Segmentary Opposition and the Theory of Games: A Study of Pathan Organization

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The present essay relates to the extensive discussion in the anthropological literature on the role of unilineal descent groups in politics, i.e. the theory of lineage systems (cf. Fortes 1953). It is, however, concerned with the analysis of a divergent case: a political system in which ramifying patrilineal descent is of prominent importance in politics, yet where larger lineage groups do not emerge as corporate units.¹

The case analysed is the acephalous political system of the Yusufzai Pathans of the Northwest Frontier Province, Pakistan. To elucidate this case, it will be necessary to present considerable detail on their organization. This consists of field material, collected in the course of the year 1954. Further material has been, and will be, published elsewhere (Barth 1956; MSS). In the analysis of this data, I shall utilize some of the elementary concepts and procedures of the Theory of Games (cf. Neumann and Morgenstern 1947; Stone 1948), as well as the relevant anthropological theory relating to descent groups and corporate groups.

The argument of the essay depends on a distinction between the purely structural arrangement of units defined by a unilineal descent charter, and the manner in which these units are made relevant in corporate action. In the description of lineage systems in the literature, this distinction is not often made. The analysis of the solidarity of unilineal descent groups usually relies on a Durkheimian conception of mechanical solidarity. In such a framework, solidarity derives from likeness. The descent charter defines a hierarchy of homologous groups, and thus directs the fusion of political interests within a merging series of such groups.

This particular expression of the descent group charter has been incorporated into our whole conception of lineage organizations, as if it were a necessary derivative of the descent structure. The present case study describes a different political application of unilineal descent. Descent units are arranged in a recognizable manner by patrilineal genealogies, and hold joint rights to large territories. But close collaterals in the system do not join in corporate groups in opposition to more distant collaterals. The genealogical charter is none the less relevant to the structure of the corporate groups that do emerge; essentially, it defines rivals and allies in a system of two opposed political blocs. Closely related descent units are consistent rivals; each establishes a net of political alliances with the rivals of allies of their own rivals. In this fashion a pervasive factional split into two grand alliances of descent segments emerges, with close collateral segments consistently in opposite moieties.

Clearly, though this is a unilineal descent system of a kind, the analysis of the internal solidarity of the political units which emerge can not be contained in a schema based on the concept of mechanical solidarity. Among the Yusufzai Pathans, the recruitment of corporate political units depends on the exercise of individual choices between alternative allegiances. Thus descent charters do not unequivocally define corporate units; these charters are made relevant to political action indirectly through their strategic implications for the choices of individuals. Therefore, the manner of recruitment of Pathan political groups can not be understood directly in terms of the descent system; it requires some analysis of the bases of individual choices and the sources of the internal solidarity of the groups which do emerge. The ‘Theory of Games’ is designed precisely for the analysis of such strategic choices, and will be utilized in the latter part of this essay. The essay thus falls roughly into three parts: I, a descriptive and comparative account of Yusufzai Pathan unilineal descent groups and political organization; II, an attempted analysis of
some of this data in some of the categories of the Theory of Games; and III, a concluding brief
general discussion.

I

Lineage systems have been described in a number of societies in Africa and elsewhere. Their basic
features are particularly apparent in acephalous systems, where their expression is not complicated
by the existence of centralized political institutions based on other criteria. In these societies,
unilineal descent through a line of ancestors defines a hierarchy of descent groups, the more
remote the common ancestor, the wider the span of his group of descendants, and the larger the
segment defined by his genealogical position. A political system based on this organization is
described by Evans-Pritchard (in Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940) as characterized by a situational
balanced opposition of groups: 'although any group tends to split into opposed parts,
these parts tend to fuse in relation to other groups' (p. 284). The political system thus becomes a
'system of fission and fusion, of relativity and opposition of segments' (p. 296).

According to Fortes, 'the guiding ideas in the analysis of African lineage organization have
come mainly from Radcliffe-Brown's formulation (in Fortes 1953, p. 25) of the structural
principles found in all kinship systems. Prominent among these are the appreciation of the
structural implications of unilineal descent, and the principle of equivalence of siblings.

With a view to the particular orientation of this essay, the implications of unilineal descent
may be expressed in terms of their significance for individual choices. For each 'ego' in society,
unilineal descent resolves a problem of identification. Through his two parents, two different
assemblages of kin have claims on his loyalty and support. Unilineal descent gives primacy,
for specified purposes, to one of these relations; it defines a bond which in these situations overrides
other bonds. Thus, in a patrilineal society, sons are unambiguously identified with fathers in the
culturally defined contexts in which descent is relevant.

A second principle is that of equivalence of siblings, which defines a bond ideally approach-
ing a merging of the social personalities of siblings. We are here concerned with political organiza-
tion, i.e. the groups and statuses concerned with the maintenance of order and the defence of
rights to culturally valued goods in situations of conflict. The two principles of descent and
equivalence of siblings combined together and given primacy for political purposes, produce a
lineage system as we know it in the literature. In a patrilineal system, there is a fusion of the
interests of fathers and sons, of the father with his brothers and of these brothers with their
sons, and by the same token with grandfather, grandfather's brothers, and their descendants,
etc. In such fashion, a charter of unilineal descent becomes a charter for the fusion of interests
and progressive creation of larger corporate groups along a gradient of collateral distance.

This fusion of interests is situational; it implies an identification in situations of conflict
with those more closely related by lineage bonds against those less related, or unrelated. Implicit
in the framework of a lineage, then, are both identification and opposition, both fusion and fission.
The opposition between near and distant collaterals, defined by their descent from two different
ancestors on one level of segmentation, in one generation of the genealogy, is overridden in the
case of outside threats by fusion in terms of the sibling bond which unites these two ancestors
and defines a common interest for their descendants. The solidarity implicit in such a descrip-
tion of the political system is derived from the likeness of the groups concerned, and their ego-
centric conception of rights and wrongs. The implied solidarity of groups is thus a mechanical
solidarity (Durkheim 1947).

The Pathan kinship system forms no exception to Radcliffe-Brown's generalizations. The
principles of descent and equivalence of siblings are clearly embodied in its structure. But the
manner in which they are utilized in political contexts is only superficially reminiscent of African
lineage organizations. Charters of unilineal descent define territorial units and administrative
councils. But intertwined with this basic frame is a system of political alliances, through which
individuals by their own choice align themselves in a political dual division. The groups which
for most political purposes act together as corporate units are the regional branches of these
two factions or blocs. Thus the corporate groups in the political system are formed by the strategic choices on the part of the participants, and do not emerge by virtue of a mechanical solidarity deriving from likeness. Such a political system may be analysed in terms of the bases on which the strategic choices are made. In the following account I shall attempt to show that the contexts in which patrilineal kinship is relevant are such as to emphasize the deep opposition of interests between collaterals, which is indeed implicit in any lineage organization. In the patrilineal descent system, the Pathan ‘ego’ is thus faced with a profound dilemma: the bonds between brothers and the bonds between fathers and sons are given political primacy; yet an organization based on these principles would unite ‘ego’ with his close agnatic collaterals, who for reasons elaborated below are his prime opponents. The political dual division develops as a direct result of the choices that individuals make in seeking a solution to this dilemma, and the political organization can thus be understood only in terms of the structure of the unilineal descent system. As the dilemma is to some extent implicit in all lineage systems, we may provisionally assume some generality for the problem, and for this pattern of its solution.

As a preparation for what follows, it is necessary to give some background to Pathan society, relating particularly to the Lower Swat Valley (Malakand Agency, North-west Frontier Province, Pakistan). In this area the accephalous system persists unmodified to this day. Yusufzai country consists in the main of fairly barren hill and mountain tracts, cut by a few fertile valleys, mainly those of the rivers Panjkora, Swat, and a section of the Indus. These valleys are very densely settled and intensively utilized, the population supporting itself by cereal agriculture, predominantly dependent on artificial irrigation, with double cropping and manuring. The entire valley bottom and a major part of the surrounding hills are under cultivation; thus there is no free land and practically no possibility of extending the cultivated area. Most cultivators are sharecroppers. Practically all land is owned by a dominant aristocracy of Pakhtuns, numbering, in different areas, from one half to one tenth of the population. These Pakhtuns trace patrilineal descent from ancestors who conquered the area in the sixteenth century. Title to land entails, in the manner of a feudal organization, jurisdiction over persons residing on this land. Except for certain persons of holy status, who may be disregarded in the present context, only the landowning Pakhtuns have independent political status; tenants, craftsmen, traders, and all other non-landowners are the political dependents, or clients, of the Pakhtun on whose land they reside. The ‘persons’ who occupy positions in the Pakhtun genealogical charter and who act as units in the political system thus vary greatly in the power they bring to it. One Pakhtun, with little land, represents himself only; another Pakhtun, who owns much land, represents perhaps a hundred male clients, and may figuratively be given a valency of one hundred in the political system. It should however be noted that the relation between Pakhtun and client is a reciprocal contract which may be broken at the will of either party. The relation is not one of adoption or bond serfdom, and changes in the political fortunes of a landowner are quickly reflected in the numbers of his clients. The essential asset of the Pakhtun is his title to land (which is scarce and, with irrigation and terracing, a highly capitalized resource), and only through his control of this resource can he attract the clients with which to inflate his political ego.

The landowning Yusufzai Pakhtuns claim patrilineal descent from the common apical ancestor Yusuf. Indeed, through a genealogical charter of an additional six generations’ depth, Yusuf is connected with the ancestors of other Pathan tribes to the first Pathan, Kais, who was converted to Islam and took the name Abdul Rashid.

The Yusufzai control a territory with a total population of more than a million inhabitants; but it is difficult to estimate the number of persons among these who trace lineal descent from Yusuf—they may count about one fifth of the total. The modern descendants of Yusuf are twelve to thirteen generations removed from the apical ancestor. The depth of genealogies varies mainly between different collateral lines, but also with respect to completeness as given by different informants. Pathan genealogies show a tendency to retain genealogical links which are superfluous from the point of view of the segmentation of groups, particularly among the closer ascendants. There is a distinct ideal of genealogies as historical traditions, apart from their value
as charters for the internal segmentation of groups. Such genealogical information was however difficult to uncover; most informants admitted ignorance of the actual traditions, and would reconstruct outline genealogies on the expressly post hoc argument of the names of the segments in the system. In any one level of segmentation, each descent group has only a limited number of subdivisions, usually two or three. Thus, fathers in the genealogies are generally represented as having two or three sons, though the recorded range is from one to five sons. Segmentation between groups of half-brothers is occasionally recognized, in which case the groups carry the names of their respective mothers.

Rights as members of these descent groups are contingent on the additional criterion of ownership of land. The sons of a man who has 'eaten' or otherwise lost his title to the whole of his inherited land are no longer regarded as members of the group; and they are forced to establish bonds of clientage to a man who holds such title. This follows from the feudal principle on which the society is based. Descent group membership is thus connected with title to a share of the common landed estate of the group, both in the sense that only members can hold such title, and in the sense that membership lapses with loss of title. The descent group therefore of necessity becomes localized—all members have their permanent residence within the district appropriate to their group. The districts take their names from the descent groups holding title to them, and in similar fashion the whole population of the district, a majority of whom are clients of members and not themselves members, none the less refer to themselves by the name of the descent group. Unilineal descent groups, or lineage segments, form the cores of local territorial groups, or tribal segments, of larger membership, including both lineage members and their clients.

The number of levels of lineage segmentation varies, and their correspondence to territories is complicated by the pattern of land tenure, to be discussed shortly. An example might help somewhat to clarify the situation. The Nikbi lineage (khel) controls a side valley and a section of the west bank of the Swat River, a territory roughly fifteen by ten miles. Of a total population of perhaps 40,000, about 8,000 are Pakhtuns—lineal descendants of Nikbi, and owners of land, while the remainder are political clients—non-landowners who are tenants, craftsmen, and traders by occupation. A simplified genealogical framework of the Nikbi lineage is as follows:

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  Nikbi
    /\    \
   /  \  /
  Asha Aba
    /\    \
   /  \  /
 Dado Khadi Zubar Zeina Mata Sabi
    /\    \
   /  \  /
 Ghali Awdel
    /\    \
   /  \  /
 Manki Shado Nasar Ghali
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At the time of my field work, the descent segments Manki and Shado co-resided in two small villages of eight hundred inhabitants each, of whom about two hundred in each village were lineage members. The villagers all depended, directly or indirectly, on the landed estate of the Manki-Shado lineage core for their sustenance. The neighbouring villages are owned by the Ghali/Nasar and Awdel lineage segments, partly co-residing in two villages of more than 2,000 inhabitants, as well as occupying several smaller villages. The territories of the Khadi and Zubar segments lie along the river to the south, while the Aba khel major lineage segment occupies the main section of the tributary valley. Within each village, the local lineage segment is divided into separate households.

With the possible exception of the peculiar emphasis on title to land, and the consequent pattern of shedding of members, this formal description of the unilineal structure, its genea-
logical framework and territorial correlates, should fall within the limits of what is usually described in lineage systems. In other words, in its abstract structural arrangement of units, and their expression in terms of residence, the descent system of the Yusufzai Pathans belongs to the general class of lineage systems.

There is however wide variation between societies in terms of the contexts in which this structure is utilized, that is, in the fields of relevance of descent group membership. In this respect, the present case may represent one extreme. Thus, descent groups among Yusufzai Pathans (1) Do not regulate marriage through rules of exogamy of preferential choice. Islamic incest laws as to the forbidden degrees are observed; beyond them, all women are eligible as marriage partners. There is no significant statistical or ideological emphasis on any particular category of relative as a preferential spouse, though there is a strong ideology of endogamy vis-à-vis non-Pakhtun clients. (2) Do not define common jural responsibility in blood revenge. The right to revenge is passed on as a privilege to the person or persons who inherit from the deceased; thus, by Pathan inheritance practice, to closest male agnates and only to them. Revenge is directed against the murderer himself, or in the case of murder by hired thugs, against the person who initiated and paid for the murder.

The main relevance of agnatic descent group membership among Yusufzai Pathans is in the field of government. Members of agnatic descent groups of every recognized level of segmentation meet in councils for the purpose of governing the tribal segment of which they form the core—i.e. for the administration of their joint estate. Thus, in the example on p. 8, there may be council meetings of all of Nikbi khel, of the Asha khel major segment, of Dado khel, or of the members of Manki/Shado khels co-residing in a village. In every case, all adult males of the lineage with an individual title to land—i.e. all heads of Pakhtun households—have a right to speak in the council meeting. Such councils have formal rules of procedure, and usually a permanent employee, without vote, who serves as messenger to notify members of scheduled meetings, and who is paid a yearly rate from the fines which the council collects. This council is highly egalitarian; it does not, in fact, recognize any formal differences of rank between its members. To remove all mechanisms for the expression of precedence, the council members must sit in a circle on flat ground, away from the home of any particular member. All members have equal rights to speak, and no one may interrupt anyone else in the sense of ordering him to be quiet; although several members may speak at once. Decisions must be unanimous, in the sense that there should be no articulate objection raised to the final conclusion—there is, in fact, usually considerable mumbling by a fraction of the members. Some issues may be settled by open debate, but most settlements are arranged by ‘lobbying’ behind a haystack or out of earshot while the council is in session.

These councils thus look in every way like lineage councils. By their formal rules they contain the members of agnatic lineages, who meet as equals to solve the political problems of their territory, to settle conflicts between members and agree on action vis-a-vis the outside world. A hierarchy of councils is defined, corresponding in terms of their membership to a merging series of agnatic descent groups. But when members align against each other in debates, or any other form of opposition, they do not act in terms of such a merging series. In a meeting of a council of a wide area, there is not the fusion of interests of smaller, related segments of a minor council vis-à-vis larger segments which one would expect in a lineage system, and which is exemplified in the above citations from Evans-Pritchard (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940, p. 4). On the contrary, the opposition between small, closely related segments persists in the wider context, and these segments unite with similar small segments in a pattern of two-party opposition, not in a merging series of descent segments.

The opposition between collaterals is a structural feature of any segmentary lineage system; but where one finds a merging series of segments acting as political corporate groups, this opposition is temporarily cancelled by a fusion of interests vis-à-vis larger groups. Within the same formal architecture of a segmentary unilineal descent system, such fusion does not take place among Yusufzai Pathans. Whether or not such fusion takes place, i.e. whether the common
interests of related segments, in their relations to larger units, are stronger or weaker than the opposition which divides them, would seem to be an empirical question, and depends on a great number of cultural variables. From first principles one cannot determine which interest will be the stronger. In the Pathan context, the lack of fusion is understandable in terms of the particular types of issues in which the descent is relevant, i.e. the types of issues with which the councils are mainly concerned. For the purpose of demonstrating this further empirical material must be added. But the general validity of the argument does not depend on the presence or absence of the particular cultural features which I shall describe, but on a recognition that cultural factors are effective in weighting the opposed interests in fusion or continued opposition of close collaterals.

The following section is thus ethnographically specific. The point I wish to make is that nearly all questions of administration relate to land in the Pathan system, and that the Pathan system of land tenure defines prominent lines of cleavage between agnatic collaterals. The tribal councils deal with matters which are basically of two types: the settlement of conflicts, and the co-ordination of joint or public action. Such joint public action relates to the maintenance of public roads and rights of way, and the maintenance of the joint irrigation system. Both relate prominently to land and land rights. The same is true of conflicts between individuals. Land is the sine qua non of Pakhtuns. From title to land springs all political power—wealth, the control of clients, and a voice in the councils. Except for questions concerning the honour of women, and revenge, all conflicts among Pathans boil down to conflicts over land.

Finally, the pattern of land tenure is itself regulated by the councils of the agnatic descent units. Yusufzai Pakhtuns hold land as individual property, but they do not own particular fields, and their tenure is subjected to a system of periodic re-allotment, known as the wesh (division) system, related in conception to the musha’a system of the Near East (cf. Patai 1949, p. 436). This system may best be explained by the analogy of industrial shares, where a shareholder owns a specified fraction of the industrial estate by virtue of holding a certain number of shares; he does not, however, own any particular part of the factory concerned. Similarly the common estate of a descent unit is divided into an absolute number of equal shares. A Pakhtun through inheritance receives a specified fraction of the tribal estate in the form of a specified number of such shares, but no particular plot. He is allotted fields of irrigated and dry land, sand and clay, and marsh in standard proportions, corresponding to the size of his share. But as no two pieces of land are equal, the equivalence in value of each share is assured only through making this allotment temporary, and periodically redistributing the estate between the shareholders. Every fourth, fifth, or tenth year each man is allotted new fields, so through a long cycle the holders of each share exercise rights over all fields an equal length of time (cf. Baden-Powell 1896, pp. 244 seq.).

This pattern of land tenure has been changing in the Yusufzai area during the last generation. Most of the main valley of Swat has increasingly come under the control of a recently established princely state. In this state, the ruler enforced permanent allotment twenty to thirty years ago (in a traditional ten-year cycle), with the exception of river-bank land, where continued reallocation reduces the individual hazards of erosion and undercutting by shifting river courses. In acephalous tribal area in the lower valley extensive fields are still reallocated for four-year periods. The trend towards permanent settlement is too recent and still too far from complete to invalidate the present argument.

The procedure for redistribution follows the segmentary charter of the tribal genealogy within tribal units of between 10,000 and 40,000 inhabitants. The example illustrating the genealogical framework of such a group, on p. 8 above, may also serve as an illustration of the redistribution system. Of the inhabitants of Nikbi khel territory, only roughly 8,000 are Pakhtuns, corresponding to a total of some 1,000 independent land-owners, all of whom are the adult male descendants of Nikbi. This group is divided into two primary segments. Similarly, the lineage territory is traditionally divided into two roughly equivalent areas, one including most of the tributary valley, the other stretching along the bank of the Swat River. Until permanent settlement was
enforced twenty-eight years ago, these two segments alternated in their occupation of the two areas, each spending ten years in the side valley, and then moving some ten to fifteen miles to spend the next ten years on the river-bank. Furthermore, each of these areas is subdivided into three traditional sub-areas, corresponding to the three secondary segments of each primary segment. The council of each primary segment meets and allots one sub-area to each of its component three sub-segments, ideally in a system of rotation.

As these reallocations take place every ten years, the borders of each sub-area of the joint estate are well known to all, their equivalence in value has been established, and no great opposition of interests arises between the major descent segments in the reallocation system. The real problems arise on the lower levels of reallocation, where individuals have their eyes on particular fields, and especially where deaths and transfers change the distribution of shares from one time of allotment to the next. To pursue the present example, Dado khel, comprising about a hundred council members, is divided into two segments. Tensions and conflicts do arise during the division of their joint estate, since the fields granted to one segment are in fact within practical reach of members of the other segment; they are in the order of one or two miles away, and could be worked or controlled by them. But the most intense conflicts develop in the last stage of allotment, when the roughly fifty men of Ghali kheil are competing for the actual, individual fields. There is no traditional subdivision of the village lands into the particular configuration of shares represented at that particular time; the men must meet in a council of their small segment and devise a pattern of allotment through negotiation and compromise, or force. This is a type of issue uniquely suited to generate intense factionalism between collaterals; there is an overriding opposition of interests between such groups competing for the slightly better fields. Thus at every periodic reallocation, the opposition of close agnatic collaterals is dramatized and made acute, while the opposition between segments of higher levels is routinized and involves no particular conflicts.

This opposition stops short of alienating brothers. Their landed property is not divided till after the death of the father, since he retains some measure of control of it through his life; and, even after his death, political pressure is such that few persons have the courage to split away from this minimal nucleus of agnatic kinsmen and face the hostile world completely alone.

Other factors combine to make the relation between close collaterals one of peculiar rivalry. Conflicts over inheritance inevitably involve agnates, in a modified Islamic system of exclusive patrilineal male inheritance of land. Conflicts over the borders of fields involve them, since after every new reallocation they still find themselves owning adjoining fields. Conflicts over water for irrigation, particularly intense in the last critical month before the rice harvest, involve them, since with adjoining fields they share the same irrigation channels.

Such particular cultural factors combine to place close agnatic collaterals in a perpetual relation of opposition and rivalry. This negative charge on their structural relationship is clearly recognized in Yusufzai Pathan kinship terminology. Pathans distinguish between Father, Mother, Father's Brother, and Mother's Brother, but classify Father's Sister and Mother's Sister together. The terms for the two kinds of uncle and for aunt are extended to first and second cousins of the parents as well. Sibling terms are extended to the children of all these persons, except to the children of Father's Brother, own or classificatory (tre), for whom there is a special term (tarbur). A differentiation of kinds of 'siblings' may of course be expressed, but only by constructions such as 'aunt's son' (da tor zoe) or 'mother's brother's daughter' (da mana lur). Patrilateral parallel cousin is uniquely separated from all other cousins and siblings by a separate term. Furthermore, this term carries the subsidiary connotation of 'enemy' (cf. Morgenstierne 1927). Thus, where friendly relations do exist, the proper term for such cousins is not used, and they are referred to as siblings by courtesy. Only those collaterals with whom one has unfriendly relations are freely referred to as tarburan, father's brother's sons.

This persisting opposition between collateral agnates prevents their interests from fusing even vis-à-vis outsiders. A Pakhtun's political activities are directed at gaining an advantage over his agnatic rivals, as only through their defeat can he achieve his own aggrandizement. He is not
limited, as in many lineage systems, to them as his potential supporters—his clients constitute the main body of his supporters. Any loss by his collaterals means a gain for him—he wrests control of the councils from them, he encroaches on their fields, and he inherits their shares in land if they are exterminated. His political strength vis-à-vis his paternal cousins he assures by political alliances, and in the pattern of these alliances the architecture of the unilineal descent system can be recognized, as if by its very negation. Alliances are sought with small, distant collateral groups against one’s close collaterals, while the latter reciprocate by allying themselves with the rivals of one’s allies. Such alliances involve mutual support against the respective rivals of the partners, both in the debates of the councils, and in the case of warfare.

As will be seen in the figure, this means in structural terms an alliance between segments of the descent system which cannot individually come into opposition with one another. In other words, the alliance takes the schema of merging series of segments into account, but does so in terms of a strategic choice of allies, and by negating such merging in terms of any fusion of interests. ‘a’ are the rivals of ‘b’, and ‘c’ are the rivals of ‘d’. ‘a’ and ‘b’ are segments of ‘A’, likewise ‘c’ and ‘d’ are segments of ‘B’. ‘a’ can form an alliance, alternatively with ‘c’ or ‘d’, since there can be no occasion when they can meet either sub-segment in a simple opposition. Assume that an alliance ‘a’-‘d’ forms. They can only meet in councils, or in any other type of situation, on a higher level where ‘A’ and ‘B’ are structurally opposed—but in this situation, ‘a’ and ‘d’ contract to combine against their respective relatives ‘b’ and ‘c’, whereby they both, if they are successful, will gain victories over their rivals.

Such alliances, if widely and consistently extended, produce a political dual division into two blocs. The Pathan blocs or alliances (dela) have this pattern. Small descent segments of fathers and sons, or brothers, align under recognized leaders in a two-faction split which extends throughout the Yusufzai and bordering areas. I am suggesting that the Pathan pattern represents an alternative way of utilizing the segmentary structure defined by ramifying unilineal genealogies to build a political organization, and that the organization in this case will tend toward a consistent dual division, since the opposition between rivals leads to a dichotomization of their associates into supporters and opponents.

At this point, I should present some description of the resultant Pathan organization, before pursuing the argument further, first with regard to the political structure of the local groups in Pathan society. The group of agnatically related landowners is allotted mainly four types of property: houses in the nucleated village, irrigated garden land, irrigated rice land, and unirrigated land. The percentage distribution of each kind of property should be the same for every shareholder; but the absolute size of individual allotments varies greatly, as shares descend linearly in inheritance, and may also on occasion be bought and sold within the group. Because of the territorial concentration of each type of land, there is a necessary fragmentation of holdings, in that every share is composed of one piece of the good rice land, one piece of the bog, a corner of the irrigated garden, etc., etc. Inevitably, this intermixing of holdings gives scope for continual petty conflicts between adjoining opposed landowners.

With respect to residence, however, opponents separate. The village is a closely packed cluster of houses. But every village is divided in at least two wards, and political opponents occupy different wards. Wards are in a sense miniature villages, occupied by landowners of one political party, and their clients. The wards, not the whole villages, are the operative political and economic units in the following contexts: there is a complex pattern of division of labour
among hereditary specialists of the non-Pakhtun, landless category. Such specialists perform traditional services for the sharecroppers and labourers working on the land of the Pakhtuns, for which each specialist in return receives a traditional fraction of the crop. This pattern, analogous to the Hindu Jajmani system, organizes the main occupational relations between persons, and unites them for corporate productive effort. The units of such corporate economic action are the wards of a village. Correlated with the intimate economic ties within the ward is a pattern of political centralization. There is a headman or chief in every ward. The main duties pertaining to the office are to administer the communal institutions of the ward (men's house, mosque, wells), to settle disputes between members of the ward, and to co-ordinate its members in protecting their interests vis-à-vis other wards.

A full description of the role of the chief falls outside the main line of the present argument; but the existence of this office becomes important in a later connection. I should emphasize that the office is usually coveted by many pretenders. It offers great personal and strategic advantages to the incumbent. On the other hand, the incumbent can only maintain his position by constant expenditure of valuables; he must continually 'buy' the support of followers. To satisfy his men, a chief needs to control extensive rice-lands; thus, the office is invariably held by persons of inherited or achieved wealth in land.

Thus, the economic pattern of division of labour, and the presence of some essential community institutions, prevent political fission from proceeding below the level of the ward. Splits between co-residents of one ward must be solved either by a splitting of the ward into two autonomous and complete wards, or by one party moving to another ward. Of the latter I collected a series of cases; not so of the former. This might be expected, since a splitting of the ward can be achieved only if the rebels are stronger than the established chief of the united ward, in which case one would rather expect that their chief would attempt to usurp the position of the former chief as leader of the whole, undivided ward.

Wards, as geographical subdivisions of a village, are then in practice very stable units; they are conceived of as permanent fixtures by the villagers. But the composition of a ward is changeable, on account of political defections, and the system of periodic reallocation, particularly where, as in most parts, this involves actual migrations of landowners. The co-residents of a ward form an alliance and pledge allegiance to the chief only till the time of the next reallocation. At that time, the landowners of a ward may move en bloc to occupy a common ward in their new territory; or else new alliances may form between landowners over the always fresh problems of allotment. The group of landowners who associate in a ward is thus unstable, but represents the alignment of allies that obtains in a village at any one time. Thus where a descent group containing two major segments occupies a village of two wards, there is a probability that each of the major segments will be split between two parties, and that members of both segments are found in both wards. The wards correspond to the local branches of the political blocs, while the villages of which they form parts correspond to complete descent units.

A wider, but essentially similar framework of organization is built by alliances, in two blocs, of wards of different villages, or within villages, where they contain more than two wards. Most villages contain wards belonging to both blocs, and the bloc which dominates one village or district (bande, 'the uppers' or 'those above') may be the weaker bloc (lande, 'lowers', or 'those below') for the time being in the neighbouring area. Influential men may be regarded as the leaders of blocs over wider territories, and there is considerable jostling for recognition of prominence within the bloc. Such important men mobilize large segments of their bloc in defence of their private interests.

The blocs function in protecting the interests of their members, by exerting underhand pressure, by working together in the councils, and as armies in the case of fighting. The flaring-up of actual fighting is now quite local and limited in the Swat valley, but continues on a considerable scale in neighbouring Dir and Bajaur, where a couple of thousand men may be mobilized at times. Units of comparable size are mobilized in the context of council debates in the Swat valley. While large groups of men within one bloc unite for corporate political action, whole
lineages or segments seem totally unable to unite. The several attempts by the Nawab of Dir to conquer major sections of the Swat valley were invariably resisted only by the bloc in power, while their local opponents either joined the invading forces or remained neutral. United defence of the tribal estate, such as met British military efforts in the area, was only achieved through the institution of holy war under the leadership of religious devotees.

The respective fields of relevance of descent groups and party groups should be summarized. Essentially, descent groups are units vested with a joint estate, while alliance blocs are units for the exercise of power in an acephalous political system. Territories and sub-territories in the administrative system are thus defined by descent units; it is the fact of shared rights to land which necessitates an administrative machinery in the form of a hierarchy of descent group councils. But whole council units never fuse for corporate action; their constituent two blocs of allies remain separate, and individually constitute the largest units which fuse politically and internally co-ordinate the actions of members. ‘Agreement’ in a council meeting implies the promise of passive compliance and neutrality of one bloc to the actions of the other, and not active co-operation. Apart from changes in allegiance, the alignment into blocs of allies and opponents is permanent and not situational. This is the main organizational difference from the lineage systems described in the literature, where one’s opponents in one situation fuse politically with one’s own group to become allies in another situation, when the dispute involves units of a higher level of segmentation. In the Pathan system of organization, members of different blocs remain opposed no matter what the situation may be. The territorial unit involved in a dispute (corresponding to a descent group council at a certain level of lineage segmentation) determines how large a part of the blocs will be mobilized, but does not affect the alignment in opposition. As a crude parallel, the opposed parties of individual counties in England persist in wider political contexts: a Labour representative from Middlesex joins the Labour members from London, and remains opposed to the Conservatives from Middlesex, even in the wider context of Parliament.

The local branches of the two blocs thus emerge as corporate groups in opposition at meetings of lineage councils at every level. Through debate, threats, compromise, and occasional use of force on the part of these two blocs, the council may formally reach a decision (though often the meetings break up without any decision being reached). The implementation of this decision still depends on the action of private individuals. What may be achieved by the plaintiff in the dispute is an arrangement whereby he has the support of his own bloc in self-help, within the specified limits, while he is assured of his opponent’s inability to mobilize his bloc in resistance. The relative strength of the opposed blocs, and the importance of the contestants to their respective allies, are more important in settling conflicts than are abstract principles of justice.

Balance between the blocs is maintained, according to the Pathan conception of the system, by the essential cupidity of politicians. The stronger bloc in an area will tend to grow in numbers and land by making good their advantage over the weaker bloc. Inevitably, however, rivalry will develop between the leaders of this growing alliance, until one such leader sees his chance to capture supreme control of the territory by seceding with his followers and joining the weaker bloc, which thereby becomes the stronger. The life histories of some prominent leaders may show one or two such changes of allegiance. But if such are the dominant attitudes, the relative stability of alliances, and the continued relatively peaceful coexistence of the two parties in most villages seems puzzling. One would rather have expected a chaos of constant realignments and a disintegration of the bloc organization. The Pathan conception of political activities as an expression of self interested opportunism on the part of their leaders appears to be contradicted by the evidence.

However, this apparent contradiction must be examined more closely. The political two-bloc system has provisionally been described as if it was derived from a system of strategic choices of allies by the individual landowners among Pathans, and as if these choices were made largely with reference to factors implicit in a relatively small number of structural features of Pathan organization. Before complicating the analysis further by the introduction of additional explana-
tory devices, the possibilities inherent in what has already been presented should first be exhausted. This poses, in a sense, an experiment in inductive logic: which factors are logically necessary and sufficient to produce a system like that observed in Pathan political organization?

II

For the purpose of disciplining the logical manipulations involved in this kind of argument, the 'Theory of Games' (Neumann 1947) is eminently suitable. On the basis of a limited set of assumptions the authors design concepts and procedures for the analysis of games involving strategic choices on the part of the participants. The authors state that this type of analysis is relevant to the problems of the social sciences in general; yet outside of economics it has proved difficult to apply their methods and concepts. In the following section, I shall attempt to apply some elementary procedures borrowed from this vastly more complex and sophisticated theory. I shall endeavour to keep the somewhat frightening symbolic logic of the theory at a minimum.

In the logical framework of the Theory of Games one may regard the political manipulations of Pathans as a variety of game. This game is subject to certain rules, which embody the factors affecting the choices made by participants in the game. The crucial step in a transformation from real life to a Theory of Games model is the formulation of these rules. To be meaningful, they should express the strategic implications of those factors which one hypothesizes to be crucial in the system. In the present case, they should summarize the main points in the preceding description.

In the following I shall attempt to describe a 'game' which may serve as a model for the analysis of the Yusufzai Pathan political organization. Its rules I propose to derive from the main features of the above description. These features, I propose to show, define both the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence of a two-bloc system like that observed among Yusufzai Pathans. Stated briefly, they are: (1) The presence of a persisting opposition of interests between wards occupied by collaterals in the agnatic descent system—i.e. there is a persisting direct opposition between some units of the system. (2) The recognition by Yusufzai Pathans of relations of a patron-client type (so that no person is limited to agnatic relatives as potential supporters) and of relations of contractual political alliance between two or several equals, i.e. there is unrestricted freedom for the units of the system to form coalitions on the basis of strategic choices. (3) The recognition and positive value given to the status of chief of a ward and local leader of a party alliance, i.e. there is a set of indivisible 'bonuses', the distribution of which is the subject of understandings between persons.

These features correspond to Neumann's definition of a zero-sum majority game. In a zero-sum (or constant-sum) game, persons are opposed to each other, in time experience a series of victories and/or defeats, and in each case, the victory or gain of the one means a corresponding defeat or loss to his opponents. This corresponds to condition or features (1) above: there is a persisting and simple opposition of interests between opponents in Pathan politics, by virtue of their competition for control of the one basic good—land. As emphasized in the descriptive section, all tillable land is in fact under cultivation, and all other aspects of power and prestige are derived from or depend upon land. In this land tenure and administrative system, any loss to one's opponents is by necessity a gain to oneself.

Secondly, our model will be the majority game. In cases of opposition, the stronger party, corresponding to a 'majority' of players, gains the victory, i.e. we represent this as a simple majority game where no further restrictions or 'rules' are presumed. This expresses feature (2) above: the freedom to form majorities through strategic alliances, and the facts of an acephalous political system, where the final sanction is majority in terms of power.

Our model for this discussion is thus the zero-sum majority game, provisionally for three persons (Neumann 1947, p. 222 seq.). By its rules, each player may choose one partner. Two players who choose one another form a couple, or coalition, and are able by their simple majority to extract a value from the third player. Players 1, 2, 3 are each given a positive value a, b, c
respectively, which they lose if they become outnumbered by opponents. This gives the following possibilities:

coalition 1, 2 forms: 1, 2 get c, 3 gets -c;
coalition 1, 3 forms: 1, 3 get b, 2 gets -b;
coalition 2, 3 forms: 2, 3 get a, 1 gets -a;

or no mutual choices are made, and no player gains or loses. Clearly in this game, by virtue of the rules governing it, coalitions will form for the mutual protection of the values of the coalition forming players and the extraction of a value from the minority. In other words, the emergence of coalitions in Pathan political life seems implicit in the factors as stated.

Consider next the case of a five-person majority game (Neumann 1947, pp. 332 seq.), where each player 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 for simplicity is vested with an equal value 1, which he will lose if he finds himself in minority. Each player may choose any number of allies.

One feature immediately becomes apparent: the simple nature of the opposition encourages the formation of a two-party, not a multi-party, system. In a situation where no coalitions form, no player gains any advantage. If one coalition forms, say of 2, 3, the interests of the other persons can only be defended by an opposing coalition. Thus a coalition 4, 5 can defend its members against losses. But in this situation, the third force 1 is in a desperate situation. Both coalitions can gain a victory over him, i.e. rob him with impunity, and since no further rules are presumed, this is inevitable. His advantage from holding the balance of power he can only exercise by joining a coalition. He is thus forced by the strategic implications of the rules of this game to join one or the other coalition: he is forced into the framework of a two-bloc system.

This five-person equal-value example illustrates the argument in its simplest form, but the conclusion may be seen to follow irrespective of the number of players, and also in cases where the players are vested with unequal values a, b, c...n respectively. The necessary conditions for the reduction of the number of coalitions to two relate to features (1) and (2) above, not to the particular numbers and values in the example. The theoretical possibility of a stalemate (i.e. an exact balance in numbers between three or more coalitions) is not considered, as it is assumed that participants are interested in completing the game, i.e. in obtaining a value.

The basic dual division in Pathan political organization would thus seem to be derived directly from the strategic implications of persisting opposition between defined groups with unrestricted possibilities for alliance-forming between these groups, i.e. an institution of contractual political alliance. The system of two blocs does not depend on a recognition of the nature or function of duality, but emerges through the separate self-interested decisions of the persons in the system.

One further consideration has a direct bearing on the relation between the two blocs in the Pathan system. In the gradual crystallization of coalitions in the above five-person game, there is a definite point at which passage from defeat to victory occurs, and thereafter a progressive reduction of the fruits of victory. Consider the situation from the point of view of 1:

1 stands against 2, 3, 4, 5: 1 gets \(-1\) value;
1, 2, stand against 3, 4, 5: 1 gets \(-1\) value;
1, 2, 3 stand against 4, 5: 1 gets \(\frac{1 + 1}{3}\) value;
1, 2, 3, 4 stand against 5: 1 gets \(\frac{1}{3}\) value;
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 form coalition: 1 gets 0 value.

Every coalition of two persons will be defeated, while any overwhelming majority coalition, of four persons against one, wins a victory of limited value. This brings out one of the strategic rules of the two-bloc opposition. In terms of the simple self-interest of the persons in the winning coalition, absconders from the losing coalition will not be welcomed, i.e. on the basis of this model one would expect the dominant bloc in Pathan politics to be hesitant about accepting absconders and to remain moderately evenly matched in numbers with the weaker bloc, as is indeed the case.

One final feature remains to be accounted for by the Theory of Games model: the relatively
peaceful coexistence of the blocs in one locality, the empirical unwillingness of the stronger bloc to make the most of its advantage and literally run the opposition out of the village. This might of course be readily explained in terms of the numerous bonds, e.g. of marriage and familiarity, which cross the line of opposition; yet such bonds seem surprisingly unimportant in situations when opposition does express itself in open conflicts. All Pathans have some matrilateral kin or affines in the opposing bloc, but in periods of tension they are not visited, and relations with some may be permanently severed. When a man and his sister’s husband or mother’s brother emerge as immediate rivals they freely oppose one another, and attempt to ruin and even kill one another. Such bonds thus seem insufficient as an effective check on the intensity of factionalism. However, at least a partial answer may be found within the framework already elaborated. Perhaps not surprisingly, factor (3) above, the presence of chiefs of wards and parties, has some relevance to this.

This introduces the problem of unequal distribution into the present model. Imagine in the five-person game above, that the coalition 2, 4 forms, represented by 2 as chief, who thus represents the value of his total following, b. Similarly 3, 5 forms, represented by the chief 3 of value c. Strategically, the game is then reduced to a three-person game of players 1, 2, 3 where 1 is the weakest person and must join either 2 or 3 in a coalition. The coalition which 1 joins will win. But 2 and 3 are ‘chiefs’, a position of value in terms of which they claim a special bonus, of honour and deference, if not of the spoils, over and above the share due to them in the coalition. This bonus is represented by ε, the value attached to chieftainship. Player 1 joins whichever coalition offers him the greater advantage. If coalition 1, 2, 4 forms, 1, 2, 4 get c, 3, 5 get -c. But 2 claims his bonus ε, so

\[ \begin{align*}
1 & \text{ gets } \frac{c}{3} - \varepsilon \quad \text{(since there are three members of the coalition and 1 is merely a follower)} \\
2 & \text{ gets } \frac{c}{3} + 2\varepsilon \quad \text{(since he has two followers: 1 and 4, in his coalition)} \\
3 & \text{ gets } -c + \varepsilon \quad \text{(since he loses, but remains chief of the opposition). If coalition 1, 3, 5 forms, on the other hand,} \\
1 & \text{ gets } \frac{b}{3} - \varepsilon, 2 \text{ gets } -b + \varepsilon, 3 \text{ gets } \frac{b}{3} + 2\varepsilon.
\end{align*} \]

If b = c, it is indeterminate which coalition 1 joins. If on the other hand b ≠ c, 1 will join the weaker party, so that the accruing advantage to the coalition will be greatest (assuming, as we have, that it does indeed represent a majority).

Imagine that coalition 1, 2 forms. As long as b < c, i.e. as long as the fruits of a victory over 3 are greater than those of a victory over 2, 3 can entice 1 to abscend from this coalition, and join in a coalition 1, 3, only by offering him the bonus ε, i.e. by offering him the position as chief in the coalition. This is acceptable to 1 if his gain as a chief of the other coalition is greater than his share as a follower in his present coalition, i.e. if

\[ \frac{c}{3} - \varepsilon < \frac{b}{3} + 2\varepsilon, \quad \text{or } \varepsilon > c - b. \]

But 3 will offer this only if it is also to his advantage, i.e. if what he gets as a follower in a winning coalition is greater than what he gets as the chief of a losing coalition:

\[ \frac{b}{3} - \varepsilon > -c + \varepsilon \]

\[ c > 2\varepsilon - \frac{b}{3} \quad \text{or, in the limiting case of } b = c, \text{ if } c > \frac{3}{2} \varepsilon. \]

In other words, 3 will offer this enticement only if his loss, -c, while remaining defeated is greater than \( \frac{3}{2} \varepsilon \) of the value he attaches to chieftainship.

This difference defines limits of strategic importance for 2 if he wishes to retain his position as leader of the winning coalition, and thus brings out implicit restrictions on the intensity of opposition, of great interest in relation to the Pathan material. It indicates that as long as the
amount which the leader of the dominant bloc extracts from his opponent does not consider-
ably exceed the value which his opponent attaches to chieftainship, there will be no fission
within the dominant bloc. For the sake of holding the bloc together, and maintaining his position,
the leader of the dominant bloc is thus interested in limiting the intensity of opposition between
the blocs so that it will not exceed a critical level. If he extracts too much from his weaker rival,
one of his own lieutenants, who by virtue of his private following holds the balance of power, will
be enticed to abscond to become the leader of the other faction. That faction thus becomes the
stronger bloc, and the leader of the formerly stronger bloc will suffer a loss.

For the sake of the semi-mathematical treatment pursued, it has been necessary to leave the
units such as $b$, $c$ and $\varepsilon$ unanalysed. In an attempt at transferring the conclusions from the Games
Theory back to real life, it is necessary to clarify just what these symbols stand for in the empirical
situation. The values $b$, $c$ represent real gains or loot, i.e. the value of the actual amount of
fines or disputed lands extracted from the opponent. In the descriptive section, I have indicated
how disputes are discussed in the context of lineage councils, and how the stronger bloc utilizes
its position of dominance to arrive at settlements favourable to its members. The numerical value
of $b$, $c$ is thus at any time a mixed function of the total value of the property of the weaker bloc,
and of policy decisions by the stronger bloc as to how much pressure should be applied towards
the exploitation of the opponent. In the majority game model, these values are assumed to be
identical or at least proportional to the weight given the players in establishing majorities, i.e.
to their power, while in actual life the relation between these two variables is more complex.
However, as the blocs as wholes remain fairly equally balanced through time, this discrepancy
does not seriously affect the present argument.\footnote{The empirical referent of the unit $\varepsilon$, the \textit{‘bonus’} granted the chief, is more problematical.
It does not merely represent an extra share in the loot. Some chiefs do regularly claim such an
extra share, and, what is more important, all naturally direct their bloc’s politics with an eye to
their own material gain; on the other hand, chiefs will sometimes claim \textit{less} than a normal share
of the gains, or none at all. To be of any meaning as an expression of the value attached to chieftainship, $\varepsilon$ must thus stand not merely for an inequality in the distribution of loot, but also for
a less tangible inequality: for a value in terms of status differentiation. This merely implies the
argument that persons will at times renounce material gains in favour of intangible gains of
‘status’ and ‘esteem’.

Strictly speaking, $\varepsilon$ is thus incommensurate with $b$ and $c$, as it does not stand for a simple
measure of tangible property. Yet chiefs are daily forced to reconcile such incommensurables in
making decisions. Pathan leaders are by inheritance and accretion the wealthy men of their
respective groups, i.e. they are vested with an initial high value in the ‘game’. They constantly
expend their profits through feasts and gifts in the men’s houses which they control, in a pattern
analogous to the potlatch in its status implications. The status as chief is thus continually being
bought by expenditure of material values. The intangible value renounced by being a follower
and gained by being a chief thus has, in some contexts, a tangible material value. The situation
in which $\varepsilon$ is associated with the units $b$ and $c$ above may legitimately be regarded as precisely
one such context. Furthermore, over a longer period of time, a chief certainly expects to derive
material advantage from his status.

The whole discussion of the political organization in terms of the ‘strategic implications’
of various structural features of the situation raises one further problem: to what extent do the
actors themselves realize these implications; to what extent do they determine the choice of
strategy? Implications of this type, no matter how logically significant one may demonstrate
them to be, are ineffective unless realized in some form by the actors in the system.

This is a simple question of ethnographic fact, and the answer depends on observations of
the types of arguments used in arriving at decisions, and the types of circumstances described
in native accounts of past political events. In this particular case, the inadvisability of standing
alone, outside both party alliances, is rather obvious and clearly expressed by Pathans. The
question concerns mainly the degree of realization of two further strategic principles: (1) the
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advantage of joining the weaker bloc, so victory is won with a narrow margin but the value of the victory maximized (cf. p. 36), and (2) the importance from the point of view of the chief of restricting the intensity of opposition between blocs (cf. p. 38).

Both these principles are in fact clearly realized and expressed. Between 1917 and 1927, a major part of the Swat valley fell under the control of a prominent leader of holy descent, Miangul Gulshahzada Abdul Wadud, who founded the State of Swat. His policy is explicitly described by the politically sophisticated as one of joining the weaker bloc, thereby gaining victories over the richest chiefs, and also, by 'tipping the scales', gaining a disproportionate influence in the bloc. His great success is attributed in part to his unique freedom to effect such changes of alliance. Having eliminated the small number of agnatic collaterals in his holy descent line, he was not hampered by persisting opposition with personal rivals, and was at any time equally acceptable as a member of either alliance.

The interest of the chiefs in limiting the opposition between the blocs is proverbial, and has been noted by British political agents, who contrast the attitudes of young warrior 'hot-heads' with the more reasonable attitudes of chiefs and headmen (Wylly 1912). Popularly, this interest in maintaining relative peace is related to a great variety of causes; its mere recognition is sufficient for the present argument.

Our 'inductive test', aided by the concepts of the Theory of Games, thus appears to support the argument that Yusufzai Pathan political organization develops as the political expression of a unilinear descent system under certain simple, specified conditions. These conditions are summarized in the premises (1)-(3) above. Features (1) and (2), the overriding opposition between collaterals, and the recognition of contractual political alliances, summarize the sufficient conditions for the emergence of a system of two opposed blocs, but do not imply any control on the intensity of opposition between blocs. Feature (3), the positive value attached to the position as chief, has implications which serve as a brake on excessive factionalism.

III

This case study of unilinear descent and political organization among Yusufzai Pathans exemplifies a pattern, not previously described in the literature, of deriving corporate political groups from a ramifying unilinear descent charter. In most lineage organizations, descent segments fuse for political action in a merging series of groups, so that opponents on one level of opposition become allies when the opposition occurs on a higher level of segmentation. Among Yusufzai Pathans, on the other hand, opposition separates small descent segments, and these fuse politically with other segments in a system of two blocs where the opposition between close collateral segments is maintained in all situations.

It might be noted that this is not a unique situation. A two-bloc alliance system of named alliances, Gar and Samil, is characteristic of southern Pathans as well (Wylly 1912), though in this case the lineage segments which form the units of the blocs are slightly larger. A corresponding division into two factions, the Hinawi and Ghafari, runs all through Southern Arabia (e.g. Thomas 1929, p. 98).

The analysis of the Yusufzai Pathan system relies on Radcliffe-Brown's formulation of the structural principles in kinship systems (Radcliffe-Brown 1950). Most analyses of lineage systems further depend, although this is not always stated, on a Durkheimian concept of mechanical solidarity. But the present case study requires a more general framework for the analysis of the solidarity of groups. That which is utilized is derived from Neumann & Morgenstern's 'Theory of Games' (Neumann 1947), and sees groups as forming through the strategic choices of persons, i.e. the solidarity of groups springs from the advantages which persons obtain from being members of the groups.

The nature of these advantages, and the various restrictions on the choices open to individuals, depend on structural features of the total situation, which in the Theory of Games are expressed as 'rules' defining the 'game'. In such a framework, the groups which do emerge thus
relate to structural features or conditions of any kind which offer the bases for the development of a community of interests of group members.

This wider conception of the bases of solidarity is not altogether a departure. It is, in part, implicit in the growing emphasis in the analysis of lineage systems on the presence of a joint estate, the importance of which was first brought out by Radcliffe-Brown (1935). However, as demonstrated by the present case study, shared rights in a joint estate need not imply a community of interests, and may in fact imply an overriding opposition of interests which inhibits the emergence of corporate unity. The analysis of solidarity deriving from strategic choices requires a more extensive analysis of the strategic implications of the contexts in which persons and groups are mobilized, and should prove fruitful in other instances, as well as the present.

In the case analysed here, solidarity between fathers and sons, and between full brothers, is associated with strong normative emphasis, and an incomplete division of the joint economy till some time after the death of the father. Immediate agnatic kin thus constitute politically indivisible groups. The first potential line of fission is between paternal cousins, and in the descriptive section I have attempted to document how numerous factors combine to lay the foundations for a relation of rivalry and opposition between such close agnatic collaterals. As has been demonstrated, these factors have strategic implications which define the necessary and sufficient conditions under which a two-bloc alliance system emerges. Among Pathans, the factors encouraging permanent opposition assert themselves on a very low level of genealogical segmentation. Occasionally, descent groups among them of three or four generations' depth may manage to maintain group unity, but frequently permanent opposition splits groups down to the level of paternal first cousins. I should emphasize that in other ethnographic settings, factors with similar implications may impinge on higher levels only of the descent charter. Lineage segments of any size may be the units in permanent political opposition; the point in a descent charter where fusion in a merging series stops, and bloc formation begins, depends upon the factors affecting strategic choices. The distinction between clans and lineages in the description of many African lineage systems, for example, may relate precisely to this point. On the clan level, the lack of genealogies removes the restrictions on strategic choices which presumably are implied in these particular societies by established genealogies.

Thus variable features of lineage organizations and unilineal descent group organizations in general are amenable to analysis in terms of the strategic bases for the solidarity of groups. This manner of analysing the relation between descent charters and actual political organizations, exemplified in the present essay, would seem to be particularly useful in the study of the larger, more complex societies. It is also appropriate to the study of these political systems under conditions of change.

NOTES

1 The present paper was written while the author held a Wenner-Gren Pre-Doctoral Fellowship. The original field work was supported by the Norwegian Research Council.
2 Fairly complete genealogical tables representing the relations of major groups are given in Ridgeway (1918).
3 The structural opposition resulting from such a relationship is implicit in our very term rival, derived from the Roman custom: those who shared the water of a riuus, or irrigation channel (Drower 1954, p. 521).
4 It does, however, relate significantly to the possibility for a spectacular rise to power by individuals within the system, exemplified by the great chief Malak Baba who increased his land by a factor of ten in the course of his stormy lifetime.

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