ariholi ("white ox") and Gongulobibi ("big canoes"). Members of the three northern sections think of themselves as forming a larger unit, named Dola, in opposition to the two southern sections which are not linked by a common name. Since 1969, I have spent a total of about three years living with the Mursi, all but three months of this time in the Mara section, and I have never visited the extreme south of Mursiland.⁶ Like Almagor, Carr and Tornay, therefore, I too have carried out most of my fieldwork amongst one group of Mursi whose economic resources and mode of subsistence are not necessarily typical of the society as a whole. Also, like these authors, I worked in an area which, because of its ecological diversity, supports a higher population than in the rest of Mursiland and allows this population to maintain a closer involvement in the pastoral activities that give the whole society its sense of cultural identity. The brief description⁷ of subsistence activities that follows must therefore be seen as applying primarily to the Mara section, although I think it also applies, in all important respects, to the three northern sections as a whole.

There are three main subsistence activities: rain-fed cultivation, flood-retreat cultivation, and cattle herding. None of these is sufficient in itself, nor even in combination with the other two, to provide a regular, reliable subsistence, but each makes a vital contribution to the overall viability of the economy. Rain-fed cultivation takes place in clearings along the eastern fringe of the Omo bush belt. If there is a sufficiently heavy and prolonged fall of rain in March or early April, sorghum (the main crop) will ripen in ten weeks and will be ready for harvesting in twelve. There is no shortage of land potentially cultivable by this method, but the unreliability of the rainfall makes it likely that the harvest will be poor or non-existent at least one year in every three. Sorghum is also the main crop cultivated by means of flood-retreat cultivation. Planting takes place along the banks of the Omo as the flood recedes in September and October and the crop is harvested in November and December. This is much more reliable than rain-fed cultivation, since the size of the Omo is controlled by the heavy rains that fall over its highland catchment area, and not by the erratic and light local rainfall. But the potentially cultivable area is confined to small pockets and strips along the banks themselves, there being no flooded flats such as are found further south. Because of its relative reliability, however, flood cultivation provides a vitally important insurance against the failure of the main rain-fed crop.

Cattle are the most valued material possessions of the Mursi, as they are of the Dassanetch and Nyangatom but, in an objective sense, they are less "pastoral" than either of these groups. Having only about one head of cattle per person they would need at least ten times their present cattle

wealth to subsist entirely on pastoral products (L.H. Brown 1973; Dahl and Hjort 1976) and I estimate that they depend on cultivation for about three-quarters of their subsistence needs. This still leaves an important contribution to be made by cattle to daily subsistence, particularly to that of young children and unmarried man, but cattle are particularly important to the Mursi as a form of insurance against crop failure. They provide this insurance not, of course, by being consumed directly but by being exchanged for grain - either in Mursiland itself or in the surrounding lowlands (where the localised rainfall may lead to wide variations in crop yields) or, when rainfall in the lowlands is universally poor, in highland villages to the east of the Omo.

I am not sure how to account for their relatively low stockwealth, although part of the explanation must be disease: not so much the more dramatic visitations of such diseases as anthrax and rinderpest, to which their herds are certainly subject but the continuous and growing problem of trypanosomiasis. There are reasons for thinking that the tsetse population becomes more numerous, and the species more dangerous to cattle, from south to north along the Omo. Carr (1977:88) notes that tsetse have migrated southwards along the Omo with the woodland forest advance in that direction, the species in question being the "forest tsetse", *Glossina fuscipes*, which is not, however, a good vector of trypanosomiasis. Along the east bank of the Omo in Mursiland, furthermore, there is a wedge-shaped belt of bushland thicket, narrowest in the south and extending to a width of about fifteen kms in the north, which has probably been developed by a combination of cultivation and overgrazing. This would have allowed entry to the more dangerous "thicket tsetse", *Glossina pallipides*, which is able to penetrate the wooded grasslands east of the Omo by adopting a linear distribution along the numerous seasonal rivers that, in Mursiland but not further south, flow westwards into the Omo (Nash 1969:51). Given the increasingly dangerous nature of this environment to cattle (middle-aged men say that they have "grown up with" the fly), the northern Mursi have only been able to maintain their commitment to a pastoral way of life by the close integration of pastoral and agricultural activities, which is made possible by the ecological diversity of their environment.

The essential difference between the three northern and the two southern sections is, I believe, that the latter (and particularly Gongulobibi) contain a large number of people who have few or no livestock and who therefore live almost exclusively by cultivation and fishing. The above description may therefore be said to apply not so much to the three northern sections, as I suggested earlier, as to the "pastoral Mursi", since these seasonal activities and movements are also

engaged in by the "pastoral" members of the two southern sections. The existence of a group of "agricultural" Mursi in the south, where the spreading meander belt of the Omo provides much larger areas for flood cultivation than further north, has been one of the factors allowing the pastoral Mursi, at least two-thirds of whom are members of the three northern sections, to remain actively engaged in cattle herding. Grain from the south has always - or at least until the particularly severe conditions of the past fifteen years - been an important standby when the main harvest fails in the north. Equally, when there is a good rain-fed harvest and a poor flood, members of the southern sections may depend on grain from the north. Inter-section marriages are common and although there is a clear tendency to local endogamy, links of kinship and affinity provide a ready basis for economic co-operation and exchange between north and south.

Mara, with a population of around 2,000, is the largest section, but it is not the historical "centre" of Mursiland, as the Inkabelo section is for the Dassanetch. On the contrary, until the end of the last decade, it was the most recent section to have been formed. In 1979, a group of Mara people, looking for an area of better rainfall after a decade of drought and famine, occupied a new, uninhabited, area fifty miles west of the Omo in the Mago valley (Turton and Turton 1984). This migration has resulted in the formation of a new section, now about 1,000 strong, called Mako (the Mursi name for the River Mago, not to be confused with the other Mako section in Mursiland proper). Although offering the prospect of more reliable rainfed cultivation, the Mago valley is particularly dangerous to cattle, probably because of the presence of *Glossina morsitans*, a species of tsetse that is the most effective vector of trypanosomiasis. As a result, it seems unlikely that the members of the new Mako section will be able to keep an effective foothold in the pastoral economy. The migration may, therefore, be seen as a "sloughing off" process, which has reduced pressure on grazing and agricultural resources in the now numerically depleted Mara section. All this accords with Mursi oral tradition, according to which they entered their present territory from the west bank of the Omo and first occupied that part of it which now forms the two southern sections. This area is consequently thought of as the "stomach" of Mursiland and retains a ritual pre-eminence (most evident in age-set affairs) in relation to the northern sections, which have resulted from a "pioneering" (cf. Waller 1985:348-9) northward movement. I shall discuss the nature of this movement in more detail in the next section but must here place it briefly in the context of Mursi relations with two neighbouring groups, the Chai and Bodi.

The Chai (singular Chachi) speak the same language (one of the Didinga-Murle [Tucker and Bryan 1956] or Surma [Bender 1976b] group of languages) as the Mursi and live south and southwest of Maji, close to and probably on both sides of the border between Ethiopia and the Sudan. Mursi-Chai inter-marriage is frequent. Many Chai live in Mursiland with their affines and matrilineal kin, and many Mursi are acknowledged to have a Chachi parent or Chai grandparents. My impression - although I have no statistical evidence to back it up - is that there is a net flow of population into Mursiland from the more marginal (because ecologically less diversified) territory of the Chai. Such a movement would reflect the Mursi tradition that they entered their present territory from the west and it is also borne out by linguistic evidence since phonological differences between Mursi and Chachi suggest that the former has diverged from the latter. This demographic drift has led, I believe, to a growing population in northern Mursiland which has in turn brought the Mursi into competition with their northern neighbours, the Bodi, for pastoral and agricultural resources.

The Bodi number about 3,000 (Fukui 1979:49) and live east of the Omo and north of the Mara. Their language, although closely related to Mursi, is not mutually intelligible with it and the two groups do not inter-marry. Since their subsistence systems are broadly similar they may be said to occupy the same ecological niche, but Bodi country has more sources of permanent water (in addition, that is, to the Omo) and it is therefore better endowed with resources for both grazing and rain-fed agriculture. Mursi-Bodi relations, like those between Nyangatom and Dassanetch, alternate between lengthy periods of peaceful co-existence and shorter periods of all out war. During periods of peace, Mursi of the Mara section have close and regular contact with the southern Bodi. Mursi families may be found living in Bodi settlements on a seasonal or longer-term basis, although I have never come across Bodi families living in Mursi settlements. Similarly, while Mursi may water their cattle at Bodi watering points in the dry season, the opposite does not occur. This peaceful infiltration by Mursi into Bodi territory can quickly become an occasion for resentment and open aggression when environmental conditions deteriorate, which is what happened during the very serious drought of the early 1970s. Between 1971 and 1975, Mursi-Bodi relations were permanently hostile, with no peaceful contact between them. A "no man's land", approximately forty miles deep, opened up between them, across which small raiding parties went regularly to and fro, a favorite tactic being to lie in wait for potential victims beside a path or watering point. There was also at least one much bigger engagement early on in the hostilities, when a large war party of Bodi attacked the Mursi deep in the Omo bush and succeeded in getting away with a large number of

cattle (Turton 1979a). After these hostilities had been brought to an end, by peacemaking ceremonies held in 1975, there was no visible difference in the location of the Mursi/Bodi boundary, and although conflict between these groups is clearly related to competition for scarce resources and although it is acknowledged by both sides that the Mursi have, historically, pushed northwards into Bodi territory, the military activity itself is not easily interpreted as a means of acquiring or defending territory (See Plate 6.1). I return to this point in the next section.

Movement, Warfare and Ethnicity

None of the peoples described above think of themselves as the original inhabitants of the territory they now occupy. Their myths of origin and oral traditions are essentially accounts of migrations which brought outsiders into new areas from which they either drove out the existing inhabitants or incorporated them into a new political unit.

This is particularly clear in the case of the Dassanetch who appear to be a fairly recent (*i.e.* since the early nineteenth century) amalgam resulting from the occupation of the Omo delta region by the ancestors of the present Inkabelo section. The latter place their homeland to the west of Lake Turkana from where there did indeed take place a migration during the early nineteenth century associated with both drought and Turkana expansion from the west (Sobania 1980:61-67). The Nyangatom say that they originated from Jie and Dodos country in northeastern Uganda, the Toposa being a western offshoot from the same area. Tornay also dates the arrival of the ancestors of the Nyangatom in the Omo valley to the early nineteenth century and notes that "it is probably Turkana expansion which has forced them to move northward" (1982:140). The Mursi say that, on entering their present territory from the west, they found it occupied by the ancestors of the present Bodi, cattle herding people like themselves, whom they proceeded to displace. But they place their own homeland, *Thaleb*, far to the south east, describing an anti-clockwise migration of five original clans who accumulated other groups on their journey. They describe the people from whom these five clans broke away as *Munubahuli*. (One of the first questions they asked me, when I began my fieldwork amongst them, was whether I had come across the descendants of these people on my journey to the Omo Valley.)

This tradition of a Mursi origin in the south-east is surprising, since all their presently observable cultural and linguistic affiliations are with people living to the west and north of them: the Mursi and Bodi are the easternmost representatives of the Didinga-Murle/Surma-speaking peoples who extend westwards to Murle country in the southern Sudan.

According to Ehret's analysis of the linguistic evidence, furthermore, the speakers of "Proto-Surma", from whom the Chai, Mursi and Bodi languages have developed, were living south and west of the Maji plateau five thousand years ago (1982). Since he also estimates that Mursi began diverging from Tirma (a dialect very similar to, if not identical with, Chai) around one thousand years ago, the split between the mutually unintelligible Mursi and Bodi must have occurred well before that.

On the whole the Surma peoples have been involved in a remarkably restricted range of population movement over the past five Millennia. Initially centred probably along the west of the Maji highlands, the Surma territory was eventually extended sometime in about the second and/or first Millennium B.C. to include areas up the Omo River to the east of the highlands. Only the Didinga-Murle group since sometime in the last Millennium B.C. have expanded beyond the southwestern Ethiopian fringes (Ehret 1982:23).

Assuming that this interpretation of the evidence is broadly correct, we must conclude that Mursi speakers have been living in the Omo lowlands for at least a thousand years and that it was a movement of population from the west to the east bank of the Omo which was crucially responsible for the creation of the modern Mursi identity. Although the Mursi think of this movement as having occurred at a specific moment in time it is, in a sense, still going on through Chai immigration from the west. As for the tradition of a Mursi homeland to the south-east, whatever historical basis there is for this must lie too far in the past to be recoverable by presently available evidence.

If, as I presume, the distinctive identities of the Dassanetch, Nyangatom, and Mursi are the products rather than the causes of the movements described in their oral traditions, then these traditions are as much attempts to account for present political identities as they are about past events. Much remains of the important task, so ably begun by Sobania, Tornay, Ehret and others, of reconstructing past population movements in this area, but historical reconstruction can only go so far in helping us to understand processes of ethnic group formation. It can tell us that a particular group moved to a particular area at a certain time, and for certain reasons, and that, in this new area, linguistic and cultural differentiation, and the incorporation of the existing peoples, led to the creation of a new political unit. But it cannot tell us much about the details of this process - about, for example, the kind of movement involved. Was it a "soldier ant" migration or a gradual drift? And if the latter, what were the social mechanisms that made it possible? What role

did warfare play in the occupation of new territory? What was the mechanism of exchange and domination by which peripheral groups were incorporated? By what means do societies whose "structure" is "process" (Waller 1985:351) or, to put it another way, for whom "existence" comes before "essence", maintain an illusion of permanence in the midst of movement and flux? Attempting to answer these questions is a task for contemporary ethnographic analysis, a task which is made that much easier if, as is still largely the case for the Lower Omo Valley, the processes involved have not been stopped in their tracks by the imposition of rigid administration boundaries.

I think we may tentatively distinguish at least three types of population movement that have played a part in the creation of ethnic identities in the Lower Omo. One is a concerted move by a group that breaks away, at a specific moment, from its parent group due to the pressure of some extreme event. Another is a gradual infiltration of one group by individual members of another, most likely through inter-marriage, resulting in a one-way net flow of population across a geographically stable ethnic boundary. A third is a gradual but concerted *de facto* occupation of territory claimed by another ethnic group, as a result of which the geographical location of the ethnic boundary between them is changed over time. For the sake of convenience I shall call these type A, B and C movements respectively. All these types tend, I think, to be lumped together, both in the oral traditions of the people themselves and in the reconstructions of historians, with greatest prominence being given to type A. Movements of this type are particularly memorable, because of their association with critical historical events, and visible because they take place over a relatively short time. Their attractiveness to historians is that, for the same reasons, they are at least potentially datable. Since these relatively sudden movements certainly do occur, furthermore, they provide a useful format in which the more diffuse, long-term and therefore relatively "unknowable" movements can be encapsulated in oral tradition.

If this last point is correct it complicates the task of historical reconstruction by making it more or less problematic whether a particular population movement, described in oral tradition as though it were of type A, actually did take this form. The task is less complicated, of course, if the time scale is short enough to allow external and independent corroboration of the oral historical account. A case in point is Sobania's discussion of the Dassanetch tradition of migration from a homeland to the west of Lake Turkana. The evidence he presents from both Dassanetch and Turkana oral tradition makes it plausible to suppose that this was indeed a type A movement that occurred in the early years

of the nineteenth century following a period of warfare and (probably more important) drought. The Mursi account of their crossing to the west bank of the Omo may also have been a specific historical event, although I have so far been unable to find convincing external corroboration of it. Alternatively, it would be an encapsulation in type A form of a more gradual type C movement, since it is this kind of movement, I believe, which has taken them in recent years further and further into former Bodi territory.

But the Mursi do provide us with our best example from this area of a type A movement in their migration to the Mago Valley (Turton and Turton 1984). This occurred in 1979-1980, when a group from the Mara section deliberately set out to establish a new home for themselves in higher, better watered land, as a direct response to the unprecedented (in living memory) drought and hunger of the previous few years. The attractiveness of the new area, it should be noted, was its agricultural, not its pastoral potential. For although it offers better prospects for rain-fed cultivation than the Omo lowlands, the high tsetse challenge makes it quite unsuitable for cattle herding. The migrants, who now account for about half the former Mara section, are adopting a sedentary and wholly agricultural way of life, although they continue to resist the suggestion that they have given up their commitment to traditional Mursi pastoral values. The Mago Mursi are clearly on their way to acquiring a new ethnic identity as a result of their occupation of an ecological niche that they can only exploit effectively by giving up their foothold in the pastoral economy. Nor do they look upon the Mago valley as a temporary refuge from which they will return in better times to the lowlands, and to a pastoral way of life. Finally, they have moved to an area that, although unoccupied at the time of the migration, was vacated by its former inhabitants, the Bodi, about seventy years ago due to an outbreak of human sleeping sickness.

Once such a group of "pioneers" has successfully established itself in a new area, its members will be added to by the second type of movement - infiltration by individuals seeking access to new economic resources through inter-marriage. This process is well attested by Almagor's account of population movement between Dassanetch territorial sections - the main direction of these movements appearing to be towards the ecologically best endowed Inkabelo section (1972b:203). The movement of Chai into Mursiland is another example. So while type A and type B movements are both ecologically determined, the former is a "revolutionary" response to cataclysmic conditions and the latter a "normal" response to long-term or slowly changing differences in ecological conditions from one area to another. Type C movements, too, fall into the latter category but they differ from type B in that they are

not the result of cumulative individual movements across a physically stable boundary. Rather, they are the result of the collective but gradual occupation by one group of another's territory, which causes the boundary between them to move, as it were, across country. It is tempting to describe this in terms of one group "pushing" the other, by force of arms, out of its territory, but the reality is more complex. Its association with periodic armed conflict is certainly another fact which distinguishes this kind of movement from the other two, so that discussion of it raises the general question of the relationship between warfare and population movements. The evidence from the Lower Omo Valley suggests that to see the appropriation by one group of the territory of another as a matter of military superiority would be a great oversimplification.

I shall give two examples of type C movements - of Dassanetch into Nyangatom territory and of Mursi into Bodi territory - and then suggest a tentative interpretation. Tornay considers that there has been taking place in recent years "a slow but certain territorial drift" of Nyangatom in a northerly direction.

During the 1920s the main settlements of the Nyangatom were located at Leere near Kalam, the Ethiopian police post which is in Dassanetch territory. Nakua or Kibish was a grazing area, used for transhumance from which the Nyangatom, with the help of the Dassanetch, drove away the Turkana. The successive initiation places of the Elephants' age-set illustrates a continuous northward movement of the tribal centre. This centre, located today at Natikar (Kibish), has moved about 40 km northwards during the last fifty years (Tornay 1979a:115-116).

There is a ready explanation for this northward movement of the Nyangatom in the pressure from the Dassanetch for access to new grazing areas and dry season watering points (Almagor 1972b; Tornay 1979a:112-113), but, according to Tornay, it is more a matter of the Dassanetch filling a space left vacant by the Nyangatom than of territorial conquest by direct military action: "it should be emphasised that this move of the Nyangatom towards the north does not seem to be a consequence of Dassanetch hostility" (1979a:114). The fighting is not followed by the early occupation of new territory and is not seen to have such a purpose by the participants. During their engagements with the Nyangatom in the early 1970s, the Dassanetch do seem to have inflicted heavier casualties, both in absolute and relative terms, than they suffered themselves but their northern "push" towards Kibish was achieved through peaceful co-operation and co-residence with the Nyangatom over the previous twenty to thirty years (according to Carr there was another

period of hostilities "about 1948" [1977:10]). This suggests that the significant fact is population pressure exerted by the Dassanetch (who outnumber the Nyangatom by a ratio of three to one) on Nyangatom resources along their common border. Their numerical superiority does not give the Dassanetch a specifically military advantage, except in the sense that the equalising of deaths on either side, towards which the tit-for-tat of raid and counter-raid seems consciously to aim, will always leave the Nyangatom relatively worse off. What, then, is the role of armed conflict in this kind of movement? The Mursi-Bodi case suggests that the real importance of periodic conflict is that it precipitates the legal ratification of an already achieved territorial advance.

The Mursi are also, without doubt, moving northwards into Bodi territory, a movement which is also accompanied by periodic wars - the most recent of which lasted from 1971 to 1975 (See Plate 6.1). The most obvious explanation of this movement is that the Mursi have "expanded" at the expense of the Bodi through force of arms, but this is not convincing. In this kind of guerilla warfare the Mursi can gain no particular military advantage from their numerical superiority over the Bodi. Each side has equal access to arms and ammunition and each is subject to more or less the same environmental constraints. It cannot be said that the Mursi are more "warlike" than the Bodi, in either their own estimation or that of the Bodi. Mursi pressure on Bodi resources is explained by the inflow of population to the three northern Mursi sections (Dola) which must therefore expand to exist; that is, they do not first exist and then expand; they are expansion. The role of warfare in this process is best revealed, I think, by concentrating not on the hostilities themselves but on the way they are brought to an end.⁸

Peacemaking between the Mursi and Bodi is accomplished by means of two successive ceremonies, one held by each side, at each of which a stock animal is killed in the presence of the other group's representatives. What really matters is not whether one side has lost more men than the other in the conflict but where these two ceremonies are held, since each side is supposed to hold its ceremony in its own territory. At the end of the last war, in 1975, the Mursi held their ceremony at Mara, which had been their *de facto* northern boundary for many years, but at the end of the previous war, in 1952, they held it twenty miles further south. Holding a peacemaking ceremony at a certain place is therefore a way of making (and having acknowledged by the other side's representatives) a claim to *de jure* ownership of territory which was formerly owned only in a *de facto* sense. In this case, it may be said that the "purpose" of the fighting is to give legal ratification to the territorial encroachment which had already taken place, peacefully, before the fighting started. Warfare

is not a means of Mursi territorial advance, but part of the retrospective ritual legitimization of it.⁹

The northward movement of the Mursi is not, then, to be seen as a consequence of military success, due to their superior fighting qualities, tactics or strategy. To explain it we have to see it in a broader spatial and temporal context - not in terms of one group "pushing" another, but in terms of several groups and sub-groups which are all involved in, and indeed the products of, a structurally single population movement, going beyond each of them in space and time. The direction of this movement is towards higher, better watered land with greater agricultural potential and its underlying causes are therefore ecological. In this particular corner of the Omo Valley it shows up in the recent migration of Mursi to the Mago Valley (a type A movement), in an inflow of population to northern Mursiland through Chai/Mursi inter-marriage (a type B movement) and in the northward progression of the Mursi/Bodi boundary (a type C movement). We should see all these movements as part of a single process of which the separate identities of the groups involved are by-products. Today's Mursi (or, to be more accurate, today's Dola) are tomorrow's Bodi, and today's Bodi (like the Dola members who have moved "sideways" to the Mago Valley) are tomorrow's highland cultivators. Ethnic identity ("essence") is a product of population movement ("existence").

If, therefore, these groups, like the "subjects" of existentialist philosophy, "make themselves", we are led to ask by what means they maintain a sense of their own separateness and historical permanence. The Mursi case points to the importance of ritual here also for, if peacemaking ceremonial defines the changing external boundary of the Mursi political unit, age grade ceremonial (by which local groups of age-mates are promoted from one age grade to another) periodically and retrospectively defines its changing internal divisions. The age organization, by bringing together space and time in a single ritual complex, helps to preserve an illusion of permanence in a society whose "essence" is movement. Age ceremonies define

...not only a cyclical series of temporal divisions of the population, based on the physiological aging of individuals, but also a linear series of spatial divisions, based on a continuous northward movement (Turton 1978:124).

As Waller has recently put it, in commenting on the Mursi case, "growth in space is expressed in terms of progress through time" (1985:369).¹⁰

The northward movement of the Mursi-Bodi, as of the Dassanetch-Nyangatom, boundary is associated with periods of military activity,

lasting years rather than months, that must nevertheless be seen as interrupting the "normal" (because extending over longer periods) state of relations between groups. It is now time to look more closely at the nature of these military activities and to ask whether any significant distinctions emerge among the phenomena I have so far referred to by the general term "warfare". The best place to begin is with the people's own distinctions, as expressed in their linguistic categories.

The Dassanetch distinguish three types of armed conflict, according to degree of intensity, by the terms *nyasagsag*, *hol dim* and *nyakiryam*. These are translated by Almagor as "reciprocal raiding", "escalation", and "all out war" respectively.

Raiding is typically a small scale, spontaneous and uncoordinated venture. In reciprocal raiding hostilities are governed by certain conventions, namely that the quantities of cattle looted should be reasonable, that casualties should be kept to a minimum ... that the frequency of raids should not be excessive and finally and most important, that each tribe may retaliate similarly. But even if some of the rules are broken... hostility need not escalate into full-scale warfare as long as the injured party receives compensation and is assured that the breach was an exception.... escalation results in a campaign which involves organised recruitment and strategic decision-making processes that extend beyond the limits of a certain locality, so that inter-tribal co-operation ceases and daily social life and economic routines are disrupted (Almagor 1979:122, 126-127).

"All-out-war" is not defined and, indeed, it is difficult to imagine how it might differ from "escalation" as this is defined here, except in degree. All three terms can probably be used to refer to the hostilities themselves - actual armed attacks and engagements - as well as to a state of affairs characterised by the occurrence of these hostilities. This is certainly so of the English word "war". We can speak of a person "going to war", meaning that he is going to take part in a certain kind of activity, and we can also speak of two countries being "in a state of war", meaning that a certain kind of activity characterises the relationship between them. What is common, of course, to all the activities we lump together under the term war in English is that they take place between autonomous political units, the separate political identities of which are partly constituted by these very activities. To put it another way, and speaking logically rather than chronologically, these units do not first "exist" and then go to war with each other. Since war is constitutive of political identity, it is not surprising that the same word should be used to refer both to "actions" and "states" (of affairs). What I want to suggest is that we will make more progress in our search for significant analytical distinctions by

focussing on the context of inter-group relations in which warlike activities occur than on the warlike activities themselves. Let me try to illustrate this by returning to Almagor's definition of reciprocal raiding (*nyasagsag*).

This is not so much a definition of a particular kind of activity as of a particular context of inter-group relations - a context which requires that the activities be governed by certain conventions. Almagor is, in fact, describing relations between the Dassanetch and Nyangatom but I suspect that the Dassanetch also use the term *nyasagsag* to describe "small scale, spontaneous and unco-ordinated" raids that they might launch against such groups as the Turkana and Boran. I also suspect that, in this context, the conventional rules which are integral to Almagor's definition either do not apply at all or are less binding. The point about reciprocal raiding between Dassanetch and Nyangatom, as Almagor's account clearly shows, is that its occurrence is seen as a threat to cooperative relations outside and to social order (and therefore to the authority of the elders) inside the group. As for "escalation" between Dassanetch and Nyangatom, this results in a degree of disruption to "normal" social and subsistence activities that cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. The important distinction which I believe emerges from this is between two kinds of inter-group relationships. In one, military activity represents a potential or actual disruption of "normal", that is peaceful, relations both inside and outside the group. In the other it represents no threat to external relations because these are always hostile and, so far from being a threat to internal order, it is carried out with the encouragement and blessing of the elders.

The same analysis can be applied to the Mursi. Their word *luha* can also be translated as "raid", in the sense of a "small scale, spontaneous and uncoordinated venture", the attack usually being made at night or in the early hours. A large, coordinated and daylight engagement is called *kaman*. The phrase *ba kaman* (*ba* = land/ground) means a state of relations in which raids and counter-raids of both types have become the norm. Mursi-Bodi relations are characterised, like Dassanetch-Nyangatom relations, on the one hand by periods of such intense military activity that normal life is severely (and in the long run unacceptably) restricted and, on the other hand, by longer periods of peaceful coexistence. The occasional *luha* may also occur between Mursi and Bodi during otherwise peaceful periods, but it is the very nature of such periods that these events are quickly damped down by the payment of compensation according to mutually well understood conventions. The difference between a period of peace and a period of war is not that no hostile activities take place during the former, but that they are always

of the *luha* variety and they are quickly followed by the payment of compensation. In periods of war these conventions do not apply and large scale engagements of the *kaman* type occur. Both *luha* and *kaman* take place between the Mursi and Hamar, who live far to the southeast, beyond the Mago Valley, but in this case they are terminated neither by the payment of compensation nor by peacemaking ceremonies.

Based on these examples, then, my suggestion is that there is a distinction to be made between inter-group relations that are characterised by alternating periods of war and peace and inter-group relations in which armed conflict constitutes the sum total of interaction. Since, from a purely military point of view, the same activities are involved in both cases, one is led to ask what significance they have, depending on the context of inter-group relations in which they occur. Again, based on these examples and particularly the Mursi-Bodi case, which I know best, I would make the following suggestion. Military activity in the context of alternating periods of war and peace is part of a process by which the ethnic boundaries of groups that are in actual competition for the same natural resources, and therefore in close interaction, are shifted and ritually redefined over time. In the context of permanently hostile relations, military activity is a means by which groups which are in potential competition for the same resources maintain a respectful and geographical distance between themselves. Such groups are separated by an area of unoccupied land, the natural resources of which both can utilise for hunting, honey gathering, and perhaps also for occasional dry season pasturage. Concentration on the military activity itself - trying to distinguish, for example, on the basis of its intensity and the number of people involved, between warfare and raiding - could lead in the wrong direction and even up a blind alley.

Notes

1. She writes that stock raising is their "principal subsistence activity" and the "dominant production branch" (1977: 23;176).

2. Almagor puts the Dassanetch population at 15,000 and that of the Inkabelo section at 7,000 (1978:1, 15). Carr gives 18,000 for the group as a whole and "at least 6,000" for the Inkabelo (1977:9, 100).

3. Unless otherwise stated, all references in the remainder of this section are to Almagor (1978).

4. This was the case in 1984, a year of very poor local rains following an exceptionally high Omo flood, when people were travelling from as far a field as Turmi in Hamar country to the Omo to buy grain from the Dassanetch - a five day round trip to obtain, in some cases, "a couple of kilos" (Brian O'Toole, personal communication).

5. I find it difficult to follow Almagor's argument here, for two reasons. Firstly, if only adult males are slaughtered it is difficult to understand how this could effectively stabilize stock numbers, in the absence of other checks to growth such as disease. Secondly, if ritual slaughter is not consciously employed for this purpose by the Dassanetch, as one supposes it is not, it must be an unconscious adaptation, through natural selection, to environmental constraints. But this argument would seem implausible in view of the fairly recent origin of these constraints. I make this point with some reluctance because no one has contributed more than Almagor to the ethnography of the Lower Omo Valley.

6. Fieldwork was carried out in 1969-70, 1973-74, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1985. I am grateful to the following bodies for their financial assistance: The Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom; the Area Studies Committee of the University of Manchester; the Central Research Fund of the University of London; the Tweedie Exploration Fellowship Committee of the University of Edinburgh; and the Royal Geographical Society.

7. A fuller description may be found in Turton (1973, 1977).

8. For a fuller account of the argument presented here see Turton (1978, 1979a and 1979b).

9. Rappaport (1967:20) writes that warfare "seems to have defined the border of Tsembaga territory. The Tsembaga as a unit were distinguished from other units by their joint participation in the fighting that defined their borders. This *de facto* association of previously autonomous units then became a *de jure* structure through the synchronization of the rumbin rituals that follow the successful termination of hostilities."

10. It is interesting to note that Tornay uses the location of age-set ceremonies as an index of Nyangatom northward movement. "The successive initiation places of the Elephants' age-set illustrates a continuous northwards movement of the trail centre" (1979a:110).