

In The Beginning

Twenty thousand years ago, on a savanna in Africa, a man spent most of the day stalking a herd of wildebeests, carefully selecting one and eventually attacking and bringing it down. While luxuriating over his kill, another man came upon them.

Assume for the moment that 100 points designate the ability of each man to completely remove the kill from the field. Alone, each man could return the kill to his tribe but once the appearance of the second man occurs, some amount of effort will be expended to protect or take the kill and leave with it. Assume for the moment the interloper has both size, strength and agility on his side and for an expenditure of 40 points he can remove the kill from killer and that the killer would and could expend 80 units of effort to retain and leave with his kill. They engage and in the end, the interloper leaves with 60% of the kill and the killer leaves with 40%, both seriously but not fatally wounded in the effort.

Some time later, the killer embarks on a similar hunt with similar success. And again, the interloper arrives after the kill. This time however they both know the relative abilities of the other and the cost of the effort to attain or keep the kill. The interloper offers the killer this proposition: I will not attack if you agree to give me 25% of the kill. The killer agrees, they partition the kill and both leave with their portions.

Later, the killer embarks again on a hunt and comes upon the interloper before the kill, they agree to work together and share in the results. After the kill however, the interloper notes his greater size and skill made the kill easier and demands 60% of the kill. The killer agrees, and they leave with their portions.

On the next hunt, the killer brings a fellow tribe member and after the kill, the interloper returns with his proposition to receive 20% of the kill. The killer and his fellow tell him to bug off, the interloper attacks but is driven off with no portion of the kill at the cost of 30 points effort and the two tribesmen suffer a loss of 20 points each for their effort.

A subsequent hunt finds the two tribesmen over a fresh kill and the interloper again arriving on the scene with the proposition that for 10% of the kill, he will not attack. They agree and partition the kill and go their separate ways.

For the next thousand years, various tribes interact in similar ways with attacks and negotiations and efforts resulting in some general rules forming. When one individual or group comes upon another individual or group, the relative abilities are assessed by each - often with inaccuracies costing them significantly - and fights and negotiations over resources generally apportion them relatively - the stronger groups and individuals tend to obtain more of the resources over time. The general rules suggest that negotiations tend to result in less direct benefit from the resources but net greater benefit due to the retention of effort points not expended in fighting for them, especially for individuals and groups that were not the strongest or most able.

Over the next several thousand years, the general rules become more refined and institutionalized by traditions within tribes and between groups. As the general makeup of the tribes change, the rules and traditions shift back and forth across a mid-line where force and negotiation balance effort and results in obtaining resources. That line shifts from year to year and generation to generation as each individual and tribe attempts to maximize their own benefits.

Within the tribe, hierarchy forms along similar lines with individuals fighting and negotiating for various benefits and resources expending effort in the process. Over time, rules and traditions and assessments of others improve so that less fighting and more negotiations occur. Relative to the absolute of obtaining resources individually without expending efforts to retain those resources, each individual and group fairs less by fighting and negotiating. But on a net basis, they benefit overall by negotiating. There is never equilibrium because in every generation there is a change in skills and abilities and the resources themselves fluctuate over time requiring different skills and abilities to attain greater or lesser value of resources. Each individual and group seeks to maximize their benefits from every encounter with others as circumstances vary.

As groups and tribes grow, societies begin to form utilizing the same assessment, fight or negotiate rules that have dominated the efforts to obtain and retain resources. As husbandry and agriculture form, resource allocations change and surpluses form that encourage negotiation versus fight within the societies but encourage more fight than negotiation between societies as fight for and hold resources benefit larger cooperative tribes, groups and societies.

Within the tribes, groups and societies, the effort to balance fight and negotiation over the rules and traditions continues to move the mid-line back and forth. Individuals take and hold control sometimes for years and attempt to establish ruling classes that sometimes last several generations before breaking down as resources, skills and efforts shift. Relative ability to obtain resources together with willingness to expend effort creates additional mid-lines within tribes, groups and societies. The absolute ability to obtain and retain resources becomes an ideal by which success is measured but never attained.

First Steps

After ten thousand years and little general change in how tribes, groups and societies interact, husbandry and agriculture impact the nature of the fighting and negotiations. Some tribes and groups continue to move and access resources over large areas occasionally interact with other individuals and groups. But other groups and tribes establish areas and engage in fighting with others that arrive nearby not for resources but for location. The use of effort to defend area rather than specific resources is a break from the past rules and traditions that disrupts attempts to ascertain relative benefits.

The circumstances of daily life within the groups and tribes also changed and with it the calculations that went into the effort to negotiate resources. Where hunters and gatherers returned with resources for the family, group or tribe, on infrequent and unpredictable basis, the use of husbandry and agriculture ensured

resources would be available as needed and predictable. Differences in skills and abilities resulted in new rules and traditions.

All of course was not settled and well. Nature has it's own timetables and the unpredictability of weather could and probably did disrupt the predictability of established resources.

Fight/negotiation calculations continued to exist and as often as in the past fail. However, for the 'settled' groups, the consequences of wrong calculations meant more than just going hungry over a lost kill. Groups that were 'settled' but lost in a fight could be uprooted and forced back into either finding new areas - a serious expenditure of effort - or back into old hunt/gather requirements that they had previously abandoned.

Within settled communities fight/negotiation should have given way to effort/reward negotiations. The general nature of the choices would not change - obtaining a resource - even if it just maintaining a herd or crop - had an effort cost that could be balanced against obtaining resources by force. Would a hunter in a settled community expend less energy taking from others in the group than he might expend sharing in the effort to maintain herds/crops? How would the community face fight/negotiation calculations within the group? Some groups may have faced this situation even during the hunting/gathering stage where some hunters/gatherers were more accomplished than others but less skilled at fight/negotiations.

Like the time the killer brought a tribemate on a hunt, numbers had an impact on the outcome of fight/negotiation and would likely have the same impact within groups. If the numbers of herd and crop caretakers sufficiently outweighed the ability of hunters/gatherers to expend energy for group cultivated resources, negotiation would tend to better net outcomes than fighting. Like the earlier situations, the circumstances within each group would vary with seasons, conditions, new members coming of age or older members dying that would cause mid-lines to shift over time but in an increasingly narrow band.

Some rules and traditions would survive multiple changes within the groups and become entrenched even when general circumstances

changed. But the calculation of net benefit versus energy expenditure would remain. As nature caused disruptions, the rules and the groups would break and reform elsewhere with different population make-ups altering circumstances requiring new efforts at establishing rules and traditions.

Some Common Outcomes

Although I have used the term resources as suggestive of primarily food and maybe water, it applies to other items also. Clothing and shelter, weapons and tools and even mates would be subject to fight/negotiation efforts. Non-specific resources like proximity to certain members and optimum sleep/living conditions could result in fight/negotiation.

Access to or control over resources would give individual members or groups/tribes greater relative benefit. It would also give others greater incentive to fight/negotiate for the greater net benefits. A kill might provide several meals, bones for tools/weapons and material for clothing and shelter. Wealth is what is left after needs are met. Another type of mid-line might form around accumulations of individual or group/tribe wealth.

Experience would also constitute a resource as younger individuals sought to gain advantages both within the group and for interactions on hunts/gathering forays. Stories told by older members would be treated as information that could be used as additional knowledge for fight/negotiation interactions.

Stories about specific tribes might suggest their prowess in fighting as a way to teach negotiation skills. Other stories might be of fights or negotiations that appeared significantly one sided but were snatched from the jaws of defeat. The stories would change as they were passed on until they became lore formed around variations on specific types of resource fight/negotiations. The accumulated wisdom would be another resource that would become more than just teachings, it would become traditions passed on to guide actions/choices in ways consistent with the lore/wisdom of the past.

Traditions would remove some common situations from active fight/negotiation concerns as a means of minimizing losses within groups or tribes and during repeated meetings with other groups or tribes. Ritualized fight/negotiations would play out scenarios without the cost to the individuals or groups/tribes of actual fights/negotiations.

As both the lore and traditions become entrenched, they would become rules to be followed rather than just examples of possible outcomes. Choices in fight/negotiation events that were contrary to established lore or tradition would seem to be more risky not just to the individual but to the group/tribe.

It would probably take generations to go from a story to lore or tradition to a rule. The longer fight/negotiation outcomes did not vary from the story, the more force it would have on future events.

One question is how individuals, groups or tribes might react to violations of negotiated outcomes. Obviously once someone violates an agreement, future negotiations would take into consideration that any agreement was subject to violation. Additional energy would have to be allocated to enforce any agreement. Sometimes to the point it would make negotiated results not a net benefit.

Basic rules and punishments would be established and enshrined in traditions and lore might be used to inform members of the consequences of choices that had bad results. These rules and punishments would be subject to the same fight/negotiation calculations with mid-lines forming in different groups at different points for relatively the same set of circumstances. Additional lore might arise around fights or negotiations where those in the inferior position succeeded against the odds.

When fight/negotiations were between individuals, they bore most if not all of the consequences of failure. The failure of one hunter or gatherer might extend the impact to family or part of a group. As groups and tribes settled, interactions occurred more frequently between groups rather than individuals and fight/negotiate losses had larger consequences. The loss of a crop or herd exposed many more to negative outcomes.

Inter-family and inter-group fight/negotiations taking place within a settled community could disrupt cohesion and make external fight/negotiations more difficult. Many would try to encourage only those engagements where the probability of positive outcomes was high both within the group and intra-group.