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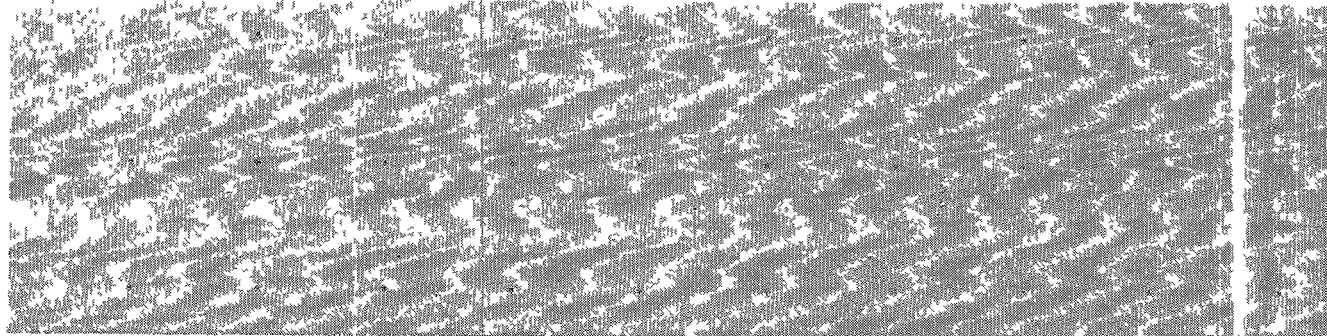
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Chapter 6

VIOLENCE AND STATE (RE)FORMATION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT: GLOBAL AND LOCAL ASPECTS OF CRISIS AND CHANGE^{*}

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INTRODUCTION

Studies of conflict and violence in contemporary Africa or elsewhere are largely dominated by political science and macro-sociological approaches, often based on theories of resource competition (Markakis 1998; Homer-Dixon 1999) and the production of inequality (Tilly 1998). However, anthropological perspectives are also gaining ground and make salient contributions to the field. Understanding transformations of power, conflict and violent performance demands a multi-disciplinary approach, linking history, social-structural factors, and cultural dynamics to human agency. As the evidence of most empirical case studies makes clear, conflict and violence are set in wider contexts of global changes in the international division of labour, world-view discrepancies, and structural inequality of access to wealth and to the means of survival. While one can ultimately share the view of, e.g., evolutionary human biologists and psychologists that 'violence' is a part of the human disposition and as such inevitable and 'ineradicable', the changing social and cultural conditions which evoke or generate aggression and violent performance are as relevant, if not essential, for an understanding of their nature and their timing.

Some recurring critical questions are the following: why does violence escalate beyond its inhibiting mechanisms; what are the conditions for its symbolic and/or status-enhancing appeal; and when is it seen as instrumentally effective or otherwise profitable. These three

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elements relate to the cross-cultural universality of violent performance but are variously constrained by local developments and contexts.

In line with a redefined, self-critical Enlightenment project (to which I, like Reyna 1994, Spiro 1996, or Lee 1998, tend to subscribe) seeking to defuse violence as the basis of identity formation and of institutionalized inequality and power difference, one has therefore to rethink it, not as an aberration in society but as an integral part of human life exceptional only when exercised unchecked and with impunity. Crucial is therefore the study of the material conditions and the concomitant cultural representations and narratives of human individuals and groups that enhance a resort to violence, either conscious or unconscious. These specific conditions are the *explanans* of the forms of violence that we see and that we are interested in as anthropologists. Ultimately, we would perhaps need to combine such institutional theories about the conditions and settings under which people act, with those on the 'psycho-dynamics' of humans - as performers of violence driven by the need to resolve the inherent mimetic rivalry in social life, as described in the thought-provoking work of R. Girard (1977; 1982).

In this chapter, I focus on recent processes of institutional political change, identity competition, and state (de/re)formation in the African context - conditions related to the emergence and expression of violence.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The problem of the relations between violence, warfare and state (re)formation can be treated on several levels. I will limit my remarks to the political level, to make a general argument about 'the African state' and sketch the context and some extraneous connections; and to the local, ethnographic level of a small-scale society which sees itself as a distinct political and cultural community (the Suri people in Ethiopia). The second level allows me to study a process of transformation of violence or conflict in a local society *in its emerging connection* to a larger political whole - an African state. (I refer here to fieldwork carried out in southern Ethiopia over the last couple of years; see Abbink 1998, 2000, 2002.)

Violence has long been undertheorized in anthropology, but this situation is changing. Certainly many new studies have appeared recently that enhance our understanding of violent performance (Linger 1993, Malkki 1995; Hutchinson 1996; Brass 1997; Daniel 1998, Wolf 1998, Heald 1999, Schmidt & Schroeder 2001, cf. also Brandt 2002). Theories on violence as a social and cultural phenomenon need, however, to combine anthropological with sociological and historical approaches in more original fashion (cf. Aijmer and Abbink 2000).

Violence I see as the use of physical, harmful force with the aim to either intimidate, enforce dominance or kill others. *Warfare* is a subset of violence and refers in my view to massive armed conflict between groups *as self-defined political communities*: it is collective, aimed at increasing or monopolizing access to resources of all kinds, at expansion of power of the community or state, or establishing political and cultural dominance.

THE GENERAL LEVEL: STATE, SOCIETY AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

In 1998 there were about 200 armed conflicts raging in the world, and 78 of these were in Africa: more than in any other continent. Africa shows deep divisions, many of which are territorial ones. Borders of any kind are now more questioned than ever. If territorial units are questioned, it follows that African polities or states are under pressure, and borders or frontiers are being redefined from below on the basis of diverging identity claims and material inequalities. The disputes over belonging and autochtony are rapidly gaining ground and form a new discourse of exclusion and opposition. Borders, real or imaginary are forged through this appeal to violent means. While pre-existing cultural differences enter into play, these are usually not the explanatory causes of conflict.

African cases indeed figure predominantly in the contemporary discussions of violence and warfare: the Rwandan genocide, the past destructive conflicts in Mozambique, Liberia, Somalia, Chad, Burundi, Sierra Leone, or Congo-Brazzaville, the massive war in Angola, the Ethiopia-Eritrea war of 1998-2000, the turmoil in the 'Democratic Republic of Congo' (ex-Zaire) or the continued bloodletting in Southern Sudan. Africa draws persistent media attention because of the dramatic nature of the violence: stunning, large scale terror and cruelty which is destroying the social fabric of local societies; the notable involvement of large numbers of deliberately uprooted youths in the violence; and an apparent absence or erosion of 'rational' agendas or goals on the part of the warring parties (At least, these are grossly overestimated in reporting on the violence). Whether Africa has a unique record in violence is another matter (witness Tibet since Chinese occupation, Burma, Indonesia under Suharto, Peru, Colombia, Cambodia or the Middle East), but there is a too easily accepted image of 'barbarism' prevalent in many analyses (akin to the influential Robert Kaplan article of 1994).

Conflict and violence in Africa are shaped by three 'initial conditions': 1. the pervasive heritage of colonial destruction or humiliation of African societies; 2. the inability or unwillingness of most current African elites and leaders - for whatever reason - to construct a legitimate and inclusive national polity and their resort to sectarianism and privileged elite rule; and 3. the continued subjection of African economies and state policies to dependency relations with the developed industrial world. Maneuvering between the Scylla of blaming the West for all African ills and the Charybdis of an Afro-pessimism that incorrectly keeps only the Africans themselves responsible for the exercise of violence, these above three elements form the backstage of any consideration of problems of violence on the continent, and explain part of their specific character.

A closer reflection of the relationship between socio-cultural structure and historical-material process in Africa reveals that the pre-colonial political heritage, ethnicity, and the transformative political role of what is often called in the African context the 'neo-patrimonial' postcolony are shaping contemporary violent performance. Below, I discuss them in turn.

Elements of the *pre-colonial cultural and political heritage* are often claimed to be still important in structuring social and political relations. What is the continuity between past and present, is there a 'violent heritage' in African political culture, and can it be an explanatory factor? The French political scientist and Africanist J.-F. Bayart, in his influential book *The*

State in Africa (1993), has overestimated such continuity of the indigenous African political cultures and bypassed the specific historical and cultural dynamics of African countries today.

Some observers of violent conflict have claimed that psycho-cultural or motivational factors are of great importance. During the Liberian civil war there was much talk of the combatants using mystical means of war, secret rites and 'witchcraft'. The use of human body parts and blood, for instance, were often mentioned, and indeed confirmed by observers. They seem to go back to traditional practices of certain secret societies like the Poro. In Mozambique crude violence was used against civilians and was said to be derived from 'traditional culture' (Wilson 1992). In Southern Africa witchcraft is being revived in some areas, as a 'modern' response to community crisis and other perceived threats to individuals. It leads to the execution of persons accused as witches. Until very recently, in southern Sudan certain political leaders - divine kings - were indeed regularly put to death by their subjects (Simonse 1992), and succession rituals in some Central-African peoples were also violent. African political culture thus has undeniable elements of symbolic and actual violence the images and symbols of which were referred to in to contemporary violence (like political culture in many other places).

Another element which shaped the nature of power and African political culture and contained elements of violent tension was patronage and protection, often enforced. Political power was not over territories but over people, and ties of personal allegiance and loyalty were paramount. This blurred the line between institutional power (weak anyhow) and personal power, and invited arbitrariness in political life and adjudication. Conflicts were often quickly personalized and acted out violently like a personal battle against enemies. For instance, when a new male heir ascended to the throne in medieval Ethiopia, his male agnates (i.e., his potential competitors) were put in prison for life. In some other countries such royal rivals were even killed. Needless to say there was great variety across the various regions in Africa, and modes of indigenous 'constitutionalism' certainly also existed. The forms of checks and balances that emerged were, however, wiped out by the colonial state. This was by nature an authoritarian entity and an imposed structure in African life, and not only reshuffled 'ethnic groups' and 'borders' but actively shaped them. The colonial state's roots in the wider society were tenuous if not absent; and its effect was to create new lines of division. Its territorial basis was also artificial, its fostering of new (African) elites biased and partial. Its power was based on coercion, its legitimacy precarious.

The postcolonial state inherited a weak institutional structure, a non-descript 'national' political identity, and a lop-sided, exploitative economic structure. The political elite that took over this state did not successfully deal with this heritage and did not succeed in establishing a wide constituency, a solid economic base, and an inclusive nation-state project. In situations of scarcity - material and symbolic - it quickly developed a neo-patrimonial practice of governance, seeing the political as a network of personal links of loyalty, not separating the access to public economic resources from private use, and narrowing the own constituency to a regional or 'ethnic' group. Thus, from the start, avenues of advancement were closed and alternative visions of the national polity suppressed for a large part of the population. Diversity in class, region and ethnic identity was denied or side-tracked.

Conditions were created for violent self-assertion by the muted voices, because political parties, protest movements, and civic organizations did not get a chance. Indeed, social research on Africa has neglected the study of the *social bases* of politics and efforts at political reform. The fact that there are no productive middle-classes with any weight and that

social mobility is very slight inhibits the establishment of a firm institutional basis for a democracy of countervailing powers.

In the course of the 1960s, insurgent movements and violent rebellions emerged in the postcolonial states. Growing relative resource scarcity, Cold War power politics, dramatic population growth, economic crisis and ecological pressures fuelled such rebellions. Systematic neo-patrimonial policies of state elites antagonized large parts of the African populations and bred violent response to continued humiliation. Groups revolted out of plain resentment against the monopolization of national resources through the state machinery. Some of these movements, like the NPFL in Liberia, the ReNaMo in Mozambique and the RUF in Sierra Leone in the 1980s and 90s became in themselves deeply violent movements that lost track of any serious political programme and compromised ends and means. With systematic terror against civilians and state representatives they instituted violence *as a way of life* for a whole generation of youths and marginal groups from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Overseeing all this, it can be said that there *was* a specific kind of cultural patterning of politics, power and violence in Africa (see also MacGaffey 2000), which has carried over in the contemporary era. The effects of this may even be reinforced, although selectively, by processes of globalization, where local traditions meet externally generated forces, objects, images and ideas, and which are redefined in the process. Globalization is accelerating, and forces people to face their differences and come to terms with them. This is not a process of assimilation but of emerging antagonisms.

Most conspicuous in present-day African political culture is *the role of ethnicity* and its constructions: culture and 'fictive kinship' are turned into a relatively fixed collective identity on the basis of which social and political claims are made and movements are formed. As we see, almost daily, the resulting ethnically styled constituencies are very susceptible to manipulation, including violent action, by old or new elites, but also institute their own discourse of difference, thereby restructuring social interaction along new lines. These tend to harden and become the fault-lines of conflict. We can note this, to mention just a few examples, in the so-called 'tribal conflicts' in Kenya (especially around election time), in the violent clashes between ethno-cultural groups in northern Ghana (Konkomba-Dugumba), in the past civil war in Congo-Brazzaville, in Nigerian ethno-religious clashes, and in the new ethnic set-up of politics in Ethiopia. If people believe in the ontological reality of such constructed lines of difference, then the stage for violence is set. This is not to say that there is no substance to cultural difference (language, ritual complexes, moral codes, shared representations, etc.) but the relevant fact is rather that there is no political model to deal with or accommodate them: they are ordered and evaluated in 'prestige hierarchies', leading to patterns of dominance and exclusion. Again, the political dynamic of the neo-patrimonial African states plays a crucial catalyzing role in this process. It is, in a way, the equivalent of the 'creation of difference' described in S. Harrison's interesting monograph on the Avatip people in Papua New Guinea (1993).

The African *state* (colonial and postcolonial), as a political structure insufficiently connected to or mandated by society and hovering above it as an exploitative agent, thus always *plays a transformative role*. It already did so in the 'contact-settings', when it forcefully established its authority over previously non-centralized, non-governed groups both in the late 19th century and in the early decades of independence. The state in Africa was rarely the result of a 'social contract' between rulers and ruled based on consent. This was hardly the case in Europe either (cf. Tilly 1985), despite the much longer period of gestation

of the state on this continent. Still today the African state is connected to society through its horizontal networks of patronage and extraction, and commands the means of coercion. But it has not solidly grounded its hegemony in consent of the populace. Its *cultural repertoire* is different, its ways of dealing with citizens - largely fictive concept in itself, as the bureaucratic means and resources to sustain this identity are lacking for the great majority of Africans - are often exclusionary. The idea is that power is indivisible. This partly goes back to traditions of authority among chiefs and kings. In addition, the state's extraneous linkages to resources outside its territory must neither be underestimated, e.g., with donor-country institutions, and in international (semi-legal or illegal) trade networks. These linkages have a great impact on its domestic policy, for instance that towards ethnic or regional groups in border areas.

EMERGING STRUCTURES OF ANTAGONISM

The African neo-patrimonial state has created a new 'opportunity structure' for violence as a means for political ends, thus making itself vulnerable to violent subversion. By 'instrumentalizing' inequality, public disorder and the diversity of the constituent parts of the population - ethnic groups, professional classes, civic organizations, marginal regions - it has induced a sharpening of social antagonisms, to the construction of alternative identities as a basis for (political) mobilization, and to putting a premium on violent means to achieve ends, ranging from electoral fraud, intimidation, the trampling of human rights, and blatant repression. This happens in conditions of enduring material resource scarcity and growing economic and environmental insecurity.

While authoritarian elite politics is an heritage of the colonial past, it is not given up by the postcolonial state: indeed cannot be given up for fear of loss of power and of access to economic resources by the elites. Violence is an inextricable part of the political instrumentarium of governance.

A remarkable domain of antagonism in contemporary African political discourse is obviously that of communal *identity* notions. These have come to play a key role, based on either ethnic, regional or social characteristics. Increased contacts in the framework of, first, colonialism, then within that of the emerging postcolonial state structures, and subsequently in that of the current phase of globalization, have brought out group differences and confronted them with each other. These 'identities' were initially diffuse and had their roots in quite diverse moral and cultural systems, but in situations of competition (for 'resources' of any kind, i.e. material or symbolic) the intensified contacts led to the emphasizing of difference, not of similarity. In this sense, violence and ethnicity are closely intertwined, not because of the autonomous power of 'ethnic identity' but because of the latter easily being appealed to in terms of 'family feeling' and inclusive 'belonging'. In Somalia for instance, the 'ethnic' as such was absent but the constructions of kinship and belonging were structured around the clans, which were the units of descent-reckoning through which rights to marriage, inheritance, or access to collectively held pastures were established. The consistent 'creation of others' in situations of scarcity and duress always tends to lead to patterns of exclusion and hence to conflict.

In this way, domestic and international factors concur in the African state generating the conditions of its own demise. The appeal to ethnic or regional constituencies limits the base

for its legitimacy, also regarding its use of the monopoly on the use of violence and its powers of taxation and administrative authority, as well as its territoriality and its national project. This process leads to a *rethinking* of borders, of imagined community (Benedict Anderson's concept) and of formulating ideas of 'self-determination' for the constituent groups.

Thus, state formation and reformation by means of violent contestation and insurgency are the almost logical outcome of the emerging antagonisms within the failing state structure of Africa (witness Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia after 1991, the emergence of Eritrea, the disintegration of ex-Zaire, Sierra Leone). Doubtless, the violence can be seen as a 'constitutive' element in society: it is creating and shaping new forms of (state) organization, but not necessarily in a way that enhances legitimacy or grounds a broader constituency.

SOME EXAMPLES: CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE AND ETHIOPIA

As a classic example of a postcolony gone foul one could take Congo-Brazzaville, an ex-French colony independent since 1960. The colonial state left the country without democratic institutions, with a top-heavy bureaucracy and a socio-economic structure strongly biased towards the cities. There was no pan-Congolese identity to speak of. After a long period of one-party rule, a process of political liberalization started in 1991. But in the course of this, networks of patronage (based on the distribution of the state's oil revenues) began to shift, and the newly elected president and the ousted one started to play upon 'ethnic antagonisms'. This undermined the political arena and the unitary state project (Clark 1998). Political leaders instituted 'ethnic' militias, subverting the national army, and in 1997 began a destructive four-month civil war during which opposing new categories of 'northerners' to 'southerners' emerged and various ethnic groups came to be pitted against each other. This violence was repeated in the 1999-2000 clashes. The appeal to violence as a political means led to abrogation of the constitutional order, to state collapse, and to the emergence of an autocratic regime based on one ethno-regional constituency. A background factor was the fight over oil and oil contracts: a French company supported the ousted president (also in his violent struggle), three non-French oil companies had backed the newly elected one, because he promised them access to the rich Congo oil-fields. The global context thus reveals itself to be increasingly important.

The case of Ethiopia shows that the colonial heritage is *not* all determining for the problems of African states. The old indigenous Ethiopian empire up to 1974 also showed a high level of authoritarianism, ethnic heterogeneity, regional favoritism and inequality, and a national narrative that did not appeal to all Ethiopians living within the state borders. Although there had been an ancient state core dating back to the 4th century, providing a sense of political identity, the empire expanded by violent means especially in the late 19th century, incorporating several new ethno-regions. A socialist revolution in 1974 did not lead to a change in the tenets of the authoritarian political culture or the basic structures of governance. In 1974-91, state violence became the prime political means to enforce a 'new order'. Political opponents were killed by the thousands in public persecution campaigns like the 'Red Terror' by the Marxist-Leninist-oriented regime (cf. Abbink 1995). A new regime that took over in 1991 officially instituted 'equality' between the various ethnic-linguistic groups and reorganized state policy (education, justice, administration, and the provincial boundaries) accordingly. It led to a highly charged 'ethnification' of the country's politics and

to numerous local 'ethnic conflicts', many of them violent. These two successor regimes in Ethiopia did neither facilitate the emergence of a cross-cutting middle class nor equalize the chances of access of ethnic-based or regional groups to resources on the level of the central state. Regional disparities remained notable, and a politics of (ethnic) exclusion created new problems after 1991. Indeed, ethno-regional rebellion was partly a response to the failing modernization project of the state. The young elites of larger 'ethnic' groups in Ethiopia like Oromo, Somali and Tigray had rebelled in the 1970s and 1980s because they saw their regions suffer from economic neglect and cultural discrimination, and themselves being largely *excluded* from that modernization drive. The military victory in the civil war in May 1991 was claimed in the name of 'ethnic liberation' (by the Tigray TPLF/EPRDF; and in Eritrea that of 'national liberation and unity' by the Eritrean EPLF). After 1991 the state politics of ethnicity led to heightened consciousness of 'ethnic difference' and thus to new symbolic boundaries within the mass of the population, many of whom had previously not primarily thought in ethnic but in regional, religious or social status terms. Ideological campaigns of identity creation prescribed by ethnic elites, and a new state education policy emphasizing the own ethno-region and language, started having their effect. They have now led to new ethnic militancy, to the rise of new 'ethnic' units (such as the Silt'i people), to campaigns of economic exclusion, but also to some episodes of violent ethnic cleansing, with hundreds of dead.

In the absence of democratic opportunities to vent discontent and redress wrongs, violence remained the subtext of Ethiopian political life. The gradual expansion and penetration of the central state into local societies apparently did not deliver equality or ground legitimacy but basically amounted to an expansion of surveillance in rural areas.

THE LOCAL LEVEL: SURI TRANSFORMATIONS

An analysis of the overall conditions of the generation of violence in Africa proceeds on a macroscopic, political-historic level, and it cannot tell us how violence and coercion play a role in the attempted reproduction of state governance and hegemony in society. More interesting from an anthropological perspective is to see how local societies articulate with the political mechanisms and coercive policies of the African state: how are these relations constituted and acted out, and what role does violence play in it? Such linkages are being more and more studied in current research; one good example is the monograph on the Nuer of Southern Sudan, by S. Hutchinson (1996).

Local-level studies often show that the entrance of the state in local societies did not eradicate violence but changed its nature and scope. While local societies (e.g., neighboring pastoral societies raiding each other) were not unfamiliar with 'violence', it was often not seen as a 'problem': its scale and its effects were more or less predictable, and contained in shared codes of fighting (in raiding) and in ritual reconciliations. 'External factors' like state action, regional wars, or new technology can often change such a state of affairs. The case of the Suri agro-pastoralists in the Sudanese-Ethiopian border area (a group of about 24,000 people) shows how the confrontation of state and society articulates different cultural commitments, creates antagonisms, and transforms the nature of violence. It illustrates the problematic reproduction of state authority in a different cultural setting and reveals the socially reordering force of violence.

I limit myself to the last phase of state impact, that of the post 1991-regime, because compared to previous types of government, the impact of the current EPRDF-administration on the Suri seems to have been greatest. Historically, the Ethiopian state (present in their area since c. 1898) was never seen by the Suri as a normative agent with which a mutually beneficial relationship could be established. It had manifested itself first in military form, and its activities over the years were marked by the exercise of punitive violence in the maintenance of public order and in tax extraction. In Suri society violence was not scarce, but it was somehow 'contained'. Young men become adults while committed to herding the cattle and defending it against raiding outsiders. On this basic level - i.e. that of their mode of subsistence and of 'competition for resources' - the readiness to confront and use violence (repulsing and/or killing raider-enemies) was an essential requirement of the Suri way of life, and not seen in any sense as problematic or contested. This cattle-herding, requiring mobility, decentralized organization and a 'warrior ethos' or militancy, also correlated with a 'culture of personal achievement', expressed in songs and stories about exploits and defense of the herds, battle and the identification with a 'favorite' stock animal. It also included killing big game predators or human enemies. Such a killing was symbolically given recognition by applying a prestigious skin scarification and in songs by age mates. For the formation of the Suri social *persona*, clan identity and age-grades play a defining role (of the latter, being a form of 'fraternal interest group', it is predicted in the literature that it correlates with a relatively high level of violence).

Suri violence could be said to move between the two poles of ritual containment and political strategy. (cf. Abbink 1998.) The former element was related to keeping a kind of equilibrium in their own society, the latter for the defense of livestock herds and safeguarding access natural resources vis-à-vis different pastoralist and agricultural neighbors.

In 1991, when the new Ethiopian state entered the scene, this pattern changed. It was a time when local conflict between the Suri and their four neighboring groups were under pressure. There were population movements, more pressure on natural resources, and an influx of new automatic weapons since the mid-1980s that altered the exercise of violence itself (more victims, more robbery, raids and ambushes, and a decline in trans-group trade and contacts). The Ethiopian state authorities now *linked* the exercise of Suri 'external' violence towards their neighbors to presumed violent practices within their own society, such as frequent animal sacrifice in the context of reconciliation ceremonies and ceremonial stick dueling, both very cherished cultural practices that 'ordered' local Suri society. The government tried to discourage these practices in the hope that this would also reduce the Suri resorting to violence in their dealings with other groups (sedentary peasants and pastoralists). This became the issue of a major debate: the Suri contested the interpretation that sacrifice and dueling were 'violent' or a 'bad custom', and they did not give them up. At the same time, the government tried - predictably - to disarm the Suri. This did not work due to all kinds of practical reasons, and due to obstinate refusal of Suri to cooperate. They knew that handing in weapons would make them vulnerable to neighboring groups (partly living in Sudan) that did *not* hand in their weapons, and from which the state could not protect them (cf. Abbink 2000).

The government policy after 1991 also included the installation of a new local Suri Council for 'self-government', to make people more responsible in dealing with their own problems. This whole process of state co-optation of the Suri, however, was ultimately not successful. Violent incidents did not diminish. Indeed, in the years after 1991 the Suri had some of their most violent confrontations with both their Dizi and Anyuak neighbors and with

the state. A series of incidents in late 1993 of Suri attacking Dizi, and, more importantly, killing some government soldiers finally led to a massive retaliatory action by the latter. In this confrontation (late October 1993), whereby hand grenades were used, it is estimated that a few hundred Suri died, mainly women and children. Smaller incidents followed in subsequent years.

There is no doubt that conflicts of the Suri with other ethnic groups in their vicinity were in part a continuation of long-standing structural problems: increasing resource competition, droughts, problems of cattle disease. But the meeting of state and Suri itself was also a contributory factor: it was based on false premises and cultural misconceptions (see Abbink 2000) and led to growing antagonism. The Suri retain their ingrained notion of the encroaching Ethiopian state - whatever its nature - as an imposition and a threat. They see that the state at crucial moments reserves the right to use massive force, while failing to assist them in resolving long-standing economic problems or disputes with neighboring groups. The Suri also have a political model of authority and decision-making that does not sit well with the ultimately authoritarian model of the state, which is not seen as adequate for local conditions. They also see the state dominated by people 'not of their own', with their own agenda.

CONCLUSION

A first point to emphasize is that African state formation was and remains incomplete, and largely unsuccessful. The colonial rupture in many respects prevented a gradual evolution of new forms of governance and authority from the old. Secondly, African regime politics tends to be elitist, exploitative and divisive. It produces antagonisms and identity competition. There is no inclusive project of citizenship and sharing. The neo-patrimonial system of politics is incapable of incorporating local society except by coercion and force, often crude violence. In this, the African state experience, though much more compressed in time, shares many traits with the long process of state-making in Europe as 'organized crime': instrumental use of violence, war-making, resource extraction, and enforced 'protection' (Tilly 1985). In this experience, local societies were not 'partners' in an unfolding 'social contract', but simply losers. The Suri experience in Ethiopia seems to underline this: it is the record of a, so far, unsuccessful mediation, marked by a violent subtext.

Thirdly, African social structures, ethnic communities and modes of governance in the post-colonial era are not congruent, and they are not really in the process of becoming so. There is an economically and politically fuelled process of division and indeed of instrumentalization of disorder (Chabal & Daloz 1999) going on which carries a high conflict potential. Violence remains a widespread *political means* that elites and power holders can and do resort to without hesitation if their position is at stake. The global international system that props up their position largely aids and abets them, and has no other solutions ready.

Fourth, the remarks above imply that African states as we know them do not create an inclusive political arena or give sufficient autonomous space for indigenous political responses. They tend to contribute to the reproduction of structures of inequality, insecurity and often criminalization. This, incidentally, is where the globalization factor comes in. Africa and especially its elites are part of a globalizing world arena: it is not left alone and its processes of state (re)formation, conflict and warfare do not develop as they did in Europe,

over a period of hundreds of years and with a more or less autonomous logic of competition and internally generated economic accumulation (Tilly 1985). African state elites are co-opted and supported by their extractive contacts with the developed countries and by their insertion into the current world of interconnecting elites and interest groups. This new global domain not only enhances political survival strategies of the elites in place, but also has a wider *cultural* impact, fostering images and ideals of unscrupulous competition, showing-off, real or symbolic conquest, and violent performance. This can be seen in the exercise of power itself and in the competitive traffic and display of consumer products as signs of new wealth and status. They create their own market, and the wish to possess them, or to use and abuse them, is spreading, also in Africa. Initially, in non-industrial societies without many resources, that wish is mostly detached from the possibilities to acquire them (money, contacts, location). Violent appropriation is then the most powerful means to bridge this gap and acquire them. But African countries remain marginal in this quest, except for their elites, which can be exceedingly rich. It is partly the rebellion against the element of 'structural violence' in global relations - power difference, economic exploitation, development paternalism, consumerism, exposure to foreign mass media products, and continued devaluation of the viability of indigenous traditions - that keeps generating violence in contemporary African societies. This is a structural aspect of evolving political-global relations that has not worked towards meaningful development or rehabilitation of damage done in the past. Hence violence will not soon decrease but likely become a more general practice, more 'democratized', and entrenching itself as an option available to more and more groups - ethnic, regional, religious or otherwise -, thus becoming part of the 'life-world' of communities. It is also much different from past practices because fuelled much more by current patterns of (failing) state governance and continuing hegemonism. Violence is often both a protest against state elites as well as a way to alternative self-assertion, thus reflecting persistent divisions between state and society in Africa.

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the sampling process and the statistical tools employed.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study, including a comparison of the findings with previous research. It also discusses the limitations of the study and suggests areas for future research.

4. The fourth part of the document provides a conclusion and summarizes the key findings. It highlights the significance of the results and their implications for the field of study.

5. The fifth part of the document contains a list of references and a bibliography. It includes citations to all the sources used in the study, as well as a list of additional resources for further reading.