

Do the Hamar have a Concept of Honor ?

Ivo Strecker

In an interesting essay on honor and shame Unni Wikan has noted that "Honor is a word with a very special quality. Unlike most of the words used in anthropology, it holds an alluring, even seductive appeal. I think its spell derives from its archaic and poetic overtones: it harks back to more glorious times when men were brave, honest and principled" (1984, p. 635). The term honor has certainly a long history and evokes a whole lot of sentiments. Of all the related terms like prestige, esteem, fame, glory, respect, face, name etc., honor is the only one which allows the phrase, "she or he has a *sense* of ...". We speak of a "sense of honor" (Bourdieu 1979), but we don't speak of anyone's "sense of name", "sense of face", "sense of fame", etc. As the phrase "sense of" indicates, honor refers particularly closely to a person's inner self. In my native language, German, the nexus between honor and personal sentiment comes out in a similar way. We speak of *Ehrgefühl* (sense of honor) but not of *Ansehensgefühl*, *Rufgefühl*, *Gesichtsgefühl*, etc. The latter compound words, though grammatically correct, are semantically unacceptable. From where does the sentimental charge or impact of honor and *Ehre* come? Historical linguists tell us that the ancient indogermanic root **ais* from which *Ehre* derives points out an emotionally charged act of veneration. Some people must have once shown deep reverence to someone or something. They venerated and worshipped and their acts of **ais* were inspired both positively by admiration and negatively by fear. In addition to this there was the act of pleading. People pleaded to those whom they admired and feared. This act of submission to some superior power lies at the heart of the Gothic term *aiza* and the old Greek term *aidos*. Later an interesting change occurred: the concept **ais* moved from the perspective of the honorer to the perspective of the honored. That is, the old Saxon term *era*, the Anglosaxon term *ar* and the old Nordic *eir* don't speak of veneration and worship anymore. They speak of granting peace instead, and of protection and luck. They embody the beneficent will of superiors towards their dependents, who, by providing peace for others, gained honor for themselves. For them honor was also heavily charged with emotion. The superior who gave peace and protection was proud of his strength and ability. He risked his life for others by doing chivalrous deeds, and therefore he received glory, fame, praise and all the wonderful attention which makes the heart beat faster.

The Roman use of *honor* and *honestum*, which later was strongly coloured by *era*, *ar* and *eir*, involved yet a third party. This third party was the public which judged the performance of the honorer and the honored. *Honor* was a result of virtue: persons who adhered to the publicly defined and sanctioned code of morals were also publicly honored (given *gloria*, *decus*, *reverentia*). This public attribution of social worthiness was eminently political because it was the basis on which people were granted political offices. The holding of an office in turn led to that strong personal sense of socially accepted dignity which in European culture has been a defining element of honor until today.

To sum up: the history of the concept of honor and its counterpart *Ehre* shows that the concept has always been emotionally charged. To various degrees, three different parties were involved in the process: the honorer, the honored and the public. Thus, Unni Wikan is right when she speaks of the *allure* of honor. But when we meet that word, we do not just project our ideas of a heroic past into it. Rather, the term honor has always spoken and speaks still today of contexts in which sentiments play an important part. Honor is simply not a detached anthropological category. It is not an observer category but an actor category which evolved under specific social conditions and had its function in specific places and times.

What are the conditions which give rise to the concept of honor and in what kind of social formations does honor have a place?

These are questions which we should try to answer. But to do so we need a general and historical theory of the formation of social concepts. More specifically, we need a general theory of

honor phenomena. Such a theory is still missing today. There have been a number of detailed studies of how the concept works or has worked in particular societies, especially in the Mediterranean area but no one has approached the topic within a general theoretical framework. The spell of Peristiany seems to have had a lasting effect. He wrote in his introduction to *Honor and Shame. The Values of Mediterranean Society*: "If honor and shame are universal aspects of social evaluation, the polarity of the sacred and profane is equally common. But our concern is not with the universal causality or logic of these phenomena but with their relevance to a particular social system and to the search for correlations which might provide an index to the classification of these social systems" (1966, p. 11).

Why should we not concern ourselves with the universal causality or logic of such concepts like honor? Surely, we can only fully assess the relevance of specific social (and moral) concepts, once we have understood what objective conditions and what kind of subjective reasoning cause them to arise. Also, why should we assume that concepts like honor and shame are culturally universal? Peristiany has neither offered a theory which allows him to deduce that the concept of honor should be found in every society, nor has he offered any comparative evidence which would prove its universal occurrence.

In fact, in this paper I argue that honor is not a universal concept, and in many societies, like for example the Hamar of southern Ethiopia, it has no place. To sustain this argument, we first need a definition of honor which goes beyond the rather empty one provided by Unni Wikan. Drawing on earlier studies by Blok, Campbell, Herzfeld, Peristiany and others, she has defined honor as "the value of a person in her or his own eyes but also in the eyes of her or his society" (1984, p. 649). From this minimal definition many of the components are missing which have given terms like *ais*, *aiza*, *aidos*, *era*, *honos* their particular colour. All we are left with is the "value of a person". This value is both assessed by the public and by the person's inner self. How can we complete the picture and capture the semantics of honor related terms? In order to know what honor is, we also need to know what it is not. We need to focus on the differences which separate "honor" from similar terms like "dignity", "respect", "name", "regard", "reputation", "esteem", "fame", "face", "merit", "pride" and so on. All these terms have to some extent to do with the value of a person in his or her own eyes and also in the eyes of others. But how do they differ?

A first step to visualize the differences is to draw a horizontal line and call the left end self and the right end others. As we know from Unni Wikan's definition, honor should be placed in the middle of the continuum because it belongs equally well to the domain of "self" and "other".

Pride and fame are also rather easy to place because they each belong to one of the extreme poles. "Pride" belongs closely to the domain of "self" while "fame" belongs closely to the domain of "other". Your pride belongs more closely to you than to others because you may believe in your own value while at the same time knowing that others don't value you highly. Your fame, on the other side, is always in the hands of the others. You may wish and work for your fame, but it is up to the others to notice you and make you famous. Dignity should also be plotted near the pole of "self", but unlike pride it always involves the recognition of the judgement of others. Persons act dignified when they have reasons to believe in their own social worthiness. As the self is involved so much, it would be a pleonasm to speak of "self-dignity" and so this possible linguistic form is not found. With "regard", "respect" and "esteem" this is different. "Self-esteem", "self-respect" and "self-regard" are linguistically acceptable expressions, and this points to the fact that "regard", "esteem" and "respect" are closer to the domain of "other" than of "self".

"Face" and "name" are used in a figurative sense and we need to have a closer look at them before we can place them on the continuum. "Face" as a metaphor for public "self-image" draws its power from a clever exploitation of part-whole relationships: First, a significant part of a person, that is the face with whom one faces others, or which one hides from others, is taken to represent the whole person, including character and social standing. Secondly, a single act, or single acts, are used to deduce a cause from an effect. A bad deed, it is said, reflects a bad person, to break a social norm is a sign of bad character. Thus, the threat behind the notion of face is that if you don't do what is publicly expected of you, you will lose your "face" and will be declared bad *in toto*. The metaphoric meaning of "face" is in this way a reflection of the influence of others on the self. Like

"honor", it lies in the middle of the continuum. But as it is less abstract than honor, and as it is physically associated with the body, it should be plotted towards the side of "self". Like "face", the term "name" is used metaphorically to say something about the social worthiness of a person, and like face it exploits a part-whole relationship. In all cultures people are named, and their name is an intrinsic part of their social existence. Social standing and worthiness accumulate, as it were, in the name of a person. To have a good or great name is to be good and great. However, in this mode of thought also the opposite is true: to spoil a name means to spoil the whole person. Therefore "name" has a coercive aspect like "face" and "honor", for if you don't behave according to the moral values of your society you risk your "name". But "name" reflects more the influence of others while "face" reflects more the influence of self. To think and to speak about someone's name always implies a fine distinction between self and the public image of a person. While face points to the affective involvement of a person, "name" speaks of a label which itself is again the object of manipulation and reflects the social skill and power of a person, his first attempt to differentiate honor from some of the related terms may be summarized in the following diagram:

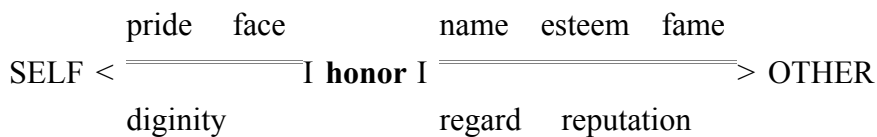


Diagram 1

The diagram shows how in the concept of honor both the "self" and "other" overlap. The private and the public, the individual and the society merge here more closely than in any other related term. Above all, honor is a coercive concept. "Honor" lost, everything lost" goes the saying. You can not escape the power or honor because it is neither your own, nor is it not your own. Honor has welded self and other together and this gives it its special effectiveness for social control.

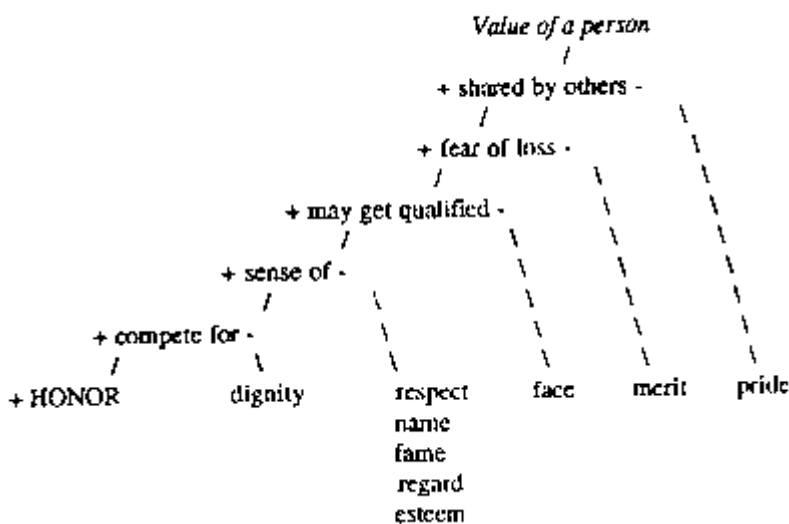
People tend to overlook this darker side of honor. They think only of such bright aspects as praise, adoration, applause etc., and they don't notice the coercive aspect of honor. But those who have honor are also always in the danger of loosing it. What is, those who live in honor also live in fear. In fact, all the terms included in Diagram 1, with the only exception of "pride", are terms which share the feature "fear of loss": you don't want to loose your "face", "respect", "name", "fame", "regard", "esteem", "dignity" or "honor". To bring this out more clearly, let me now introduce a further term: "merit". "Merit" differs from "honor", "face", "dignity", etc., in that it is an intentionally neutral category which evades the "self - other" polarity and the social struggles which go with it. Like money, "merit" refers to objective scales of judgement and does not speak of the social bartering which goes an between "self" and "other. Ideally, an objective third party, preferably God, would measure the merits of women and men and award them accordingly. "Honor" and the related terms mentioned above do not make any such claim to objectivity. Rather, they are radically subjective and express the emotive and political side of social and moral judgement. A further noticeable feature of "honor" is that you may qualify it speaking of great or small honor. With "face" this is different. You may loose it or keep it, but you don't try to increase your face like you try to increase your honor or the respect which you command, your name, fame, regard, esteem or dignity. Also, you don't speak of a person's "sense of face" (or "sense of" respect, name, fame, regard, esteem). Only "honor" and "dignity" allow the gloss "have a sense of". But what distinguishes honor from dignity? In terms of the rhetorical definition of honor which I am aiming at, the crucial difference lies in the fact that dignity is a concept which does not lend itself for social coercion because anyone who thinks of himself as having dignity and acts dignified, does so because he thinks he has reasons to believe in his own social worthiness. Dignity reflects the recognition of right social conduct, and therefore you can not properly reprimand anyone saying something like "think of your dignity". Such a reprimand would sound comical and utterly

insincere, for the one who has dignity should know best what his social conduct should be. Lastly, dignity is not a competitive concept like honor. One does not compete for dignity, but one competes for honor. In a sense, dignity is the peaceful and mature companion of honor. You don't incite people to die on the "field of dignity" no, you incite them to die on the "field of honor". There is more to explore. But for the purpose of this paper the following diagram and definition of honor will do:

Definition: Honor is the value of a person in her or his own eyes and in the eyes of others. Its loss entails grave social danger. It may be qualified by attributes like high/low, great/small, etc. One has a sense of it, and it may be increased through competition.

Having given a fuller definition of honor, let me now continue with the theory. Honor, I have said, is above all a coercive concept, and like all the other related concepts (see especially the analysis of face and name above) it acts like magic.

Diagram 2: The semantics of honor



It acts like magic by the conceptual manipulation of relationships between the whole and its parts, and the cause and its effects. The reasoning involved in the discourse of honor is that if an effect is bad (or good) then the whole must be bad (or good), or if the part is bad (or good), then the whole must be bad (or good). If you do a bad deed, then not only that bad deed but your whole person gets condemned. The condemnation is in turn justified by the argument that the individual is a part of a whole (society). If the person acts badly, then society must exterminate it because otherwise society itself would become bad. Also, the rules of conduct have been established by society, which thinks of itself as the good cause of good effects. To break the rules means rejecting the good effects of a good cause. This, of course, is an *insult*. Here lies the special twist in the concept of honor: it transforms objective into subjective facts, it turns social deviation into insult. Those who have acted against an existing code can therefore be met with indignation, scorn, anger. In short, they can be morally coerced (See Abu Lughod, 1986).

Which are the societies where we should expect the concept of honor to occur? Where would it function and do its peculiar job of coercing people?

A first point to note is that for honor to work as a coercive concept people must live under social conditions which do not allow them to move freely away from the contexts in which they are living. If people can move away freely from each other, and if they can live to a large extent independently of each other, the power of public opinion and ostracism is weak.. If you can not make anyone *feel* that she or he has *lost* her or his honor, then the politics of honor have little chance of success.

There are many societies with predominantly face-to-face social relations where mobility is high and the power of social ostracism is accordingly low. Such mobility exists typically among hunters and gatherers, but it also occurs among a number of pastoralists, cultivators and people practicing different varieties of mixed economies. The Hamar of southern Ethiopia with their reliance on different resources (sorghum, cattle, goats, sheep, apiculture, hunting, gathering, trading and raiding) are a case in point. Their whole economy is in fact based on the ability of people to move and exploit their environment optimally in this way. No large corporate groups and no large permanent settlements exist, and for this very reason alone we should be able to predict, that the concept of honor has no important part to play in the politics of the Hamar.

Today, in my own native Western culture, honor has also no place as a coercive and their many options of mobility have drastically reduced the effectiveness of public opinion. For this and other reasons, the concept of honor has become obsolete (see Berger, 1970 an interesting analysis of this topic).

So where should we expect the concept of honor to flourish? We should expect it in societies with restricted spatial mobility, prevalent face-to-face relations and a significant division of labor and social stratification. The prototype would be feudal society with its social organisation based on the homage and service of vassals who have been granted holdings of land or fiefs, that is spheres of operation and control. The politics of honor are part and parcel of the formal public acknowledgment of feudal allegiance, of the acknowledgement of the lord's superiority, and of the demonstrative fulfillment of duties.

In feudal society honor was a weapon in the class struggle used from above. The superior who delegated a responsibility to an inferior (who in turn was the superior of some other inferior!) forced the other by means of the concept of honor to act honestly and not to betray his oath of allegiance. When a vassal was entrusted with a task, honor demanded that he did what had been delegated to him. And once he had done the task, he was honored, gained honor. In this way honor converted the exploitation of others into the pleasure of doing one's duty. In the extreme case the superior honored his vassal and then let him die on the "field of honor". So, ironically, many of the oppressors within a feudal system were oppressed too. They, the "courageous" were in constant fear of losing their honor or being surpassed by others in their battle for honor.

The Hamar of southern Ethiopia have no feudal past, and they do not have the degree of social differentiation and the asymmetries of wealth and power which would motivate any strategies of honor. There are no kings, lords and vassals, no patrons and clients, no competing social classes or corporate groups. As I have indicated already above, the Hamar economy is based on pastoralism, slash and burn cultivation, gathering and hunting, apiculture etc., and these diverse modes of production require small groups which can quickly change their residence and adapt to changes in environmental conditions. Their whole superstructure of moral and ethical concepts, beliefs and rituals is geared to the practical problems of living in an unpredictable transitional zone which lies between the well watered Ethiopian highlands and the semidesert of northern Kenya. Although the social structure is basically acephalous, in that it has no single political leader, there are a number of ways in which the Hamar delegate responsibilities for decision making to single individuals. But while they delegate a certain amount of power, they are careful to distribute it evenly and constantly check it. Also, political power may never show itself directly, it always has to wear the guise of ritual. There are two *bitta* who are ritually responsible for the well-being of two parts of Hamar territory, there are the *gudili* who are ritually responsible for the well-being of the fields in a settlement area, there are the *ayo* who speak each for his respective territorial segment at public meetings, there are the *djilo* who magically initiate and supervise dangerous enterprises like raiding, and there are the *moara* who divine by means of throwing sandals, reading the entrails of goats, sheep or cattle, etc., and in this way influence public and private decision making. But these functionaries are jealously watched by the *donza*, the Hamar married men who, each in his own independent way, shape the politics of Hamar every-day life (see Lydall and Strecker, 1979 b for a more detailed description of the offices mentioned here).

If there is any axiom which characterises Hamar social life then it is the rejection of authority.

This feature is so striking that I used to call it Hamar anarchy and filled many pages of my diary on this topic when I began to study Hamar culture and society (see Lydall and Strecker, 1979 a).

This insistence on the primacy of the individual and its concomitant rejection of the influence of others can also clearly be detected in the use of language. Remember the "self" - "other" continuum and how the terms relating to the value of a person can be plotted on it (Diagram 1). We saw that the heaviest moral coercion lies in the middle where the domains of the "self" and "other" overlap. In Hamar, where such an overlap is rejected, we simply have a blank here. There are plenty of terms which refer to the value of a person in his or her own eyes, and there are plenty of terms which speak of the value of a person in the eyes of others, but there are no terms which attempt that curious merging of perspectives which is characteristic for honor.

Typically, one does not swear in Hamar by one's honor or something similarly intrinsic to one's self. Rather, one swears by something which is close to oneself but extrinsic. The women swear by their *bakulo*, the three stones which constitute their hearth. The *bakulo* signify that a woman has married and has set up a house on her own. They are the symbol of her adult, married status. So when she says "*issa bakulo ne*", she means "I swear by my hearth, by my house, my children and all what I value highly".

Also the man swears by something which is not intrinsic to him. He swears by his *garo*, the calf which played a special role at his initiation rite and became his fast symbolic child, long before he brought home his wife and could have children with her. The *garo* is taboo for him. He should not drink its milk, nor eat its meat, he should not even rest on its hide. If he swears by his *garo* he says, "I swear by my calf, by my child, by my elderhood, that what I am saying is true". So both men and women say they would risk something which is external to their self (yet at the same time dear to them) if they were not telling the truth.

It goes well with their rejection of authority that the Hamar not only have no word for "honor" but also none for "shame", "duty", "sin", "devil" and not even for "god". Or if they have a word for "god", then every Hamar is his own god or carries a god-like quality (*barjo*) in him.

The Hamar don't pray but call forth *barjo*. Jointly or individually they call forth what the world ideally should be: "The rain shall fall, the children shall play, peace shall be in the land", etc. As long as a person is alive and healthy, she or he has *barjo*, only when one dies has one's *barjo* finished. People speak of other people as having rich (or poor), small (or big) *barjo* and select their spokesmen and ritual leaders accordingly. And as soon as the luck or good fortune of such a leader begins to wane, they say that his *barjo* is not rich anymore and withdraw the tasks which they had delegated to him before (for a fuller analysis of the rhetoric of *barjo* see Strecker, 1988).

If the Hamar do not play the game of sin, god and honor, this does not mean that they are morally insensitive. On the contrary!

Their egalitarian ethic forces them to scrutinise each other carefully and constantly. In order to check the power and aspirations of others you have to know them and keep a discourse alive which has a rich social and psychological vocabulary. In Hamar, people discuss for ever the strength and shortcomings of others and their language abounds with metaphorical inventions which give colour to their expressions. Metaphors for character traits come from diverse domains, as the following examples show:

Animals:

gaia (baboon) - playful, irresponsible
kofini (ground squirrel) - clever, unbeatable, trickster
guni (snake) - traitor

Body parts, substances or gender:

kanta (joint) - ruthless
woilem (heart) - concerned, thoughtful
pi (excrement) - coward, disgusting

angi (male) - competent, strong, reliable

Elements:

nu (fire) - engaged, spirited, successful

gibare (wind) - unreliable, insincere

Natural attributes:

cerengi (clean) - no social offence

kadji (cool) - peaceful, tempered

ipha (straight) - truthful

and so on.

I have collected a whole lot of terms which the Hamar use for judging persons. Although I have not finished the analysis, the following good/bad pairs stand out more clearly:

good traits

paxala (bright)

kabo (thoughtful)

koi (knowledgeable)

gon (truthful)

kadji (peaceful)

burda (generous)

zia (courageous)

cerengi (clean)

bad traits

barri (mad)

budamo (deceitful)

palli (quarrelsome)

banco (mean)

pi (fearful)

mingi (polluted)

Interestingly, the Hamar have also terms for the lack of developed character traits. They call such persons *dudi* (closed), *daega* (dumb) or *mume* (full). Of interest is also the fact that in Hamar people are not much judged in terms of physical strength and wealth. What counts much more and is much more prominent in their assessment are qualities pertaining to the mind, the temper, generosity, courage (which must not be mistaken for physical strength!) and the general ritual state in which a person is at any given time. There are several words in Hamar which refer to the acts by which people show appreciation for each other:

walsha (praise deeds of others in song, especially those who return from hunting or raiding);

sada (celebrate your kin and dear ones in song);

shekinda (to get adorned with beads, cauri shells, etc., for having killed big game or an enemy);

ganata (address others endearingly).

Just as there are terms for acts of appreciation, there are also terms for the act of rejecting other persons. Here are some examples:

bagga (reject, dislike, break with a person);

boia (despise, deride, reject, look down on);

ishimba (don't take the other seriously, don't listen).

These examples will suffice to show that the Hamar are not morally indifferent and that they judge each other, and applaud and critic, and certainly also guide and control each other. But they don't do it by means of concepts which could be translated as "honor". There is simply no concept which fuses "self" and "other" in the way "honor" does. Hamar term relating to the social value of a person always keep "self" and "other" nicely distinct from each other. To bring out this point more clearly, let me turn to the two concepts of *Kaia* and *goshpa*, which come closest to honor.

A word which is constantly used in Hamar every-day conversation is *Kaia*, "get lost, disappear". More rarely one hears the word *Kaia*, which begin with a glottalized /K/ [K'] and means the opposite of *kaia*, *i.e.* "to appear, become known, become visible and manifest". When I asked the Hamar about the meaning of *Kaia*, they gave me examples such as the following: (note that *Kaia* is intransitive!)

1. A tree may become known because it is very high, has an important shade, is a good one to place beehives in, etc.
2. Big herds of goats or cattle.
3. A person may become well known for many different reasons, good ones and bad ones, especially if the person is a leader and speaks at public meetings, initiates raids, etc.
4. Fields become known for their good harvests and social events which have taken place there.
5. A family or homestead.
6. A settlement area, a territorial segment, the whole land.
7. An important event like a raid, a public meeting etc.
8. Dances, songs, fashions...

There is also a Hamar saying which throws light on the concept of *Kaia*: "*wodemo Kaio ne*", "The rich are maggots", that is their cattle and goats multiply quickly like the maggots in a piece of fat, and as their animals become many, they themselves become famous. In this way the maggots are a metaphor for fame. Just like the maggots appear over night and multiply with great speed, so a person, an object, a group, a place or event appears and becomes visible and known to everybody. Interestingly, neither the "self" nor the "other" is particularly involved in the concept. *Kaia* differs from "fame" in that it does not refer to anyone speaking about something or someone and making a thing or person known in this way. Nor does it have a manifest element of "pride". No one says admiringly of someone else, "*kissi Kaiditai*" (Hasn't he become well known!) in the sense of "He is admirable that he has become so well known". Rather, such a sentence is said in a matter of fact way, with perhaps an element of surprise and envy in it. And whatever the meaning of *Kaia* may ultimately be, it can not be translated as "honor" because it would be impossible to have "a sense" of it, and it lacks any dimension of social coercion.

The concept of *goshpa* is difficult to grasp and it took me a while to figure out its full meaning. Literally it means "to cause to look beautiful, to adorn". *Goba* is "to be furnished with ornaments" and therefore "walk about looking beautiful". Women are adorned with butter and red ochre, iron rings on arms and legs and around the neck, with ostrich feathers, beads, etc., and men are similarly beautified with beads, bracelets, feathers, special hair dress and so on. But the term *goshpa* has also received a metaphorical extension which pertains to the social domain: you may adorn someone by accepting her or him. You beautify others by expressing your liking for them. Furthermore, *goshpa* has a reciprocal element because it applies both to the host and the guest. The guest gains by the good things the host does for him, and the host gains by the good sentiment he creates in the guest.

To give some color to what I have said and show how I discovered the social meaning of *goshpa*, let me quote directly from my notebook:

1. Sarinda's son Kala explains *goshpa* to me as simply "the act of dressing and adorning someone with clothes and beads". But Sarinde likens *goshpa* to *shoshinsha*, "the act of receiving a guest". You *goshpa* someone by giving something to him, a goat, a cow, gram.

You worry: "*edi shoshi niade amaekoato?*", "Will they say that a guest has arrived?". *Goshpa* expresses the fact that you are recognised as a worthy guest. In Hamar, the guest never bring anything (except within some clearly defined situations like marriage negotiations). Therefore a person exposes himself (or herself) when he goes to visit. He can not force anyone to accept him by offering a gift first. He has to wait until he is recognised and accepted as guest and is given things freely by the host. Then he has been *goshpadada*, "beautified by acceptance".

2. Merrie explains *goshpa* to me differently from Gardu. He says that you *goshpa* a host by acknowledging his good hospitality and generosity. I ask if those who eat like hyenas and don't say that they have been treated well also *goshpa* you. "No, they don't only those who say that you have treated them well *goshpa* you". Before he departs, I give Merrie a Konso blanket. I also ask, "Who is doing *goshpa* here, do I *goshpa* you or you me?" He answers, "I will *goshpa* you later when, at home, I say that I have received the blanket from you". What is happening here? First I *goshpa* someone by accepting him or her as a guest. Gardu from her social weak perspective (she is a widow with four children to look after, stresses this point. She gets *goshpa* when she comes somewhere and is accepted. As people know that she does not come just so, and that she will take something away, they *goshpa* her, value her highly, by accepting her as a guest. Once she has been accepted, it is her traditional right not just to remain passive but to tell the host what she wants, or rather what she needs. She is allowed to demand and argue toughly with the host. She uses all sorts of ways including a lot of clever talking, to make the host give as much as possible. In the end, there is no direct thanking and expressions of thanks towards the host involved. Rather, the thanks return indirectly, that is *via* the *goshpa* which happens when she has returned home. Here she praises or at least comments on the generosity of the host. But she does not really have to do it because the gifts speak for themselves and *goshpa* the person who has provided them!
3. Haila comes and shows me his stick which indicates that he has entered his rite of passage into manhood. I give a present, as is customarily expected, which he later will pass on to the girls who will come to attend his ceremony. I ask whether I *goshpa* him or he me. He answers that he will *goshpa* me when he later recounts that I gave him the present. When Haila tells me of *goshpa*, he makes gestures which imitate generous and completely devoted giving. It seems that there exists an ethos of giving in Hamar which I still have not yet understood well. Here, in a society where all people know each other, it makes sense to give away all you have, especially not completely necessary goods, because you will get things back eventually in the endless chain of demands and counter demands. At least this is what Haila seems to suggest to me. To be ready to give is held to be of great value. But you don't count the returns, you don't think like a merchant.

In an ideal world, we would never be in fear of others. We would do things freely for each other and because we positively want to. Also, in this ideal world we would all have equal rights to personal preserves, non-distraction and claims to spheres of action. We would accept each other in our respective individuality. Unfortunately many historically known societies have been far removed from the ideal. In them, many members of the society could not satisfy their basic wants of freedom. They were forced to accept the impositions by others and were cognitively controlled by concepts like honor. Therefore, when I ask: "Do the Hamar have a concept of honor?", I also ask about their social chains. Isn't it telling and also encouraging that here some of the more insidious ones are missing?

References

ABU-LUGHOD, Lila

1986, *Veiled Sentiments. Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London.

BERGER, Peter

1970, "The Obsolescence of Honor", *Arch. europ. sociol.*, XI, pp. 339-347.

BOURDIEU, Pierre

1979, *The Sense of Honor*, Chap. 2, *Algeria 1960*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

LYDALL, Jean, and STRECKER, Ivo

1979 a, *The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia, vol. 1: Work Journal*, Renner Verlag, Hohenschäftlarn.

LYDALL, Jean, and STRECKER, Ivo

1979 b, *The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia, vol. II: Baldambe Explains*, Renner Verlag, Hohenschäftlarn.

PERISTIANY, John (ed.)

1966, *Honor and Shame. The Values of Mediterranean Society*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

STRECKER, Ivo

1988, *The Social Practice of Symbolization, An Anthropological Analysis*, Athlone Press, London.

WIKAN, Unni

1984, "Shame and Honor: a contestable pair", *Man*, n.s. 19, pp. 635-652