

# TUGEN MONOPOLY: CAPITALISM AND CONFLICT IN THE MOUNTAINS OF KENYA

Michael W. Coy  
*Department of Anthropology*  
*St. Mary's College of Maryland*  
*St. Mary's City, MD 20686*

## SUMMARY

Tugen economic rationality, based on different principles of what is correct, even profit-maximizing behavior, leads to a different strategy of play in a game of Monopoly between three Tugen and four American players. The concurrence of experience between game play and real life allows the varying notions of what constitutes economically rational behavior to become manifest. The basis of Tugen strategy for winning Monopoly appears to lie in their own notion of economically rational and morally acceptable behavior.

Steven rolled a six and the game began. He moved his top hat to Oriental Avenue, announced his intention to buy the property, and paid \$100 to the bank. An oooh-ing sound was chorused by the three Tugen at the table. "It's still early," I said. "Before long everyone will buy lots of property." Play passed to the left and Michael, the first Tugen to make a play, rolled the dice.

Another six. Michael moved his dog to join Steven on Oriental Avenue. "Ah ha! That will cost you six dollars, please!"

"What?" asked Michael in disbelief. "Six dollars! I must pay six dollars?" "That's right," said Janet, "he bought that property and now you must pay him rent for landing there."

Michael's eyes opened wide. "Ah laaa!" he exclaimed. Michael always said that when he was surprised. He turned to Steven who was obviously enjoying his small success. "Bwana, you do not need my money. You can let me go. Yes?"

Steven laughed. "No," he said, "you must pay me six dollars."

"Oh please, Bwana, you do not need my money. Let me go this time."

Glenn, the fourth American at the table, was anxious to get the game moving again. Surely this game should not be stalled after only two throws of the dice? "Pay him. It is only six shillings," said Glenn. "You

will pay out much more before the game is over. We all will."

Michael fingered his money, halfheartedly looking for some combination of six dollars. Taking Glenn's cue, we called them shillings. Again, Michael looked at Steven. In his softest, most secretive tone of voice, he said, "Bwana, why don't you let me go. I am just a poor man. You do not want my money. I can pay you next time."

By this time the four Americans, myself included, were growing restless.

"Oh, pay him!" someone said, "it's really not enough money to worry about." As though accepting this as support for his own position, Michael took the cue. "You see, Bwana, it is not enough money to worry about. You can let me go this time."

Steven's head dropped into his hands. Laughing and lamenting the delay at the same time, he moaned. As patiently as I could, I tried to explain that the game had a long way to go and that paying him now would seem like nothing in just a short while. Slowly, painfully, Michael drew out six dollars and shaking his head handed them to Steve. "Oh Bwana," he said, "I was thinking that you were my friend?"

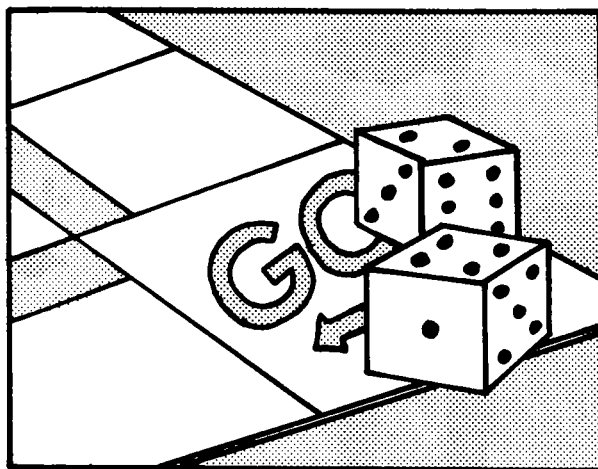
"Just because you have to pay me rent doesn't mean that I am not your friend," assured Steven. Michael only smiled and shook his head.

The dice passed to Isack, my Tugen field assistant. He rolled a three and was very happy when we helped him buy Baltic Avenue. Play passed to John, a Tugen neighbor, and John also rolled a three. He joined Isack on Baltic.

"Ah, Isack. Now John must pay you," I said. This could not be better, I thought. Now the game will become clearer and things will move along more quickly. Both Isack and John stared at me.

"Pay him!" exclaimed John, "I have to pay him?" "Four shillings, not very much."

John turned to Isack, who seemed just as confused. John tilted his head slightly and smiled. "Bwana,"



he said, "you do not want my money. Please, let me go without paying. I am a poor man and you are my friend."

It was going to be a long afternoon.

This is an account of relativism, economic rationality, Tugen economics, games, and fieldwork.

There is no rationality "in itself," nor any absolute rationality. What is rational today may be irrational tomorrow, what is rational in one society may be irrational in another. Finally, there is no exclusive economic rationality. These negative conclusions challenge the preconceptions of "ordinary" consciousness and are remedies against the "temptations" that these present. In the end, the idea of rationality obliges us to analyze the basis of the structures of social life, their *raison d'être* and their evolution. These *raison d'être* and this evolution are not merely the achievement of men's conscious activity but are the unintentional results of their social activity (Godelier 1966, 317).

Economic rationality is culturally relative. Economic decisions, economic goals, and the relationship between goals and the means for achieving them are determined by cultural definitions of what is good, right, and proper. It is further proposed that the varying notions of what is economically rational explain the contradictions and conflicts that arose in the context of the game that is the subject of this paper.

Fieldwork raises a host of practical issues that tests even the most avowed cultural relativist. The anthropological fieldworker is engaged in a heated combat with his own assumptions about what is good, right, and important in life. Failure to recognize these assumptions leads to embarrassing errors in judgment that most anthropologists would rather forget. Fortunately, there are exceptions that point up the importance of learning from one's mistakes.

In 1980, I participated in a trivial and frivolous event that was to illuminate for me, and some others, the relativity of a world of things that I had taken for granted. We played a familiar American game, Monopoly. This particular game was a bit unusual: four Americans and three Tugen grouped around the game board in a hut on top of a mountain in the Rift Valley of Kenya.

## GAMES

One of the central notions in the theory of games is the notion of strategy, which is a complete plan that specifies the behavior of the players for all possible circumstances and contexts that become relevant during the course of play. A solution of a game may be defined as the set of strategies which are prescribed to players or . . .

to coalition formations, such that the outcome satisfies intuitive notions of rationality or rational behavior. An outcome of a game is, generally speaking, the best that each player could achieve "given the rules of the game and the constraints resulting from the strivings of all the other players to achieve their goals" (Buchler and Nutini 1969, 7-8).

To the social scientist, games are models of reality. Through games a player can experience the decision-making processes, the cost/benefit calculations, the effectiveness of strategies, and the potential outcomes of behavior without paying real prices or suffering genuine defeats.

Monopoly is a board game of investment capitalism. The game was invented by Charles B. Darrow during the economic depression of the 1930s. Darrow, a salesman and part time fix-it man, from Germantown, Pennsylvania, worked out the details of the game of Monopoly while unemployed. The "streets" are taken from street names in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where Darrow and his wife liked to vacation. The object of the game is to buy properties that are then used for building investments and exacting rents from one's opponents in order to bankrupt everyone and thereby win. The shrewd wheeling and dealing that is involved in the game is a model of investment behavior in the world of business. What were Darrow's motivations in creating a game like Monopoly in the midst of both the Great Depression and his own unemployment?

Games are, to varying degrees, culture-specific and culturebounded. By culture-specific, I refer to the interplay of game life and real life, such that the real-life circumstances surrounding a game event impact on the game itself, influencing strategy and enmeshing the game in the cultural system. Playing poker with the boss or playing Monopoly with one's spouse clearly communicates the relevance of cultural conditions influencing strategy beyond the specific rules of the game. If strategy is the "complete plan that specifies behavior . . . for all possible circumstances and contexts that become relevant during the course of play" (Buchler and Nutini 1969, 7-8), then playing Monopoly puts one squarely in a culture-specific situation. The culture-boundedness of a game of strategy refers to the modeling aspect of the gaming experience. Games model the cultural reality of the society that invented and perpetuates the game. The culture-specific influence of playing poker with the boss is meaningless if there are no bosses. In combination, the culture-boundedness and the culture-specificity of a game result in the definition of a meaningful gaming experience. Respectively, games model one's realities and are impacted by them. Thus, a game is bound to one's cultural behavior and is a part of one's cultural reality.

Mr. Darrow's Monopoly might be viewed as a product of the economic depression of the thirties. Yet the game has continued to enjoy a tremendous growth of popularity both within the United States and throughout much of the world. The value of the Monopoly money printed each year by Parker Brothers is more than double the amount printed annually by the U.S. Mint. The modeling aspect of the game in capitalist North America is easy to understand, but consider the statement made by the Parker Brothers Corporation in the game brochure:

The first games were handmade. Darrow gave them to friends and sold a few through a Philadelphia department store. As the demand for the game grew, Darrow could not keep up with the orders and arranged for Parker Brothers to take over the game . . . Since 1935 when Parker Brothers acquired the rights to the game, it has become the leading proprietary game not only in the United States but throughout the Western world. The game is published under license in twenty-five countries and in fifteen foreign languages (Parker Brothers Corporation 1973).

The proliferation of the world capitalist system that has occurred over the past fifty years is paralleled by the growth of the international popularity of Darrow's Monopoly. All of the fifteen languages into which Monopoly has been translated are Indo-European languages and associated with long histories of colonial empire building and capitalism. Is it possible that Western capitalism has carried with it the brand of economic rationality and profit motivation that makes playing Monopoly a relevant modeling experience? Some have suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that the proliferation of Monopoly is a Western hegemonic plot (Wuffle 1978). According to Buchler and Nutini (1969, 7), people plan their strategies in gaming situations such that "the outcome satisfies intuitive notions of rationality and rational behavior." Capitalism has carried with it not only the economist's "Rational Man," but also a model of itself, a game version of reality.

## RATIONALITY

Rationality refers to the choice of means in relation to ends; not to the ends or the means themselves, but to the relating of means to ends (Polanyi 1968, 142). We can thus discuss the rationality of a choice of means only on the basis of how likely these means will lead to the desired ends. Judgment of the rationality of an actor, then, attends only to the means/ends relation and not to desirability of either means or ends in isolation. Vividly then, a man who wants to kill himself is thus behaving perfectly rationally by firing a

bullet into his head.

The man who does not want to kill himself is behaving irrationally by firing a bullet into his head. The relationship between means and ends is as variable as the number of possible means times the number of possible ends. Is it plausible, then, to treat the decision-making process in games of strategy as possessing universal rationality? Possibly, but only if the games are strictly bounded by their own rules. Games of strategy, however, are especially influenced by the social context in which they occur. Thus, while the desired ends are defined for me by the rules in the game of Monopoly, the fact that I am about to wipe out the holdings of an opponent who is also my wife is likely to cause me to behave irrationally so far as the game rules are concerned. The means/ends relationship in this culturally specific case is impinged upon by real life and influence my decision not to destroy the holdings of my opponent/wife and thereby, lose the game, but continue in wedded bliss.

The introduction of Monopoly to three young Tugen men lights up the concurrence of experience between game life and real life. The difficulties experienced by those who participated in the game, American and Tugen alike, were the result of different assumptions about desirable means and ends in economic behavior inside and outside the context of the game. An analysis of some events in the game sheds light on the relative nature of rationality and on that fuzzy boundary between gaming fantasy and social reality.

## THE TUGEN

The Tugen are a Kalenjin-speaking people who inhabit a large part of Baringo District in the Republic of Kenya. Responding to the predations of the herding peoples of the Rift Valley, the Tugen took refuge in the Tugen Hills, a north-south mountain range separating the main Rift from the Kerio Valley at the base of the Elgeyo Escarpment. Until a paved road was completed in 1986, few vehicles reached the top of the hills, to the district headquarters at Kabarnet. Tugen subsistence activity is quite varied. People engage in a combination of subsistence activities—agriculture, pastoralism, hunting, beekeeping, gathering, and fishing—whatever is possible in their ecological niche. The niches differ according to topography and altitude. Cash cropping and wage labor have minimally penetrated the Tugen subsistence package. There are a few government jobs in the larger trading centers but little else. Both the government and the missions have attempted to introduce cotton, coffee, and citrus, but these have not caught to any great extent. Generally the Tugen have not been fully drawn into the Kenyan national economy. Traditional subsistence efforts remain the bulwark of Tugen livelihood. An economic ideology has grown up to support



these subsistence efforts, and beliefs about what is good and proper behavior provide a rationale for making decisions that affect not only oneself but others as well.

Four principles of Tugen economic ideology are of special interest. The first, and perhaps most central in Tugen economic ideology, is a live-and-let-live principle. No person should interfere with another's efforts to make his living. To do so is viewed as an evil act. The manner in which people gain access to farmland in the lowlands (and elsewhere in times past) illustrates this principle. Generally speaking, a formal request for land would be presented to the local elders, and they would grant an allocation of unused land. Similarly, other factors of production are freely accessed. Baringo is a dry region. Access to water may not be monopolized by individuals; to do so would be inherently evil. Game, swarming bees, and fish are also free to all. Access to pasture, while open to all, is occasionally obstructed by the fencing of farm plots and registered parcels.

From the notion of non-interference with another's livelihood follows a second principle governing Tugen economic behavior: reciprocity. Although reciprocal relationships among the Tugen are carefully balanced, the potential for delay in repaying favors creates a safety net for those who find themselves without resources in times of need. One aspect of this safety net is a special set of livestock transactions.

The harsh environment limits the number and combination of family livestock that can be kept without serious environmental degradation. *Ng'or* relationships are those established through the lending or borrowing of cattle between two people who may or may not be otherwise related. The lender distributes his cattle so that a disease outbreak in one area will not wipe out his herd. The borrower derives the benefit of daily milk. Often these *ng'or* relations are immediately reciprocal; each man gives the other a cow. A special relationship thus is established between the two that

can be politically or economically important in the future. A *besen* relationship is established when a man needs an animal to slaughter but has no animal of appropriate gender or quality. He lends a female animal to another man who will provide for him the kind of animal required. The female will be retained until it produces a female offspring, which is retained, and the female returned to the original owner. Prolonged delay and complexity characterizes this transaction, but balanced reciprocity prevails.

The notion of reciprocity based on non-interference with another's subsistence is in many instances translated into a more positive set of actions. Rather than simply not interfering, individuals on occasions feel obligated to provide assistance. Herein lies a third ideological principle, the practice of *somso*.

In case of difficulty every individual had the right to *som* (beg) from his neighbor who did not normally refuse. *Somso* was not restricted to the poor. Everybody "*begged*" for what he was in need of, if his neighbors had it. It was not restricted to immediate neighbors, either. It even crossed the Tugen boundaries to Keiyo, Kimugon and Maa-sai; but this happened on rare occasions. Payment was expected to be made for things acquired through *somso* but then no deadline was fixed. If crops failed in one region of Tugen and were harvested in others, those people living in the affected area went for *somso*. *Somso* penetrated every section of social life and contributed to consolidation of the fragmentary society. Almost everybody owed somebody else something. Sons inherited their fathers' debts along with their estates. This was, in effect an inheritance of friendship. *Somso* had succeeded in creating permanent inter-Tugen relationships. It made people travel from one end of the country to the other (Kipkulei 1972, 72-73).

*Somso* thus provides a set of channels through which resources pass. The reciprocal obligations thereby created are understood by all. *Somso* debts are not challenged, rather they are held up as evidence of an ongoing friendship similar to the relationship set up by *besenwek* or *ng'oroik*. Such bond friends refer to one another as *tilya*. Given the harshness and unpredictability of the Tugen environment, good *tilya* relationships may mean the difference between starvation and survival.

The fourth ideological principle is drawn from Tugen entrepreneurship. The little enterprise that does exist is properly termed penny capitalism (Tax 1953). Tugen entrepreneurs in the trading centers deal on a small scale, with minimal capital investment, and low profitability (Kettel 1980). In these few shops, one finds the sale of a single cigarette or even

a half cigarette at a time. Sale of a single cracker is the rule rather than the exception. Wallerstein (1976) would likely identify these people as true subsistence producers, scarcely qualified by their lifestyle for the capitalist periphery.

Still, the Tugen are not entirely unfamiliar with the range of concepts that underlie Western investment capitalism. On the contrary, some of these notions are quite clear (Kettel 1980). In the highland areas of the Tugen range, land has been registered by the government and is today bought and sold. Registration of parcels of land, especially in the highlands, has introduced into Tugen economic life the capitalistic principle of exacting rents from registered properties. However, only in the highlands, in the most fertile parts of the lowlands and on the slopes is land registered. In much of the lowlands and along the slopes, people gain access to land in the traditional fashion. Traditional Tugen livestock transactions indicate that they are not wholly without some notion of investment and maximization (Ott 1979). Consequently, while some components of Western capitalist economics have become familiar to some Tugen, the introduction of these ideas amounts to a pitting of the surface of the sphere of Tugen subsistence economics. Traditional economic ideology remains. The degree to which these Western capitalist concepts have been incorporated into Tugen economic ideology and the pervasiveness of these traditional principles become clear in the context of the game.

## THE GAME

In June of 1980, my wife, Janet, and I were living in Kabarnet, Baringo District. I was in the midst of a research project focused on the social and economic activities of blacksmiths in that part of the Rift Valley. One weekend, two American friends from Nairobi came to visit. Steven, an agricultural economist, was working for an international agricultural development agency. Glenn was a representative of an international labor affairs organization. The two of them had served in the Peace Corps in Cameroon some years before and between them they had many years of African experience.

The three Tugen men who joined us in the game were Isack, Michael, and John. Isack, my field assistant, grew up a few miles from Kabarnet in a traditional household. Michael came from a small trading center about thirty miles north of Kabarnet, high in the mountains. John came from the southern hills. Michael and John worked at the local development center as general clerks. All three spoke English, Swahili, and Kalenjin, so language was not a barrier in the game. All had eleven years of formal education, and were good friends. The chance that one of us might be offended by another's game behavior was very remote. While the Tugen participants were un-

acquainted with our American visitors, Janet and I served as a strong link between the two groups.

We had little difficulty explaining the basic rules of the game. The movement of pieces and the acquisition of property came relatively easily to our Tugen friends. The more complicated dimensions of game play were left for the game itself, to be illuminated by experience.

From the first throw of the dice, the Tugen regarded the game differently from the Americans. The opening play clearly evoked two aspects of Tugen economic ideology: *somso* and penny capitalism. Throughout the game the Tugen players sought to escape minor debts to others. This proved very frustrating to the Americans, especially when someone spent twenty minutes trying to beg off a ten dollar debt! Of course, it is equally true that the Americans insisted for the same twenty minutes that the debt be paid. When short of funds to buy property or to close a deal, and, despite our protests that it was against the rules, the Tugen did not hesitate to try to borrow the money from others at the table. For example, well into the game, John landed on Kentucky Avenue. Kentucky was available for sale, but John did not have enough cash to buy it. He turned to me. "Arap Coy," he said, "please will you give me these few shillings to buy this property?"

"Sorry John, that isn't permitted by the rules. You will have to mortgage something to raise the money." I explained the mortgage system as simply as I could.

"So this mortgage is like *besenwek* with the bank?" asked John. I thought about this for a moment, and not being certain at all about the parallel he had found, I said, "Yes." He seemed satisfied, but he still wanted to borrow the money from me. When he understood that I was determined to refuse him, he turned to Isack. "Isack, you are my friend, you will lend me these few shillings."

A chorus of groans went up from the Americans; cries of "it can't be done" bounced around the room. Four versions of explanation were launched at one moment, creating more confusion and noise. When the noise subsided, John protested. "Now look, only one hour ago, my poor car landed on the property of Isack two times. Each time I was forced to pay him \$22. Now I want to borrow just a little of this money that was mine, and you say that I cannot?"

"But that money you paid in rent has nothing to do with it," I said.

"Surely, Bwana, you are not going to forget that I have paid you these shillings in the past?" John said to Isack. Isack shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. "And you are my friend, Bwana. I am surprised at you!" John protested but finally mortgaged two properties and bought Kentucky Avenue.

Not only is *somso* present in this incident, but it appears that having found an indigenous parallel to

mortgaging property, John had little trouble using his own property in *besenwek* with the bank. This indicates the operation of that concurrence of experience discussed in the context of the culture-boundedness of games of strategy. John reached into his own ideological tool kit for a parallel economic concept that tied the game experience to real life. The modeling of reality is thus accomplished and this aspect of the game is made meaningful. John's reluctance to view the Kentucky transaction in isolation from the other economic transactions that had taken place previously was a common characteristic of Tugen strategy in the game. Repeatedly, the Tugen would link a debt to debts incurred and paid earlier in the game. Despite our best efforts, we never were able to shake this "problem." In the context of the networks of delayed reciprocal exchanges among the Tugen, this behavior is perfectly congruent with Tugen economic realities. In real-life, an economic transaction is never carried out in isolation. The fact that Isack was a friend makes the transaction all the more linked to the rest of life, economically and socially. The game rules be damned.

The purchase of property proved difficult in another sense. Michael landed on Boardwalk early in the game but balked at the purchase. He pondered the sale for a minute or two and then declined to buy it. Immediately, Glenn, who needed the mate for Park Place, demanded an auction of the deed. Janet and I intervened with advice for Michael to buy the property. "But it is too expensive," he insisted. "I do not need this one." We tried to convince him that he should buy it so that Glenn could not acquire it, and this was difficult for him to accept. "Why should I use my little money only to keep Glenn from eating? There is enough for all." Once again we tried. This time citing the property as valuable in a future trade for other properties that he might find more useful. Eventually he gave in to our prodding, and, to Glenn's displeasure, he bought Boardwalk. As a result of a subsequent deal with Janet, Glenn acquired Pennsylvania Avenue and had the basis for a deal with Michael for Boardwalk.

"Michael, how would you like to complete the green block?" Glenn asked, trying unsuccessfully to contain himself. "I will give you this green one, Pennsylvania Avenue, for the blue one that you have, Boardwalk."

The gathered players hissed and jeered, and Glenn, under this barrage, lost control. "C'mon, I'm trying to make a deal here! Let him decide for himself!" But it was too late, the players came to Michael's defense.

"Look, Michael," said Janet, "if you make that deal, he will destroy us all by putting houses on those two blue ones. He has far more money than you, and you will not be able to defeat him."

"That's right," Steven joined in, "you must demand money in addition to the green one. Tell him to give

you the green one and \$1000. Janet just paid him \$1000. Then he won't have any money to hurt you, and you can build some houses."

Michael was clearly stunned by the power he held over Glenn. "Yes," said Michael, "you must also give me some money, Bwana."

"OK, I'll give you \$500 and the green one," Glenn offered. The crowd disapproved again. "Bargain with him, but take his money," I suggested. "That way he cannot hurt us."

"No, Bwana, \$1000," Michael said.

"OK, \$600," said Glenn.

"\$999," Michael came back quickly. Laughter swept the group.

"\$999!?" Glenn repeated. "Bwana, you are not bargaining with me seriously!"

"\$999," Michael repeated, smiling.

"\$700," offered Glenn.

"\$998," Michael suggested. Glenn groaned. "I cannot bargain this way. You are going to wipe me out. OK, \$750."

"\$997," bid Michael.

"\$800." ". . . \$996." ". . . \$850." ". . . \$995." ". . . \$900."

Michael offered to accept \$994. Glenn was beside himself with frustration. Michael sat smiling, staring into Glenn's distraught face. The rest of the table was hysterical with laughter. "\$950, and that's my last offer!" Glenn thundered his resolve.

Michael paused. The table grew quiet. Michael said, "\$980."

Glenn groaned again. "\$975, take it or leave it."

"No Bwana, I want \$980." Michael was self-assured.

"Really," said Glenn. "You can come down another \$5."

"No, I want \$980."

"No," said Glenn. "You need this green one as much as I need the blue one. \$975 or nothing."

"Then nothing." Michael turned his attention to the dice.

"Fine." Glenn could not have been more frustrated. The deal collapsed over the \$5 difference. Three plays later, Glenn asked Michael if he would still make the deal if he was willing to pay the \$980. Michael looked around the table, apparently seeking advice.

"Go ahead," someone offered. "He will have less than two hundred shillings remaining. He can't hurt us. You'll be in much better shape."

"OK. We will trade." Michael seemed pleased with his resolve. The deeds were exchanged, the cash paid.

The dice passed to the left and Glenn snatched them from the board. A sneer crossed his lips. "AH HA!" he yelled. "You didn't know about *this*!" He lifted the game board and drew out a five hundred dollar bill that he had hidden earlier. "Now I'll get you all. Three houses, please!"

There was a dead quiet around the table. The expressions on the faces of the Tugen players reflected complete shock. They were horrified. Following a long pause, Isack said, "Bwana, this is too much. We cannot continue." He pushed his chair away from the table.

"We can still defeat him," I said. "There is no need to quit."

"This is a terrible thing that he has done," John added. "We cannot continue after such a thing has occurred."

"What about the rules," asked Michael. "He has not followed the rules."

"No, there is no rule for this one," I answered, feeling ill-at-ease about the answer. "It is not a good thing that he has done, but we cannot prevent him from doing it."

"What kind of game is this?" asked Isack. "We pay this man his rent, but when we ask to be let off, he refuses. You say these things have nothing to do with those things. Now he has cheated us, and we should continue to play with him? This game is not good! It is giving me malaria, Bwana."

"He hasn't cheated us. He's just a terrible person," Steven suggested, laughing. "You would never let him marry your sister, but we can continue the game."

"This thing will come back and defeat you," suggested John. "Play, Bwana, time is running." Play continued and further deals were struck. In the deal described, Glenn's dishonesty was more than the Tugen players were ever able to justify. Months later they would still talk about the *chumbin* (white person) who cheated everyone in that game. That no rules were broken seemed incomprehensible to them. Such behavior should surely be against the rules of the game if the same behavior was so thoroughly reprehensible in real life. Frankly, I haven't fully resolved for myself why such behavior is acceptable in the game, or even in real life investment transactions. The Tugen had a point.

The bargaining that took place between Michael and Glenn was typical of all the transactions in which Tugen players were involved. The deals that were struck often involved thousands of dollars worth of property and cash, and the Tugen would always bargain down to a single dollar amount. At one point in the game, Isack and John tried to strike a deal. John would receive Illinois Avenue and Isack would receive Mediterranean Avenue and cash. The deal would potentially work out in favor of both. But, the penny capitalist bloomed in both John and Isack, and they failed to close the deal. Isack wanted \$468 and John was only willing to pay \$465. Despite our best efforts to convince them to compromise, neither would budge. Much later in the game, it was clear that Isack would be eliminated from play unless a deal was struck. He asked John to let him have the Mediter-

anean deed and John gave it to him. While thousand dollar deals failed because of a three dollar discrepancy, John was willing to give Isack the deed outright because he had asked and because it would enable him to continue in the game. Tugen economic ideology entered the game once again. If asked, one must provide for another in need. One must not interfere with another's capacity to make a living. And yet, the penny capitalist could rationally reject a deal worth thousands over a single dollar.

The game lasted some five hours. Ultimately, the beast, Glenn, fell victim to his greed. Each time he was assessed even \$5 in rent, the Tugen would cite "natural justice." He finally fell victim to Janet's hotel on New York Avenue. Even in Glenn, who had vast experience with the game, we can see that concurrence of game versus real-life experience at work. Having been wiped out in the game, Glenn set out to form a cooperative venture between Isack and John. Glenn had spent years in the Peace Corps as a cooperatives specialist, and this game venture was in perfect accord with his real-life experience. Of course, the Tugen didn't trust him at all, but eventually threw their resources together and played cooperatively.

The game proceeded and empires fell. The conflicting rationalities of the Americans and the Tugens arose again and again. In retrospect, I'm surprised that the game was ever finished. I'm even more surprised that the Tugen won.

## CONCLUSION

In the Monopoly game, the Tugen players resorted to their own ideology of correct economic behavior to make decisions about game play. Repeatedly they cited real life relationships and transactions to influence game play in the others. Nearly every Tugen transaction was viewed from the perspective of the penny capitalist. *Somso* was continuous and unflagging.

At one point in the game, having grown accustomed to the inevitable delays that their begging off created, I decided to return a little *somso* of my own to see if they would come to realize that it was "inappropriate." I landed on one of John's properties; rent of \$18 was required.

"Please, John, we are friends, *tilya*. You do not need my few shillings. Let me go this time." I expected to gain a good laugh, but instead he agreed.

"OK, Bwana, this time, you do not need to pay. But you must pay next time." He agreed. Despite the adamant refusals on the part of the others in the game to accept his *somso* requests, he agreed to let me off. Perhaps he thought we were finally going to play the game like good and proper people should. I paid him, and he refused to accept the money.

"No," he said, "it is OK this time." I insisted. He refused. My joke had opened the door to conduct

business in the game Tugen-style, and he was not going to give up without a fight. The money wound up sitting on the board between us, the embodiment of our conflicting rationalities.

Just as the work ethic supports Western capitalism, and filial piety supports Eastern extended family enterprise, so the Tugen have developed a set of principles governing economic behavior that provide the basis for rational decision-making on an individual level and the adaptive functioning of society on a grand scale. When confronted with a clearly "economic" sort of game, the Tugen, perfectly rationally, turned to their own notions of good and proper economic behavior.

There is a lesson here for those who seek to engineer societies with the goal of improving the conditions of life of non-western people. Societies marked by "underdevelopment" are not only the product of competing economic systems, but of competing rationalities as well. The means of relating the means and ends is a less obvious, more fundamental battle.

While there is some rationality in the social development of mankind, the subject of this rationality is not the isolated and absurd individual of a timeless human nature and psychology, but men in all the aspects, conscious and unconscious, of their social relations. Synchronic and diachronic analysis of past and present social systems would enable us to get an inkling of the "possibilities" of evolution inherent in these systems, their dynamism; it would illuminate retrospectively the particular circumstances of the uneven development of these societies, and would give us a new conception of the contrasts that exist between societies today (Godelier 1966, 317).

## POSTSCRIPT

In August of 1988, I returned to Kenya and met the Tugen players: Isack, Michael, and John. I provided them with copies of this paper and the following day we talked about it. They assured me that, in their opinion, I had found the basis for the differences in our approaches to the game. They agreed with my analysis and were surprised that I should have ever doubted it. While the anthropologist should probably not find the ultimate value of an etic analysis in the judgements of that analysis by the bearers of the culture that is studied, think about it. In this case, if the Tugen had disagreed, wouldn't the explanation necessarily fall?

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