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“Levels of Identity and National Integrity: The Viewpoints of the Pastoral
Maasai and Parakuyo”

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Levels of Identity and National Integrity

The Viewpoint of the Pastoral Maasai and Parakuyo

Arvi Hurskainen

Introduction

There are few subjects in anthropology which have drawn as much attention in recent years as pastoralism. This is true despite the fact that almost everywhere pastoralists represent small minorities, far removed from the decision-making centres of the State.¹ Although pastoralists in Africa are relatively few in number, they occupy large areas in many countries utilizing areas unsuitable for agriculture. They seldom involve themselves actively into politics; one consequence of this being that they often are told by others what is good for them (Baxter, 1986).

One of the central problem areas in the discussion about pastoralism and pastoralists is the lack of mutual understanding between the planning organizations on the State level and the pastoralists themselves. This reflects the more general problem of analytical units in political anthropology, where attention has been overwhelmingly on phenomena of the national level, whereby such units as tribe, clan, lineage, family etc. have been ignored (Hansen, 1977:12-14). Are there possibilities of finding areas where the interests of the State and of the pastoralists meet, and thus provide an arena of mutual understanding?

One of my arguments, surely not a novel one, is that pastoralists are not more conservative, less development-oriented than any other ethnic groups within the State. If pastoralists are reluctant to educate children, to adopt new grazing systems, to acquire more productive animals in terms of dairy products, or to adopt entirely new production systems, they have reasons for it. These factors should be first identified

before due actions can be taken. I am also inclined to assume that far too little attention has been paid to the consequences, which the development efforts have on the identity of pastoral people. It may well be that much of the pastoralists' resistance should be attributed to the insecurity, that the pastoralists sense in the face of the development plans.

One key concept in this essay is the term *identity*. Although there is no equivalent to it in many languages, it is widely used in anthropological literature. We speak of 'ethnic identity', 'cultural identity', 'group identity', 'individual identity' etc. without having a need for definitions. The term 'identity' refers to a basic feeling, or sense, of an individual of belonging to a certain group of people. It points to the fact that people do not act only, not even principally, as individuals, but as members of groups. The concept of 'identity' implies the notion of similarity and difference, of 'we' and 'others'. Thus a group defines itself by making explicit the kind of relations it has with other groups. Search for identity does not derive only from the need for security, but also from the sheer human passion for cosmic order. The groups and classes, which are a result of this mental, and partly unconscious, exercise, are the building blocks, out of which the mental construct of the universe is formed. Thus, group membership is a key concept of every social system.

In order to set these issues in context, I shall discuss them from the viewpoint of eastern African pastoralists, particularly the Pastoral Maasai and Parakuyo of Tanzania. Also the situation of pastoralists in Kenya is relevant, but because of space re-

quirements this must be excluded. Although the government politics pursued in these two countries during the time of independence differs considerably, the fate of the pastoralists is quite similar in both of them. Development plans are designed in a top-down fashion, with the interest of the State as a central motive in these plans. Land ownership is arranged differently in these countries, Kenya allowing private ownership, while all land in Tanzania is still owned by the State. Kenya has extensively applied ranching models, while development in Tanzania is principally based on the countrywide villagization program, implemented mainly in 1975-76. Common to both of these development models is, however, that they have been initiated by the State, designed by the State, and implemented by the State, within the framework of the prevailing political and economic aims on the State level. In this process the pastoralists have had very little to say.

It is very important to note that an individual's identification with a wider society operates on several levels. *Ujamaa*-ideology in Tanzania tried to make use of different levels of identities. It is assumed in this ideology that peoples' identities should be extended from the level of primary groups, such as family, clan, ethnic group etc. to the national level. According to this view, individuals may be made to identify themselves as members of the nation-state², as they are members of their families, clans, lineages, language groups etc. Tanzania is not alone in trying to shift the principal levels of identities from the family and clan level to that of the nation-state. In fact, the establishment of a coherent and strong nation-state has been the main concern of independent African countries, and this issue obviously continues to be important in near future.

To what extent has Tanzania succeeded in its efforts to integrate different ethnic groups into a nation? It is obvious that it has not fully succeeded in doing this. It is also obvious that ethnic groups have responded differently to these efforts, some having been more responsive than others. If these groups were to be placed on a continuum in respect to their responsiveness to these integration efforts, the Maasai, and other pastoralists, would probably be

found in the low end of the continuum. Although we do not have unambiguous indicators for placing ethnic groups on such a continuum, we may note some of them. The government call for universal primary education has, so far, had a low response among the Maasai. Also the adult education programs had only partial success among the pastoralists. The programs were not properly planned to suit the Maasai, and still today, only a small minority of Maasai children go regularly to school.

Also the implementation of the villagization program had problems. It required the Maasai to give up transhumant pastoralism and settle in permanent dense villages. In addition, they were required to adopt cultivation as a subsidiary mode of production where cultivation was possible. In fact the introduction of cultivation was viewed as a step towards a more developed mode of production, while at the same time it would be a method of keeping the pastoralists securely in one place, so that communal services such as health care, water, and schooling could be made available to all.

Although there is no comprehensive study of the success of the villagization program among the pastoralists, two examples from different contexts may be indicative of the general picture. One is from Olkesumet in the Kisongo Maasai area in northern Tanzania, and the other is from Lugoba area, where a number of Parakuyo settlements are located.³ The ecological conditions as well as the population composition are quite different in these areas. Yet both of these groups lack a number of characteristics reported from other pastoral groups. They live far from the borders of the State, so that they do not have the possibility of utilizing the price difference in livestock on different sides of the border, like the pastoralists do in some parts of northern Tanzania (Christiansson and Tobisson, 1989). They do not have to cross national borders because of seasonal migration, which causes other kinds of problems (Markakis, 1987; 1989). Neither have they been forced to move to their present areas because of a government decision, which causes difficult problems of adaptation (Sorbo, 1985). The moves which have resulted in the present population pattern have taken place within the borders of one State.

The Maasai Of Olkesumet

Olkesumet is located on a large plain in northern Tanzania, and has been populated by pastoralists long before the present inhabitants, the Maasai, moved there. Prior to the Nilotic invasion, it was inhabited by the Southern Cushites, whose remnants are still found scattered in the eastern mountainous areas. Afterwards, the area was occupied by the Kalenjin-speaking Southern Nilotes, and then by the Maa-speaking Parakuyo, who were driven eastward and southward by the Pastoral Maasai in the 19th century (Hurskainen, 1984: 71-82). Olkesumet is important for the pastoralists because of the large well, which has fresh water all the year round.⁴ The one who controls the well has also control over the large surrounding plain. Because the nearest permanent fresh water reservoirs are in Napera, about 50 km to the northwest, and in Ruvu Remiti, 50 km to the east, Olkesumet forms a natural center for permanent habitation.

Until recently, the Olkesumet area has been populated by pastoralists and a few Torrobo (Dorobo), who live in Maasai kraals providing services for them, collecting honey and exchanging it for milk and meat with the Maasai. The kraals, of which in 1984 there were 22, were located around the well within the radius of about 2-5 km. The distance of kraals from each other varied from about 0,5 km to 2 km, depending on the kraal size, composition and environmental factors. It was considered important that the kraals should not be too close to the well so as to avoid soil degradation. It was also considered important that there is grass available for calves and small stock in the vicinity of the kraal. On the other hand, the kraal had to be close enough to the well to keep the distance of carrying household water reasonable. The use of donkeys in transporting water was common, and this made the location of some kraals in a distance of more than 3 km from the well possible. Water was transported in containers made of tin or plastic, and traditional leather bags were used as well.

The villagization program, termed as *Operation Imparnoti* (see Ndagala in this volume; *empárnát*, permanent village) did

not actually change the outlay of the kraals in any way. The village plans with straight lines and regular spacing of houses did not simply fit to the needs of the pastoralists. In fact the habitation in the area had adapted to the environmental constraints before the villagization program. In the village center there were a few compulsory buildings, such as a primary school, a dispensary, a couple of shops, a bar, and a few houses for government officers. The Maasai pastoralists were living in kraals outside the village center, while the government officers, medical workers and a couple of Somali traders, all of whom were ethnically non-Maasai, occupied the village center. The decision to move Kiteto District centre from Kibaya to Olkesumet was thought to increase the population in the center.

Climatic conditions in Olkesumet do not allow successful farming except in exceptionally favourable years. What might be considered as a direct influence of government development efforts is the increased number of cultivated fields in the vicinity of kraals. Typically such fields were cultivated in places of abandoned kraals, where livestock manure ensured the availability of nutrients. These fields, growing mainly maize, were small and few compared with the total Maasai population (Table 1), providing only a small part of the cereals consumed. Several kraals did not practise cultivation at all. Although no statistics on livestock numbers in Olkesumet are available, the overall estimation suggests that pastoral products, particularly milk in different forms, provides the basic diet, while cereals and vegetables are consumed occasionally and as a subsidiary diet.

It is relevant to our topic to understand the general outlay of habitation in the whole Olkesumet area. The settlement is divided into two sections, one of which consists of the non-pastoralist village center, and the other of the kraals scattered around the center. The unit which is most readily identified in the pastoralist area is the kraal with a round cattle enclosure surrounded by individual houses. A kraal (*enkáng'*, pl. *inkáng'itìè*) is normally inhabited by more than one family (*olmáréí*, pl. *ilmáréítà*), which need not necessarily belong to the same clan. The average

number of families in a kraal was 4,7 in 1984.⁵ Thus when the kraal forms an identity group for an individual Maasai, it does not do so on the lines of clan identity alone, but also represents the whole Maasai society in a miniature form. This statement should not be interpreted as meaning that clan affiliation is unimportant in kraal composition. As Table 1 shows in the appendix, in almost half (10) of the total number of kraals (22) the family heads were members of one clan only. In five such cases they belonged to the Ilaiser clan, the clan of healers. In the largest kraal, 14 family heads represented five different clans, and the second in size had 10 family heads from two clans only.

The kraal is divided into sections by cattle gates (*enkishómi*, pl. *inkishómin*), which is also the name for a kin group normally termed 'clan'. According to the patrilineal kinship system the inhabitants of each cattle gate are members of the clan of the family head. The wives retain their own clan name, but the descendants follow the patrilineal affiliation. Thus, within the polygynous family a clan identity is created and maintained.

Each cattle gate is further divided into gate post groups (*olgilátá*, pl. *ilgilát*) according to the alternate order of seniority of the wives. Therefore, members of each gate post form an identity group, which acts together in relation to the other gate post groups in cases of dispute. These groups, termed *olgilátá le táténé* (right-hand group, senior) and *olgilátá le kedyényé* (left-hand group, junior) are formed out of a need to organize the space within the kraal, and there is no connotation of superiority/inferiority in them.

Finally, the smallest unit of identity within the kraal is the individual's nuclear family, which consists of the mother and her children, and the father shared with his other wives. In early childhood the child develops a close affective bond with the mother, who is his/her closest defender in cases of dispute. The mother is the person who exerts pressure on the father to give a due share of the cattle to her male children.

Table 2 (appendix) shows the clan and sub-clan affiliation of mature males and females. All main clans are represented in the area, but their representation among

men and women is not evenly distributed. Ilaiser, Ilmarumai, Ilmamasita and Ilmollelian are the major clans, but on the sub-clan level we see significant differences between males and females. A number of women are members of Ilmerani, Ilmunnai and Ilmukurere sub-clans (a total of 42), while only six men belong to these groups. Such differences can be interpreted as deriving partly from the rule of sub-clan exogamy. Marriage partners have to be found from suitable clans from other areas. In most sub-clans the differences between males and females are not statistically significant. It may also be noted that although Ilaiser are well represented among both sexes, the members of the Enkidong' sub-clan, the group of healers, are rather few (6 males and 8 females). It is important to note that clan affiliation of each individual is commonly known in the whole Olkesumet area.

The individual thus develops an identity by being a member in various groups. In addition to the groups based on kin, the Maasai, particularly the males, build their identity also in age-groups. The system of age-sets (*olaji*, pl. *ilájjíjk*) is in fact one of the two basic components of the Maasai social organization. It cuts the society into groups according to age. The age-set system is reproduced by initiating all males into age sets during initiation periods, which alternate with periods when initiation is prohibited. Particularly during the warrior time a sense of a strong group identity is built up. Each age-set is further divided into three sub-groups, according to the relative age of the members. In earlier times there was a custom, still found among the northern Maasai sections, of dividing each age-set into right and left divisions. The age-set membership is lifelong, and also after the warrior period the age-set members act very much together where group action is needed. On public occasions, in various communal rituals etc. one finds the groups being formed on the basis of age-set membership. Also the gate owners of each kraal tend to be members of the same age-set.

Age-sets also form administrative units with leaders on local and higher levels. In fact, the age-set system forms a political organization, because there is no centralized

political authority covering the whole Maasai area (Jacobs, 1965). The age-set leaders (*olaigüénàni*, pl. *ilaiguenák*) of various local areas (*oloshô*, pl. *ilôshon*) are the only political leaders in the traditional system. The integration of these local and highly independent areas is facilitated by means of ritual leadership. The central authority in this domain is vested in *oloibóni kitók*, who acts as an integrating person in matters concerning the whole Maasai area.⁶ He also has the ritual authority over all age-sets. In addition, each age-set has an age-set leader (*olaunóni*, pl. *iláunok*) common to all sections, but his authority is ritual and symbolic, with little political significance. In matters concerning his own age-set and the conduct of its individual members *olaunóni* is, however, more powerful than *oloibóni kitók*. The symbolic and integrative significance of *olaunóni* becomes apparent in that he is not only the leader of his age-set, but he is also at the same time a member of the age-set, which is next-but-one above his age-mates. With this dual role of being originally a member of the age-set of his age mates, and of the age-set of his *olpírón*-elders (those who kindled the ritual fire in the initiation rituals of his age mates) he symbolizes the age-set in totality and the important connection between alternate age-sets. Thus we see that the political organization lacks centralized authority, and that the wider integration is facilitated through the age-set system and ritual leadership.

The Parakuyo Of The Lugoba Area

Another example is from a Parakuyo society in the Lugoba area, Western Bagamoyo District. Although the Parakuyo are linguistically and culturally closely related to the Kisongo Maasai, the conditions for creating identity patterns are quite different than in the Olkesumet area. The Parakuyo of Lugoba live as a small minority close to agricultural people with quite a different ethnic origin and culture. While living in clusters of a few kraals only close to populous agricultural settlements they are in constant contact with peasants and in several ways dependent on them. Ecological

and demographical factors would suggest extensive economic and cultural exchange, and also intermarriage, between these groups. The Parakuyo maintain, however, a distinctly pastoral identity, cultivation having only subsidiary significance. The proximity of agriculturalists makes it also possible for the pastoralists to utilize their services. When the Parakuyo cultivate⁷, they tend to use a hired work force for it, because it is available in the area.

Although the Parakuyo share very similar ecological conditions with the Bantu agriculturalists (Kwere, Zigua and Doe), they have different adaptation patterns, based on their experience as pastoralists. Division of labour between ethnic groups is more characteristic than the imitation of each other. There are a number of factors contributing to the maintenance of pastoral identity in these conditions.

First, the government has recognized the pastoral and cultural identity of the Parakuyo by establishing a village for Parakuyo pastoralists in the Mindu Tulieni area, west of Lugoba. It was established for Parakuyo pastoralists alone, while agro-pastoralists belonging to other ethnic groups had a village on the eastern side of Lugoba. The plan was never fully implemented, since the agriculturalists who were already established did not move away from the area allocated to the pastoralists. Also, cattle diseases and the unsuccessful tsetse eradication program prevented the pastoralists' move to the village and in fact later forced even those settled there to move to healthier areas. Such hazardous conditions made the government plans for sedentarization and an increased transition from transhumant pastoralism to settled agro-pastoralism even less attractive. For example, the size of the largest herd, whose owner was living in the designed village area, had decreased from almost 2000 in 1975 to less than 200 in 1983. He had rescued the rest of the herd to the area south of Chalinze. Nevertheless, the government recognition of the distinct Parakuyo identity as a cultural group based on a pastoral economy has diminished the fear that there is an attempt to incorporate them into other ethnic groups.

Second, although the Parakuyo live in the vicinity of peasants, they live, however, far

enough from them to maintain a degree of privacy. This condition is necessitated by the pastoral economy itself, which does not allow dense population because of the danger of soil erosion and land degradation. More permanent relations with non-pastoralists are also hampered by the pastoralists' recurrent moves after good pasture and flight in face of livestock diseases. Living conditions do not simply allow a permanent settlement pattern, and the Parakuyo have to dispense with lightly built huts with minimum investment. From the viewpoint of maintaining pastoral identity, the transhumant mode of economy may be precisely the factor which forces the Parakuyo to seek help from each other and rescues them from being dissolved as an ethnic group.

Third, the Parakuyo have inherited rules for regulating intermarriages with members of other ethnic groups. These rules allow marriage with members of such ethnic groups, which practise circumcision and clitoridectomy. Thus Parakuyo men marry girls from other ethnic groups, such as Kisongo Maasai, Arusha, and also Gogo from Dodoma area, while Parakuyo girls are only occasionally married to Kisongo Maasai and Arusha. Getting married to such groups as the Gogo is effectively restricted by the high bridewealth, which for a Parakuyo girl may be more than 60 heifers with additional gifts. Thus in-marrying to the Parakuyo society is far more frequent than out-marrying from it. This makes possible the exceptionally high incidence of polygynous marriages (Table 3) and the high rate of population increase. In the Lugoba area in 1983, 85% of the mature elders, i.e. the members of the Ilkidotu age-set, had more than one wife⁸, while the percentage of polygynous marriages of all married men was 62.4% (Hurskainen, 1984: 21). While the present demographic development meets the traditional ideal of society, in the long run this development has to meet its limits, when the resources available for pastoralism will be exhausted.

Parakuyo kraals were considerably smaller than those of the Maasai in Olkesumet. While the population of Olkesumet (1 043 in total) was living in only 22 kraals, the Parakuyo of the Lugoba area (771 in total) had a total of 64 kraals. Thus the average

number of people in a kraal was about 47 in Olkesumet and 12 among the Parakuyo. The big difference in kraal sizes was due to different kraal compositions. While the Pastoral Maasai preferred a kraal with several gates, the Parakuyo constructed kraals with only one or two entrances. The large majority of Parakuyo kraals had only one gate, and if there was another gate, it usually was a gate of a married son. Thus, the custom of the Pastoral Maasai of collecting gate owners without kin relations to the same kraal was not preferred by the Parakuyo.

These differences are also related to the very different environmental conditions. The space in Lugoba pastoral areas does not allow herding in such large herding groups as is possible in the large northern plains. The small kraal size may also reflect a tendency of the Parakuyo towards a more individualistic way of life in conditions where the defensive factors are no more crucial.

On the other hand, the Parakuyo have more extensive contacts with other ethnic groups than the Maasai in Olkesumet. This has not, however, led to a loss of pastoral identity, although the pastoralists have started to make use of the non-pastoral resources in increasing numbers. In appropriating available resources, division of labour is maintained, so that the activities related to pastoralism are taken care of by the Parakuyo themselves, while the work not directly linked with pastoralism is done by a hired work force. Thus herding, milking, dipping, vaccination, sale of livestock etc. are tasks taken care of by the Parakuyo themselves. Some other tasks, such as building houses, carrying water and cutting firewood are commonly done by a hired work force. Also, cultivation is carried out by paid labour, by using tractor ploughing where available, and hand hoeing otherwise. There are also a few Parakuyo, who themselves cultivate, but it is still more common to use a hired work force. Traditionally, house building has been women's work among the Parakuyo, as it continues to be among the Pastoral Maasai, but the availability of local labour has changed the tradition. The hired labour has also caused a radical change in house types. Instead of traditional flat-roofed

oblong constructions, the houses now resemble the local houses with ridged roofs. Only initiation houses are still built in the traditional manner (Hurskainen, 1984:157).

The way the local building habits have influenced the house building of the Parakuyo varies extensively. Further north in the Handeni area the Parakuyo are still building in the old fashion, as do the Parakuyo of the Usangu plain, southwest of Iringa. This is apparently related to the fact that the Parakuyo in these areas still largely build the houses themselves.

The Pastoral Maasai And The Parakuyo Compared

The living conditions and cultural features of the two ethnic groups discussed above have a number of interesting differences, but also some similarities.

These people are similar in that they trace a common descent to a place called Kerio (probably the valley of the Kerio-river landing to the southern edge of Lake Turkana). They speak different varieties of the Maa-language, which belongs to the Eastern Nilotic language group. They have a common clan-system; i.e. Parakuyo clans and Pastoral Maasai clans are equivalent, although clan names are partly different. On the sub-clan level the equivalence is not, however, complete, due to the fact that because of uneven growth of different clans and sub-clans, new sub-clans and their sub-groups have to be formed in order to open a possibility of marrying with people, with whom marriage was forbidden because of the rule of sub-clan exogamy. The age-set systems of both societies are related, and their way of measuring time is interdependent as well, the Parakuyo following about a year after the Kisongo Maasai. They are not, however, fully identical, and both societies have ritual systems of their own, within which ritual age-set processes take place. Both societies practise pastoralism, which is an ideology rather than merely a mode of production.

The differences between these societies derive partly from different ecological conditions. The Parakuyo are not in their present areas only because of their free will. Having occupied much of what is present-

ly inhabited by the Pastoral Maasai, the Parakuyo were driven away from their former areas in the 19th century after losing wars with the Pastoral Maasai. The Parakuyo had to try to find new pastures in areas less suitable for pastoralism, and they often came into close contacts with peasants, sometimes becoming temporarily dependent on them because of having lost livestock. Some of these new herding areas were not large enough or otherwise suitable for supporting the growing population. Many of the Parakuyo of the Lugoba area moved there voluntarily in the 1930s from the Handeni area, where impoverished pastures did not support them any more. These new conditions were quite different from the old ones, the minority status and the close proximity of peasants being now characteristic features.

The changed conditions were also a major factor in developing new modes of cooperation with the new neighbours. Instead of large kraals with several gates they started to build kraals with a single gate only, and thus developed more individualistic tendencies. The availability of a work force in building, carrying water and firewood etc. made it possible to alleviate the work load of Parakuyo women. In Olkesumet such tasks were still the responsibility of women.

The Parakuyo used these new possibilities also in cultivation by hiring labour. Also, the women found possibilities of earning money by tending chicken and selling eggs to peasants (the Parakuyo do not eat eggs and chicken themselves). Parakuyo women are also found in market places as far as Kariakoo in Dar-es-Salaam selling medicines available from trees. Knowledge of such medicines is a communal tradition among the Parakuyo, but not widely known among other local ethnic groups. The women of Olkesumet do not have similar possibilities because of huge distances to trading centers.

The Parakuyo are also more market-oriented than the Maasai in Olkesumet. This may be attributed directly to the new possibilities offered to them by the proximity of the capital city and other densely populated areas. Dar-es-Salaam alone is a rapidly growing market area for pastoral products, and the Parakuyo have made use

of this. Livestock is sold locally in monthly auctions, but better price expectations in the capital have tempted many Parakuyo to drive the cattle to Dar-es-Salaam and sell them there. This business also has its hazards, because the price fluctuates greatly depending on the balance between demand and supply at each moment. If a Parakuyo cattle seller drives the herd to the capital at the time when the railway wagons full of cattle from the interior are unloaded, he cannot expect to even get the price he paid for them. Neither is it possible to wait for an increase in price, which surely will take place, because there is no place for herding. Driving the animals back (a distance of about 150 km) would take time and weaken the animals, which again would have to be brought back to Dar-es-Salaam for a new attempt of selling. Often the only rational solution is to sell the animals at the price of the day with a big loss.

The trade of cattle, managed by the Parakuyo warriors, has for some time extended as far as to the Dodoma area, where cattle are bought from Gogo owners and driven all the way to Dar-es-Salaam and sold there. In fact the Parakuyo compete with train transportation. The money received is used for buying new cattle either for commercial purposes or for domestic use. Trading with cattle is surely an important new possibility of accumulating wealth, but it is a very hazardous enterprise. As far as I know, there are no professional cattle traders among the Parakuyo. Trading is used as a quick means of accumulating (or losing) herds large enough to support the family, and the aim of these traders is to return to local pastoralism. This fact is an indication of a desire to maintain the pastoral identity and to invest in livestock, although non-pastoral means must sometimes be used for attaining this end.

The Maasai of Olkesumet have much larger herding areas in their use, but they are also dryer and less productive. They do not have access to such large markets as Dar-es-Salaam, and they cannot use cattle trading as a subsidiary means of accumulating herds. Ecological conditions favour the cooperation of large groups in working out grazing arrangements. On the other hand, herding in Olkesumet does not face such threats as are imposed by trypanosomiasis,

East-Coast fever, many tick-borne diseases etc. as in Lugoba. A degree of security is therefore maintained; and, after all, pastoralism is the most viable adaptation in the Olkesumet area.

The Maasai And The Wider Society

What was said above about the similarities and differences of social formations and economic practice is largely based on the conclusions which could be drawn on the basis of observation. Another level, also crucially important, is the level of mythology, where important classifications pertinent to our theme are made. Although we may never get to know how these myths came about, we know how important they are in legitimizing practice. It is precisely on this level that we get the legitimacy for the social and economic relations, not only between the Maasai themselves, but also between the Maasai and other ethnic groups.

Maasai mythology clearly divides, in an idealized fashion, mankind into three distinct groups: the Maasai, the Torrobo and the Meek (Hollis, 1905; Hurskainen, 1987; Olsson, 1982; Galaty, 1982). The relations of the Maasai and the Torrobo are a theme in several myths and their different versions.

Dangers Of Losing Identity

The surest way of maintaining and communicating pastoral identity is to adhere to the pastoral mode of production. So far, the Parakuyo and the Kisongo Maasai have succeeded in following the ideal, but the Arusha, for example, are ideologically pastoralists but mainly peasants in practice. Shrinking pastures are a reality, particularly in Parakuyo areas, when, at the same time as the population increases, the areas suitable for pastoralism are used for agriculture or as pastures for 'modern' livestock development projects. So far, there is not much hope of a 'permanent' settlement of the pastoral issue of the Parakuyo. Since 1975, when unsuccessful attempts were made to allocate special pastoral areas to

pastoralists, they have been at the mercy of erratic livestock diseases and land tenure policies, which have been disadvantageous to traditional pastoralism. If trypanosomiasis cannot be brought under strict control, there will be no chances for extended pastoralism in the traditional sense. Before long, the Parakuyo will have to seek for alternative means for subsistence in order to survive. If, on the other hand, means for bringing trypanosomiasis under control would be found, vast areas of unused land would become open for pastoralism, and the Parakuyo could expand to those areas by using their pastoral expertise.

The central government has several times tried to persuade the pastoralists to abandon traditional clothing and decorations and to acquire a new external appearance by using 'modern' and 'decent' clothing. The Arusha alone have done this on a large scale, as well as educated Pastoral Maasai and Parakuyo individuals. The pressure from the side of the government still pops up in discussions with the Parakuyo and the Maasai. Clothing is known to be more than merely shelter against cold and heat. Decorations are used extensively not only for improving external beauty. Clothing and decorations are important means of communication particularly for the Maa-speakers themselves. They are such an integral part of the internal communication that the loss of them would threaten the ethnic identity. In fact, the Parakuyo as a small minority group seem to be more strict than the Pastoral Maasai in clothing themselves in the traditional manner. By wearing distinct clothing they communicate to each other and to outsiders different identity levels, such as the membership of a larger ethnic group (a Maa-speaker), of an ethnic sub-group (Pastoral Maasai, Parakuyo), the area of location (Kisongo, Iladoe), whether they are married or not, clan and age-set membership etc.

The Pastoral Maasai and Parakuyo have been more reluctant than other ethnic groups to provide their children with modern education. A number of factors contribute to this. One common factor is the unsuitability of full-time school education for pastoral pursuits. Children are needed for tending livestock, since all kinds of animals cannot be tended as one

herd. Small stock is normally tended by children of school age, and it is not easy to find a supplementary work force. The periodic moves necessitated by ecological conditions increase the uncertainty of being able to continue attending school. The most important factor is, however, the fear of losing ethnic identity. While being at school, the children are beyond their parents' control and may be implanted with alien ideas. The school syllabi are said to be biased towards agricultural pursuits, and the needs of pastoralists are neglected. The subjects intended to give the students practical skills are not relevant to pastoralists. Cultivation of maize, cassava, cotton, cabbage, tomatoes etc., and the hatching of chicken do not belong to the tradition of Maasai and Parakuyo. If there is nothing in the syllabus related to pastoralism except chicken rearing, it is no wonder that pastoralists do not see much point in such education. The experiences in Mindu Tulieni school were disappointing, and before long most of the school places were occupied by the children of the peasants, who lived illegally in the village. The experiences in the Kisongo Maasai area were more encouraging, because there were no other ethnic groups competing for places in school, and because teaching subjects and training directly relevant to pastoralism had been added to the syllabus.

In the long run the biggest danger to the identity of ethnic groups will be posed by the worsening population pressure. If the discouraging prospects pictured by Myers (1989) materialize, there will be a considerable flow from pastoralism to other occupations. Severe land degradation, true already in many areas (Ståhl, 1989), will force the pastoralists as well as the planners to find new ways of adaptation.

Can The Interests Meet?

It is attested to in several cases that the interests of the State and of the local groups, whether they are based on ethnicity, common interests or whatsoever, seldom coincide. Yet they are not totally opposed each other either. In both of the above examples, it is in the interest of the State that the areas concerned are appropriated for the benefit of the State. It is also assumed

that the appropriation is carried out through livestock rearing, the produce being mainly meat and dairy products. Because livestock development pursued by the State and pastoral development, which is in the interest of the pastoralists, are not the same thing (Salih, 1990), there is an inevitable clash of interests. The Maasai of Olkesumet and the Parakuyo of Lugoba are not so directly production-oriented as the State would like them to be. From the viewpoint of the state, the villagization program, emphasis on formal education, adult literary campaigns, destocking programs, cattle breed improvement programs etc. are measures for improving the standard of life of pastoralists as well as means for increasing productivity in these areas.

It is ironical that the pastoralists see a threat in these programs, which are intended to improve their lives, and resist them. It is sad that although the State's interests and their own wishes are on the same line - the improvement of the standard of living and of production - government efforts have so often been doomed to failure. Perhaps too much change is introduced at once, and this is done without giving due attention to the views of the pastoralists. And how do we get the views of the pastoralists after all? What is the body that represents those views? Does their representative invited to the planning office have authority to represent their views? Or does even the elected village council represent the important views, the views of those, who are de facto influential within the pastoral society? Is it so that the village chairman often plays his own political game with personal economic interests in mind? Why are there still two administrative systems, the traditional one and the State-imposed system with a village council and a number of committees? Do these systems cooperate in any way? And which of these two systems has the real power in the society?

There are certainly more questions than answers, although we should look for the latter. At least two measures should be taken in order to remedy the situation. First, communication between the real center of power in society and the planning agents of the State should be made effective already in planning phases. Second, the

traditional culture should be seen as an asset and the cultural identity of the society should be reinforced and by no means threatened. Although these seem to be self-evident facts, they have not, and will not take place without conscious efforts. It is not that the pastoralists behave irrationally by not believing what they are told by the planners. As long as there is no success story to prove the excellency of the new systems, the pastoralists cannot be blamed for their reservedness. What is at stake is the whole cultural system, a unique adaptation to given types of circumstances, and sheer existence in the worst case.

Conclusions

In this paper I have discussed different levels of identities as they are seen from the viewpoint of pastoralists. By taking examples of the Pastoral Maasai in Olkesumet and of the Parakuyo from the Lugoba area, I have tried to demonstrate how these people build their identities in many different groups, starting from the group of full brothers and sisters, and continuing to the group of half-brothers and sisters of the same gate post, and to the group of all half-brothers and sisters of both gate-posts, and further to the group comprised of all kraal members, many of which are not relatives. Relevant identity groups are also sub-clans and clans, as well as clan-groups. Very important for the socialization of males are the groups formed within the age-set system, which in fact forms the traditional political organization. The age-sets are hierarchically ordered, so that any elder age-set has control over age-sets junior than itself.

Both of these ethnic groups identify themselves also as members of the whole Maaspeaking population, large numbers of which live in Kenya. A sense of identity is maintained through oral traditions which tell about their common origin and history, and through the interrelated ritual system, where rituals marking transitions in developmental phases of age-sets have important integrating functions.

Another type of identity is being consciously created and strengthened by the central government, which tries to make the people accept the goals it has set. Although

the State apparatus through its organs tries to convince the people that it is a People's Republic and that the people themselves are decision-makers, the pastoralists have experienced that their voice has not been heard. The pastoralists are, of course, aware of their citizenship. But does it mean that they are prepared to sacrifice their personal and ethnic interests for the benefit of the State? Do they think that the well-being of the State ensures their own well-being, and that their support of the State does not endanger their own ethnic identity, their language etc.? The conscious Tanzanian policy of discouraging ethnic loyalties and emphasizing nationhood has made the pastoralists reserved, particularly because they are in the extreme periphery of the State apparatus.

It remains to be seen what kinds of effects the present political upheavals in Eastern

Europe and the Soviet Union will have on the political systems in Africa. It has been surprising to see the persistence of ethnic identities and their significance for the well-being of the people. Recently the ex-president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, initiated discussions on the viability of a multi-party system in Tanzania. The future will show whether development will lead to such a system and whether the disadvantages of the present one-party system can ever be overcome in a multi-party system. Problems will not be overcome if parties will be formed on ethnic lines. We have learned that national identity cannot be built by destroying existing ethnic groups and loyalties. What is needed is the recognition of a nation-state composed of groups with many kinds of loyalties, all of which operate simultaneously.

Appendix

Table 1. Number of people living in Maasai kraals in Olkesumet, Kiteto District, November 1984.

Kraal no.	Men	Clans*	Women	"Children"***	Total
1	5	2	13	48	66
2	5	1	9	33	47
3	2	1	5	21	28
4	10	2	19	52	82
5	3	1	4	20	27
6	3	3	4	24	31
7	2	1	6	18	26
8	4	1	7	17	28
9	14	5	24	75	113
10	7	2	11	43	61
11	5	3	8	29	42
12	2	1	6	26	34
13	4	1	9	25	38
14	4	2	9	41	54
15	5	3	8	35	48
16	4	1	11	41	56
17	4	3	13	36	53
18	3	1	5	19	27
19	9	3	11	52	72
20	2	1	5	16	23
21	4	2	9	33	46
22	3	2	10	28	41
Total	104		206	733	1043

* This column indicates the number of clans to which the family heads in each kraal belong.

** By "children" are meant those descendants of mothers who are still dependent on the childhood kraal and are mostly unmarried.

Table 2. *Clan membership of adult males and females in Olkesumet, November 1984*

CLAN (Enkishomi)	SUBCLAN (Olgilata)	MALES	FEMALES
Ilaiser	Enkidong'	6	8
Iipartimaro		13	18
Iiparsingo		5	11
Iloodokishu		10	8
Iiparsapuko		5	0
Iimarumai	Iibereti	16	24
Iimerani		3	10
Iipojos		5	6
Iimakupera		3	4
Iimosuja		3	
Isiria		3	
Iimamasita	Iicagei	10	7
Iikiyani		8	8
Iimunnai		1	12
Iimarapai		1	
Iimollelian	Iimoinko	7	12
Iimukurere		2	20
Iikipuyoni		4	5
Iiltaarrosero	Ilaisi	5	7
?			1
Ilukumai	Iisitayo	3	3
?			2
Ilaitayok	Iisimaga	4	4
Iimuhon		1	5
Iiserokineji		2	
Iiserei		1	
Iipojos	Isiria	3	1
Iimakesen		?	2
Iipasrsangui	Iikipuyei		1
Total		116	191

Table 3. *Parakuyo population in Lugoba area, February 1983.*

Place	Men	Women	Children	Total
Miono	8	17	47	72
Mindu Tulieni	12	28	64	104
Nadanya	13	37	97	147
Mbugwa	14	34	68	116
Mavi ya Ng'ombe	25	54	126	205
Pondo/Msoga	14	27	86	127
Total	86	197	488	771

Notes

- 1 Exceptions are Somalia and some areas of the Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as some other Sahelian countries, where ecological conditions do not allow extensive farming. But also in countries with significant pastoral minorities they tend to be neglected. See e.g. Lewis, 1961; Markakis, 1987; Ahmed, 1987; Salih, 1987.
- 2 It may well be argued that there are very few nation-states in Africa, if we take the term to mean a state composed of one nation. Typically we find multi-ethnic states with artificial borders cutting through areas of different ethnic groups (Touval, 1969: 107).
- 3 The data on the Maasai of Olkesumet is based on the survey carried out by the author in November-December 1984, and that of the Parakuyo has been accumulated in various phases between 1975 and 1989.
- 4 In conjunction with the transfer of the District office to Olkesumet, a deep bore-hole was drilled close to the ancient well. By the time of the field research (November 1984) the pumping system did not, however, work effectively.
- 5 Jacobs (1965: 228) gives an average number of seven cattle gates in Pastoral Maasai kraals in 1965. It is not known whether the smaller number of cattle gates in Olkesumet should be interpreted as a permanent deviation from the average or as a sign of diminishing kraal sizes.
- 6 In fact, there are more than one *oloiboni kitok* in the large Maasai area. The *oloiboni* of the Kisongo section (Olkesumet belongs to that section) is, however, considered to be the initiator in matters concerning the opening and closing up of initiation periods, while other sections, including the Parakuyo, follow some time afterwards.
- 7 In 1975 probably less than 10% of the Parakuyo in the Lugoba area had fields of their own under cultivation. In 1983, the situation was not much different, partly due to the extensive moves of the pastoralists because of trypanosomiasis and an unidentified cattle disease; Hurskatnen, 1984: 14-19.
- 8 The estimate of Rigby (1985: 142) of 70% is a good guess, yet too low. Although differently claimed by Rigby, accurate statistics were available in 1985. See Hurskatnen, 1984: 17-20.

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