

THE LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY:
A HISTORY OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE WESTERN SERENGETI, TANZANIA

By

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If 'it takes a village to raise a child,' it takes a world community to produce a dissertation.

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*Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

William Butler Yeats, 1899

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TRANSLITERATION, ORTHOGRAPHY AND GLOSSARY

Texts that are quoted in the body of the paper are cited in footnotes. In cases where I want to give the reader a fuller sense of the context of an interview or various versions of a particular narrative without interrupting the flow of the text, I have included these in the appendix.¹ The following conventions are used throughout the text.

1. Significant omission of the speaker's words is represented with three dots surrounded by brackets [. . .]
2. Slight omission of the speaker's words due to stumbling or repetition is represented by three dots . . .
3. A pause by the speaker is represented by three dashes ---
4. Explanations, actions or omissions are included in brackets, without italics []
5. Long narratives are indented and set in italics to set them off from the rest of the text. All texts are translated from either a local language or Swahili; where untranslated words appear in the indented quotations they are represented without italics and where a local language word appears in the body of the dissertation it is represented with italics.

All of these narratives were collected in interviews and not in performance situations. They are dialogic in nature, with frequent interruptions and pause for assent. Different sections of one narrative may be told in different settings for different purposes. All of this makes it difficult

¹ I have followed many of the conventions in Isabel Hofmeyr, *"We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told:" Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994), pp. xi-xiii.

to extract a "standard" version. Therefore, long quoted sections in the text represent only one of many variations of the telling and tend to be rather loose and free flowing accounts. Footnotes for interviews include the name of the informant, village where the interview took place, the date of the interview, and the ethnic group and gender of the informant in parenthesis.

Standard Orthography

The linguistic conventions used follow the orthography proposed by Muniko, oMagige and Ruel in the Kuria-English Dictionary. Because this is the only published dictionary currently available for any of the Mara languages I have chosen to use this as the standard form, following Swahili orthography. Mara languages use seven distinct vowels. This means that in using the standard orthography two single letters each represent sounds which are pronounced differently. Muniko, oMagige and Ruel resolve the problem in this way:

The open and closed 'e' are both written as 'e' and the open and closed 'o' are both written as 'o.' Where, however, the sound difference discriminates between two words that are otherwise identical their respective pronunciation is given in the entry in parenthesis immediately following the word itself. In these cases:

open 'o' as in the English 'hot' is written 'o.'

closed 'o' as in the English 'open' is written 'ou.'

open 'e' as in the English 'end' is written 'e.'

closed 'e' as in the English 'rein' is written 'ei.'

thus: -kora (prncd. -koura), to scrape away; -kora (prncd. -kora), to do, make. -kenga (prncd. -keinga), to ward off, parry; -kenga (prncd. -kenga), to cut, sever.

Other conventions used in the Kuria dictionary include the following. Long vowels are indicated by doubling. All vowels preceding 'mb', 'nch', 'nd', 'ng', 'nk' and 'rr' are pronounced long and not always indicated as such in the orthography. The nasalized 'ng' (pronounced as the English word 'singing') is written as in Swahili ng'. A trilled or rolled 'r' is written 'rr.' All vowels are sounded, including those at the end of a word. The use of 'w' as a quasi-vowel is avoided and 'w' used only as a consonant. Muniko *et al* maintain that because there are very few words

distinguished by tone alone, Kuria is not to be considered a tonal language, although intonation is important. Therefore no marks of intonation are used.²

Names of languages, people and place names are used without the prefixes. Therefore, the language Egikuria, the Abakuria people and the place Bukuria all become Kuria, distinguished by context.

Glossary of Mara Words Used in the Text

(In Nata unless otherwise indicated)

- abanyikora -- generation-set members in power (Ikizu, Zanaki)
- agecha -- famine
- aghaso -- ritual of purification for those who kill a lion, leopard or Maasai
- ahumbo -- distant fields for crops
- aka -- homestead
- akoromo -- digging stick (Ikoma)
- amachi -- house for young unmarried boys
- amang'ana ga kare -- matters of the past, history
- ambere -- drum
- ambirisi -- red oat grass, *Themeda triandra*
- amuma -- oath (Ngoreme)
- amusera -- rain medicine (Ishenyi), omoshana (Ikizu)
- anchara -- famine, path
- ang'ombe umwando -- cattle given to the clan at inheritance
- anyumba -- house
- arachana -- topi skin worn over the shoulder for elderly men
- aring'a -- oath
- asaraka -- gazelle skin worn by women as an apron
- asaro -- circumcision ceremony
- ase or ahase -- soil, land
- asi -- hunter/gatherers
- asimoka -- to sprout up, to wake up, the rise of a river (ensemoka in Kuria), origins
- asimooro -- livestock corral
- asire -- debt between women who borrow goods as neighbors
- bao -- board game common throughout Africa
- bene -- the people of, abahiri in Ikizu
- bisa -- enemy, Maasai
- budodi -- wire wrapped bracelets or anklets
- buhoro -- whole, healthy

² S. M. Muniko, B. Muita oMagige and M. J. Ruel, eds., Kuria-English Dictionary (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, for the International African Institute, 1996), pp. v-vi.

chashabashi -- ivory bracelets worn by elders of a certain rank
 chesiri -- women's self-help farming groups (Ngoreme)
 chubha -- south
 ebereri -- fall pits for hunting wildebeest
 ebeshona -- strips of hide worn ritually on fingers (Ikizu)
 ebimenyo -- settlement sites
 egeshoko -- log which closes the livestock corral, ekeshoko (Ngoreme), egesaku (Kuria), doorway.
 egghise -- black wildebeest or cattle tail used ritually for eldership titles
 egitara -- grain storage bin
 ekeburu -- temporary huts near to the fields
 ekebuse -- sandy upland soils
 ekchita/ebchita -- doorway or gateway
 ekelwe/ebelwe -- ghosts, spirits of the dead
 ekerisho -- grazing land
 ekerongori -- thin porridge for drinking
 ekinweso -- ceremony of purification, sanctification (Ikizu), usually with fire, ikoroso (Ishenyi and
 Ngoreme), shishiga (Ikoma)
 ekinyariri -- month of green flush after the burns (August or September)
 ekireri -- leader of the generation-set (Ishenyi)
 ekishomba -- state of ritual impurity, danger, blood shed between families
 ekitana/ebitana -- medicine bundles
 ekyaro/ebyaro -- ritually controlled lands, ikiaro (Kuria), clan lands
 emigiro -- avoidance
 enchobe -- horn of the generation-set, ekombyo (Zanaki)
 crisambwa/emisambwa -- spirits of the land, spirits of lineage ancestors, places where spirits of the
 ancestors who guard the land are buried
 eseghero -- clay bottom-land soils
 -gaba -- to divide the inheritance
 -gonka -- to suck at the breast
 -guha -- to grow old
 -gutaacha asaiga -- ceremony to come into your age-set
 hamate -- clan, place, strangers
 -haraga -- to prepare soil for planting in the dry season
 hengere -- short people
 -ibaka -- to praise oneself
 ikwabhe -- Maasai
 injama -- Kuria secret council of the territory
 irigiha/amagiha -- hearthstones
 -itaberi -- to bless the land
 kang'ati -- leader of the generation-set (Nata)
 kaswende -- syphilis
 -kerera -- the walk of the generation-set
 kicheneni -- of "pure descent"
 kigori -- mass circumcision ceremony to close an age-set
 -kerani -- to greet, to exchange (difference in stress)
 -kunguha -- to grow old
 kwawibancha -- front door of the house

kwibiserani angibo -- ritual to remove impurity, to reconcile two families with blood between them
 kyawisiko -- emergency back door of the house
 magoro -- feet or legs
 mame -- maternal uncle
 masabha -- north
 masubho -- secrets, medicines of eldership ranks or in general
 materego -- woodland, wilderness
 -menya -- to build
 mkamwana -- daughter-in-law, woman married by another woman to produce her heir.
 msororo -- beer party in which participants contribute in turn to the preparation
 ntemi -- Sukuma chief or Ikizu rainmaker/chief
 -musa -- to bless by sprinkling
 mwami -- Zanaki rainmaker's title
 mwanangwa -- colonial headman
 mwianani -- ogre, monster of folk tales
 mwiro/bwiro -- non-blacksmith or non-potter
 mwisenge -- paternal aunt
 ndezi -- leather and cowry shell bracelet used in the investiture of the Ikizu mtemi
 ng'ombe ya baki -- the cow of the young woman
 ntemi -- ritual scar on right breast (Sorjo)
 nyancha -- west or lake, specifically Lake Victoria
 nyangi -- celebration of life stages or eldership titles
 nyika -- wilderness
 nyina -- mother
 -nywa -- to drink
 obokima -- in Swahili "ugali", thick porridge eaten as staple food
 obosongo -- arrow poison
 obugabho -- prophecy, healing, divination
 obugo -- fortified settlement (Ngoreme)
 oburwe -- finger millet
 omnibi -- wealthy man, cattle
 omoboibororu/abibororu -- native born
 omogimba -- rainmaker
 omogomba -- childless woman, barren
 omogongo wa mwensi -- medicine of the generation-set (Ngoreme), emigongo (Zanaki)
 omogongo -- back
 omogore/abagore -- a person who is bought for food during the famine
 omokina/abakina -- speaker
 omokoro/abakoro -- the elders, ancestors
 omokuungu/abakuungu -- old woman
 omorema/abarema -- farmer
 omorokingi -- eldership title of the Nata
 omoroti/abaroti -- dream prophets
 omoseese/abaseese -- slave or dog
 omosimano/abasimano -- stranger
 omosimbe/abasimbe -- independent woman, managing her own homestead and family, not married
 omosino -- widow

omotangi -- leader of the generation-set (Ngoreme)
 omotoro -- gift of food
 omotware -- male wife, married by an independent woman
 omugabho/abagabho -- prophet
 omugambi/abagambi -- speaker
 omuhabe -- poor person, orphan
 omunase -- prophet (Ikizu)
 omunya -- mouth
 omuryango -- outer room of a woman's house for keeping small stock at night
 omusangura -- a kind of tree at *emisambwa* sites
 omwame -- wealthy man, or woman
 omwerechi/abawerechi -- speaker (Ikizu)
 omwikarabutu -- woman specialized in circumcision ceremonies
 omwisani -- friend, bloodbrother (*wa saraga, bo maguta*)
 omwiti -- the one who hits the lion first, *omunoti*, the one who hits second
 orokoba -- protection medicine around the land or a hide rope for milking
 orubago -- fence
 oruberi -- settlement
 orutani -- long distance trade, to Sukuma
 orutanya -- long staff of the generation-set leader
 -ragera -- to eat porridge, to eat
 ribancha -- homestead yard
 rihaha -- rinderpest
 rikora/amakora -- generation-set
 risaga -- work party in which labor is rewarded with feasting and beer
 -risi -- to herd livestock
 rogoro -- the east
 -rota -- to dream
 ruaki -- stone fort for protection during a raid (Nata)
 -sagari chatugo -- cattle clientship
 saiga -- ago-set, asega (Ngoreme)
 sarara -- lungs
 -sengera -- to propitiate an ancestral spirit, "to beseech"
 sesera -- iron bracelets
 -sisimoka -- to spring up, as in to wake up or to sprout up from the ground
 sukubi -- cattle hump
 -tindeka -- to store, to bury the dead
 turi -- blacksmith or potter
 utemi -- chiefship (Ikizu)
 yowe -- alarm call

FOREWORD

When I was choosing a research site it seemed wise to return to the Mara Region where my husband and I spent six years working with the Tanzania Mennonite Church in the coordination and facilitation of community development projects. This work took us to all parts of the region, developing significant personal relationships in many places. I would thus have a natural set of contacts and social networks through which to begin my work. But more than that my desire to return to graduate school and to write African history was born out of my experiences and friendships in the Mara Region—and so I felt a debt there.

I hoped that the formal study of African history would give depth and understanding to patterns that I saw in operation, but about which I was ill-equipped to make sense. At that point, as a development worker, I saw history as a tool of empowerment, providing the means for local people to understand themselves well enough to take development into their own hands, rather than relying on help from the outside. Yet how I, as an outsider learning local history, would facilitate this was never clear. At least I hoped to be able to tell the history of a people whose "voice" had not been heard, to show the significance of a people and a place which had been seen as an empty spot on the map. It was this love and respect, also mixed with some amount of paternalism, that allowed me to think I was needed to recover this neglected history. Idealism falls hard in graduate school and I am now less naive and more skeptical, but no less driven to present a history from the perspective of those who live it, even if it is told in and moderated by my own voice.

When I returned to the Mara Region to do my research I was returning to a place that seemed a lot like home. This was the place where I had given birth to my second child, bumped

endlessly over the dusty roads and sat with friends over cups of sweet milky tea. I learned to speak as a child does but had been given responsibilities such as an adult has and struggled for what seemed right. I had seen close friends die and had new babies named after me. It was a place that I "felt" as well as intellectually "knew." It was a set of landscapes and people that I had come to love and which had deeply changed me.

When we were searching for a place to live it seemed prudent to avoid living on church property or in direct affiliation with the church in order to distinguish old roles from new. It also seemed important to live in a rural village that still functioned as a community in order to be part of the agricultural cycle. Since this was conceived as a regional study I also wanted to be somewhat centrally located with transportation at hand. As much as these criteria were taken seriously, in the end the decision to move to Nata was based on personal and subjective choices. Nata is in some ways the smallest and least significant historically of all of the ethnic groups in the area. Yet by living here, Nata narratives, language and custom took on a centrality they would not otherwise have had.

The decision to move to Nata was based on a personal relationship and invitation from Nyawagamba Magoto. We got to know him as a local development coordinator and a lay church leader. He is an energetic man, committed to introducing innovation in everything from imported dairy cows to wheel-thrown, glazed pottery. We came to learn that he is also part of a large and influential Nata family--the eighteen sons and daughters of the local patriarch, Magoto Mossi. Magoto's children and grandchildren are influential in the community as politicians, teachers, development workers, church leaders, businessmen and village council members. One son has a university education and another son was the founder of the first cattle herders' cooperative in the region, "Wafugaji wa Mara," in the 1950s, and a former member of parliament. Magoto himself went through all of the eldership titles, holding one of the highest ranks until he renounced this

position later in life. He was also an innovator, introducing the first tractors and grain mills in the area. One of his daughters was the first Nata girl to attend school. Magoto was wealthy, his cattle numbering in the thousands at one time. In the early 1930s he opposed the Nata Chief, Rotigenga, and left to live in Ikizu--nearly 400 Nata followed him. For better or worse my research in Nata was under the protective shield of Magoto's legacy.¹

Nyawagamba promised that if we would come to live in Nata he would build us a house and help to facilitate the research. My husband, two sons (9 and 12 years old at the time) and I arrived in Nata at the beginning of February, 1995, after having spent a month in Dar es Salaam clearing the formalities and doing an initial survey of the archives. We found the round walls and roof framework of the house up, with Nyawagamba rushing to finish thatching before the big rains began. We camped near the house for two weeks in the rain while the house was being finished--our lives and possessions open to all who walked down the path. When we finally moved into the house we had become known locally as "*wazungu wa Nyawagamba*" (Nyawagamba's foreigners).

Our house sat in the small village of Bugerera, administratively part of the larger village of Mbiso on the main trunk road between Musoma and Arusha. Bugerera is the place where many Mbiso families have some of their fields and send second wives or elder sons out to live for the farming season. It lies on the boundary between Nata and Ngoreme. Just over the hill one finds the Ngoreme village of Mosongo and the no-man's wilderness of cattle raiders and thieves. When we first drove out to Bugerera, after having committed ourselves to live there, we drove the ten kilometers from Mbiso without seeing more than a few isolated homesteads. I was sure that my

¹ One of the ways in which I fulfilled the ties of reciprocal obligation to the Magoto family was by helping them to write a personal history of Magoto. I am now working with the Swahili manuscript by Mwalimu Nyamaganda Magoto Mossi, assisted by Masoye Faini and Chuba Faini on behalf of the Magoto Family, "*Historia ya Mzee Magoto Mossi Magoto, Katika Maisha Yake*," Nata, 1996.

research would be doomed by living where there were no people. Yet it was the location of Bugerera that taught me to look for people in the hills rather than on the flood plain where the car could travel and to see the relationship between larger villages and their related farming satellite communities.

Since we were friends and colleagues of Nyawagamba's before coming to live with him nothing between us could be settled on the basis of payment for services. We were forced into functioning in an "economy of affection" and learning the unspoken rules of reciprocity.² We did not pay rent on the house, a salary for Adeja (Nyawagamba's wife) to help with household chores, compensation for long days spent on interviews instead of farming, or for the milk, meat and vegetables that were frequently provided from the Magoto family surplus. We, in turn, provided transportation to Musoma or Mugumu for shopping, hospital or other emergencies. We sometimes bought gifts for the family when we went to the town. My husband, Peter, who volunteered in Serengeti National Park, made arrangements with Serengeti tourist hotels to buy Nata vegetables, fruits, milk and cream and transported them to the hotels when he went to the park. This system of reciprocity was also used for the colleagues that assisted me in the other ethnic groups outside of Nata. These colleagues spent a lot of their own time and resources to facilitate my research without direct compensation. I was told by Nyawagamba when I left that it was better to leave myself in the debt of others, rather than the other way around, so that they would feel free to continue the relationship when I returned.

The Magoto children incorporated us into their family as brother, sister-in-law and children. We were greeted in this way throughout Nata—treated with both the respect and

² Reference to the "economy of affection" from Goran Hyden, Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

obligation which followed these titles. This allowed me the freedom to travel alone with my brothers-in-law, or ask for help from my sisters-in-law, and allowed the children a protective shield against the curiosity of school children. The knowledge I have gained is a "situated knowledge" which is firmly seated in a particular social network and sense of place.

From the moment I arrived in Nata it was clear that the Magoto family had taken us, and my research, as their collective project. Nyawagamba talked to elders before I came and prepared them to share the history that they knew. I told the family that I intended to spend the first three months studying Nata so that I could do interviews in the local language rather than Swahili, in which I was already fluent. This also seemed convenient since it was the rainy season and it would be almost impossible to travel for the next three months. I asked the wife of one of the Magoto brothers who lived nearby to help me with language learning and we worked at it daily with a tape recorder, notebook and pen.

By the beginning of March, soon after we were living in our new house, Nyawagamba and his brother Mayani decided that it was time for me to start research. They were anxious that I should start as early as possible and not waste time on language study, since I was sure to "pick it up" without any difficulty anyway. Nyawagamba and Mayani sat in our house for a couple of days writing a list of the things that I should learn if I was to know Nata history and culture. They envisioned this list as a set of topics to be systematically covered in my interviews. It was entitled "The History of the Nata People" (in Swahili, *Historia ya Wanata*). This list is reproduced in full on Table F-1.

Soon after the list was finished Nyawagamba and Mayani arranged an interview with Megasa Mokiri in Motokeri. He had taken the top eldership title in Nata and was known as a person knowledgeable about the past. He was also in some indirect way related to Magoto and so bound to honor the request for an interview. When we arrived he was out drinking a neighbor's

Figure F-1: Topics for the Study of Nata History
(Mayani Magoto and Nyawagamba Magoto, Bugerera, 1 March 1995)

History of the Nata People

1. *Asimoka* (origins) of the Nata
2. *Ukwengera* (growth) of the Nata
3. *Obokwiri* (marriage) of the Nata
4. *Amborori* (divorce) of the Nata
5. *Amasambwa* (spirits of the land and the ancestors) of the Nata
6. *Emigiro* (avoidances) of the Nata
7. *Nyangi* (life stage celebrations and eldership titles) of the Nata
8. *Ebehita* (patrilinesages) of the Nata
9. *Chanyumba* (matrilinesages) of the Nata
10. *Chahamate* (clans) of the Nata
11. *Chasaiga* (age-sets) of the Nata
12. *Amakora* (generation-sets) of the Nata
13. *Asara* (circumcision) of the Nata
14. *Rihe* (war) of the Nata
15. *Charing'a* (oaths of peace or blood brotherhood) of the Nata
16. *Asama* (moving) of the Nata
17. *Ebimenyo ne mipaka* (settlement sites and boundaries) of the Nata
18. *Ebitana* (medicine bundles for protection) of the Nata
19. *Imieri* (months) of the Nata
20. *Ebisega bya kwerekiani amabaga gase* (seasons)
21. *Emerema gya Saiga* (work of the age-sets)
22. *Emeremo gya Rikora* (work of the generation-set)
23. *Asumo* (trade) of the Nata
24. *Anchara* (famines) of the Nata
25. *Omobureni* (young men)
26. *Omuki* (young women)
27. *Okuibora* (birth) of the Nata
28. *Orokurya* (death) of the Nata
29. *Agabho* (inheritance) of the Nata
30. *Ang'ombe ya Baki* ("the cattle of the young women")
31. *Ang'ombe yu Mwando* ("the cattle of lineage inheritance")
32. *Ababisa* (enemies) of the Nata
33. *Obuturi* (blacksmithing) of the Nata
34. *Rirema* (farming) of the Nata
35. *Obotugi* (herding) of the Nata
36. *Ribiema* (hunting) of the Nata
37. *Emeremo egiende* (other work)
38. *Abana kwegi emerema* (the work of children)
39. *Amang'ana ga Kare* (things of the past)
40. *Obugeni* (hospitality for guests) of the Nata
41. *Risaga* (mutual aid) of the Nata
42. *Chakabari* (co-wives) of the Nata
43. *Amarina* (names) of the Nata
44. *Okusahe kwa Abataki* (the entrance of the colonial force)
45. *Omuemi ambele* (the first chiefs)
46. *Kebuno betemiri* (how they ruled)
47. *Omuemi wo kabere* (the following chiefs)
48. *Abato Maarufu* (famous people)
49. *Risau* (alarm call) of the Nata
50. *Kusagari chatugo* (cattle clientship)
51. *Obogwani bwa matango* (relations with other "tribes")
52. *Obusani* (friendship)
53. *Obwiterani* (murder)
54. *Aghasa* (ritual for killing a lion, leopard or Maasai)
55. *Kwiraheri* (praise names and oaths)
56. *Imiembo* (songs and dances)

newly brewed beer and was only called away with the promise that some would be brought home for him. This interview was conducted strictly in Nata with almost no translation to help me follow the conversation. Mayani and Nyawagamba based their questions on the list with only four or five points being covered in the next four hours. My job was to hold the tape recorder.

I take these stories as a metaphor for my research and its final product. Although I eventually gained more control over interviews, this was a collaborative project which depended on networks of relationship established in an earlier time of my life. The project succeeded only in so far as people like the Magoto family in Nata, Pastor Machota in Ikoma, David Maganya in Ngoreme, Kinanda Sigara in Ikizu and Mnada Mayonga in Tatoga took an interest in the research and made it their own. These men spent uncountable hours, days and weeks driving, bicycling or walking to remote homesteads with me, arranging for interviews and dealing with the fall-out after I was long gone. The stakes were particularly high for the Magoto family, who would have suffered severe community criticism and ridicule if things had gone badly for their guests.

The elders that I interviewed only agreed to talk to me because they were convinced that the product of my research would be beneficial to their grandchildren after they were gone and their knowledge forgotten. The local men who shared their historical manuscripts with me, the archivists who took time to dig through unsorted boxes, the priests and primary school teachers who uncovered dictionaries and ethnic histories from dusty shelves and filing cabinets, Mwalimu Nyamaganda who walked out to Bugerera numerous times in spite of his illness to go over endless lists of cultural vocabulary and all of those women who shared their homes, meals and stories with me countless times did this in large part because of their commitment to the preservation of local history.

It is this enormous debt, this trust, that I struggle with as I put the words into a narrative form which must sustain a linear argument. Nyawagamba and Mayani's list remains a symbolic

measure of how closely I have fulfilled these promises. One thing that the list tells me is that the story is not linear, but that peoples' lives are made up of a vast number of parts, which in their multiplicity constitute the pasts of the people we now call Nata, Ikizu, Tatoga, Ikoma, Ishenyi, or Ngoreme. The list also tells me that Mayani and Nyawagamba considered history to be synonymous with its cultural forms—that marriage, oaths, medicine bundles and naming are all as much a part of the definition of what it means to be Nata as are accounts of origin, migration or chiefs. There is no obvious organizing structure to this list, except as a simple naming of all of the elements, without establishing hierarchies or relationships among the parts. Perhaps Nyawagamba and Mayani felt that the connections were obvious, or perhaps they left that task for me—allowed me the freedom to unite all of those disparate elements into one story. In this sense the debt becomes a burden because it is a difficult task.

How can I make local history live in narrative form while not denying its multiplicity and contextuality? The translation of historical imagination which must be trained into a focused thesis will have succeeded if the spirit of this unruly list and the vision of those who made the research possible remain. The story that I tell is my story and I must take responsibility for its outcome no matter how indebted it is to the dedicated people who made it possible. I must speak in my own voice while respecting those who gave me that voice. It will have succeeded if western Serengeti people do not accept this as a final product but contest it, debate it and write their own histories.

I dedicate this dissertation to Magoto Mossi Magoto and to his sister Nyabikwabe Mossi, whose legacies have made this work possible. The only photo of Magoto is reproduced here out of respect for his patronage and in hopes that the hospitality of his sons and daughters might be reciprocated in a work about which he would be proud [See Figure F-2]. Nyabikwabe was a woman who managed her own homestead after her husband disappeared on a migrant labor trip to



Figure F-2: Magoto Mossi Magotto, Nata patriarch, c. 1890 - 1987

Nairobi. She left her legacy with many children and grandchildren in Nata. She is remembered by her family as a storyteller, knowledgeable about the past. This is dedicated to her in the hope that the tradition of story-telling and remembering that she represents will not be lost.

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THE LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY:
A HISTORY OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE WESTERN SERENGETI, TANZANIA

By

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May 1998

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This dissertation analyzes changes in social identity from the distant past to the early colonial years in the western Serengeti, Mara Region, Tanzania, through an interpretation of oral tradition. My analysis of the core spatial images of oral tradition demonstrates the link between different ways of representing space and historical changes in social identity. Multiple social identities grounded in the ecological diversity of the region developed out of long-term social processes based on the elaboration of generative principles of social organization. The generative principles of gender, economic production, clan, lineage, generation-set, age-set and ethnicity produced various kinds of social identities and institutions according to the historical context. Social identities changed profoundly at the end of the nineteenth century when an era of ecological disasters caused western Serengeti people to undertake major social transformations. They responded to the crises of this period of stress by renovating their systems of age-set organization and by redefining the criteria for ethnic identity, not only to ensure their survival but to convert the difficulties of the early years of colonialism into prosperous ones.

"The landscapes of memory" refers to the way in which memories about the past are stored in spatial form. Oral traditions represent the past through spatial images that correspond to

particular forms of social identity. An interpretation of the core spatial images of oral tradition provides the historian with a culturally grounded representation of social processes in the past. A representation of the past reconstructed through other forms of evidence like archaeology, historical linguistics, comparative ethnography, ecology and written sources demonstrates an amazing congruence with the historical understanding afforded by oral tradition. This dissertation seeks to understand the past, as much as possible, from the perspective and categories of local historical consciousness. The spatial analysis of oral tradition contributes to the historical reconstruction of the precolonial past in Africa and social history elsewhere in the world, particularly in places such as the Mara Region where historians must rely almost exclusively on oral tradition as a primary source.

Think of the past as space expanding infinitely beyond our vision. It is not a record of progress or regress, stasis or change; uncharted, it simply, smugly, vastly is. Then we choose a prospect. The higher it is, the wider and hazier our view. Now we map what we see, marking some features, ignoring others, altering an unknown territory, absurd in its unity, into a finite collection of landmarks made meaningful through their connections. History is not the past, but a map of the past drawn from a particular point of view to be useful to the modern traveler.

Serious study of a community's history does not begin with a roid to snatch scraps to add color and flesh or nobility to the history of another community. It begins when the observer adopts the local prospect, then brings the local landmarks into visibility, giving the creations of the community's people—the artifacts in which their past is entombed, the texts in which their past lives—complete presence.¹



Figure 1-1: From Riyara Hill in Nata looking East toward Gitaraga and Mochuri Mountains with Bangwesi Mountain in the background and Serengeti Plains beyond.

¹ Henry Glassie, Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 621.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION:
ORAL TRADITION, TIME, SPACE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

This is a project, as Glassie defines it in the preceding quotation, of adopting the "local prospect" in order to "give presence" to the landscapes and the places through which a people imagine their collective pasts and "in which their past lives." This dissertation explores these landscapes containing the memories of the past to understand social change from the perspective of those who live it. As Glassie writes, concerning the great historical epics of Ireland, "time is absorbed into place, and place into mind . . . the land becomes history, and history becomes thought as people cross space in awareness."²

In this dissertation I explore the "landscapes of memory" which structure knowledge about the past in spatial form through an interpretation of oral traditions from the western Serengeti, Tanzania. This project will contribute to the growing body of research among Africanist scholars on the ways in which the organization of space functions in oral tradition.³ My analysis of the core spatial images of oral tradition demonstrates the link between different ways of representing space

² Ibid, p. 664.

³ Michele Wagner, "Whose History is History?: A History of the Baragane People of Buragane, Southern Burundi, 1850-1932," 2 vols. (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991); Henrietta L. Moore, *Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Karin Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991); David William Cohen, "The Cultural Topography of a 'Bantu Borderland': Busoga 1500-1850," *Journal of Africa History* 29 (1988): 57-79; David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (London: James Currey, 1989); Tamara Giles-Vernick, "Na lege ti guiriri (On the Road of History): Mapping Out the Past and Present in M'Bres Region, Central African Republic," *Ethnohistory* 43, 2 (Spring 1996): 245-275.

and historical changes in social identity. In this dissertation, I understand social identity as a socially shared definition of self in relation to others that is situational and relational. Multiple social identities coexist within the individual, activated according to the situation and the relationships involved. Oral traditions produce and reproduce these identities through their representation of space. This study encompasses an ecologically-defined region--the western Serengeti of Tanzania--a region larger than one ethnic group. Thus, multiple and shifting forms of social identity represented in oral tradition over time and space must be investigated.

These multiple social identities grounded in the ecological diversity of the region developed out of long-term social processes based on the elaboration of generative principles of social organization. The generative principles of gender, economic production, clan, lineage, generation-set, age-set and ethnicity produced various kinds of social identities and institutions according to the historical context. Social identities changed profoundly from a time in the distant past when people gradually developed a regional system of relationships for achieving prosperity in a marginal land to the end of the nineteenth century when an era of ecological disasters caused them to undertake major social transformations. For the western Serengeti, as for many other parts of East Africa, crisis defined the late nineteenth century. This time of famine, disease, war, and dislocation served as the dividing point between the far and recent past in oral tradition. People responded to the crises of this period of stress by renovating their systems of age-set organization and by redefining the criteria for ethnic identity, not only to ensure their survival but to convert the difficulties of the early years of colonialism into prosperous ones.⁴

⁴ Although German East Africa was established as a colony in 1885, German colonial rule was not effective around Lake Victoria until 1891 with the establishment of a military post at Mwanza. The British Mandate of 1922 incorporated the Tanganyika Territory into the British Empire as a result of the League of Nations settlements following World War I.

Scholars cannot understand these profound late nineteenth century changes apart from the long-term historical processes in which people developed patterns for building strong local communities around their relationship to the land and to other communities within regional networks of reciprocity. Yet the historian understands these older processes only through oral traditions, traditions that the events of the late nineteenth century have significantly altered. Western Serengeti people radically transformed their societies in the period of disasters by drawing on the generative principles of long-term social process, yet in their oral representation of these processes they interpret of them in light of their desire to seek historical continuity with, and validation for, new ways of building and maintaining strong communities. The fundamental importance of the era of disasters to oral representations of the deeper past requires that I interpret the oral traditions of the pre-crisis era in light of the experiences of the post-crisis era.⁵ The design of the dissertation reflects this necessity by weaving reflections on the influence of the era of disasters on the character and content of all the oral evidence presented into my analysis.

The primary oral sources for this study come from the traditions of five agro-pastoral ethnic groups that speak Bantu languages (Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi, Ikizu and Ngoreme) and two pastoral ethnic groups that speak Dadog languages (Rotigenga and Isimajek) in the Serengeti and Bunda districts of the Mara Region. These stories guide my version and compel me to take seriously the perspective and categories of local historical consciousness.⁶ A culturally sensitive

⁵ See Gwyn Prins, "Introduction," *The Hidden Hippopotamus: Reappraisal in African history: The early colonial experience in western Zambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 1-16, who analyzes "core concepts" in order to place nineteenth century colonial contact in long-term local context.

⁶ Richard Price eloquently expressed this sentiment in his book on the history of maroon communities in Saramaka, "All history is thus: a radical selection from the immensely rich swirl of past human activity. The uniqueness of this book lies in its taking seriously the selection that is made by those people who gather together at this shrine. It is about those distant people and those long-age events that Saramakas today choose to think about, talk about, and act upon: but it is also

historical reconstruction seeks to translate the inner logic of oral traditions and the profound impact of late nineteenth century crises on their content into the language of academic historical discourse.⁷ The historian can respect the integrity of oral traditions and build a chronology to explain social change by using oral sources together with other kinds of evidence, from historical linguistics, archaeology, comparative ethnography, ecological studies and written sources.

The study of African social history in the precolonial period has recently fallen into relative neglect after a prolific and optimistic outpouring of research in the 1960s and 70s. This is in large part due to the difficulties inherent in using oral traditions as primary historical sources. We still know too little about the precolonial period and, as a result, historians of the colonial period build on questionable foundations. It is my hope that this dissertation will inspire another look at oral sources through an investigation of the spatial dimension of oral memory. Although the subject is social transformation at a particular place and time, historians could apply the approach to the interpretation of oral sources from other places in Africa and to social history elsewhere in the world.

Oral Traditions in Space and Time

In recent years, academic debate over the utility of oral sources for writing history has centered on Jan Vansina's positivist approach to oral traditions. He asserts that, through rigorous application of the proper methodological tools, historians could discover the objective past on

about the ways that Saramakas transform the general past (everything that happened) into the significant past, their history. This book is an attempt to communicate something of the Saramakas' own special vision of their formative years." Richard Price, First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 5.

⁷ Steven Feierman, The Shambaa Kingdom: A History (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1977), p. 3; Thomas Spear, "Oral Traditions: Whose History?," History in Africa 8 (1981): 8.

which narrators once based these texts. David W. Cohen and others have engaged this claim by subtly undercutting and destabilizing its first premises—that an orderly "chain of transmission" would lead the historian back to the original testimony, that there was a single tradition with many variations rather than multiple and conflicting histories, and that different sets of oral traditions represented independent evidence. Luise White's recent work on rumor and gossip questions the criteria used by historians to evaluate their sources.⁸ She asks, if people all over East Africa tell consistent stories about vampires does that mean they are "true?" This primary emphasis on oral tradition as itself a historical product leaves little room for a history from oral traditions that discusses issues from earlier periods. Are we to focus only on how people talk about the present by reference to an imagined past? This dissertation argues that a middle ground between these two approaches exists that incorporates the critique of objectivist methodology and yet still supports writing about the distant past, within the standards set by the discipline of academic history.

Oral Traditions, Memory and History

Historians using oral traditions as their principal source of evidence have been confounded by the central problem of ascertaining the time depth of oral narratives. It has been demonstrated many times that the content of oral tradition is not stable and that it changes from performance to

⁸ See the collected papers from the international conference, "Words and Voices: Critical Practices of Orality in Africa and in African Studies," Bellagio, Italy, February 24-28, 1997, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. On this issue see David Newbury, "Contradictions at the Heart of the Canon: Oral Historiography in Africa, 1960-1980;" Carolyn Hamilton, "Living with Fluidity: Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Preservation;" Luise White, "True Stories: Narrative, Event, History and Blood in the Lake Victoria Basin;" David William Cohen, "In a nation of white cars ... one white car, or "a white care" becomes a truth." This destabilization is not confined to oral history alone, for an analysis of related issues affecting the more common methodologies of the historical profession see, Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

performance over time and in relation to the historical contexts in which the traditions are told. Different social groups tell different stories about the past and in different ways to legitimate a particular social order. The present not only influences the narration of the past but knowledge of the past most surely influences our experience of the present.⁹ The historian's analysis of any one tradition must take into consideration the present context in which narrators tell it, as well as all of the other historical contexts through which it has passed in transmission. Because of these difficulties, many have despaired of finding any verifiable historical content in oral traditions at all.¹⁰

One way to assess the historical content of oral tradition is through an understanding of its narrative form. Studies of oral memory have shown that narrators construct (rather than reproduce) oral traditions in performance through the use of mnemonic systems, the central elements of which scholars of oral tradition call "core images" or "clichés." By recalling these core images narrators improvise the entire narrative as they tell it. In the Nata origin story the core images are a hunter following his prey from the wilderness and a woman at her cave by the spring. Narrators elaborate details of how they met and what they said around these core images to form

⁹ Paul Connerton, How Societies Remember (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 2-3; Elizabeth Tonkin, Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For an analysis of social memory outside of African history see, Patrick J. Geary, Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹⁰ David Henige, "Oral Tradition and Chronology," Journal of African History, 12, 3 (1971): 371-389; Joseph C. Miller, ed., The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson Archon, 1980); Paul Irwin, Liptako Speaks: History from Oral Traditions in Africa (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981).

episodes or narrative units that they string together to create the larger story anew in each performance.¹¹

Historians of oral tradition have long postulated that it is these core images that hold the key to historical interpretation. Vansina proposed guidelines for interpreting the "implicit meaning" of these "core images" or "clichés," such as comparison with other traditions and other cultural expressions.¹² Joseph Miller later suggested that since core images serve as the mnemonic device for recalling the story, people pass on these images from generation to generation, even if they no longer understand the original meaning. As time goes on the parts of the story that narrators elaborate with each telling tend to lose their detail and become generalized, or are replaced with present-day experiences. Miller postulated that the core images held the best possibility of bearing "information from and about the past."¹³ Steven Feierman's structuralist interpretation of the core images in the Shambaa origin myth of Mbegha, in terms of the historical development of kingship, remains one of the best examples of this kind of interpretation.¹⁴

Some of the most important core images found in African traditions are spatial images of landscape, place or topography. As Elizabeth Hofmeyr put it, "oral memory has a close mnemonic relationship with place and location, and in a variety of societies people often bank information in the landscape." She questions whether people can sustain memory if they lose touch with the

¹¹ The theory is first argued in A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1964); see also, Joseph C. Miller, "Introduction: Listening for the African Past," in *The African Past Speaks*, ed. Joseph C. Miller (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson Archon, 1980), pp. 5-9.

¹² Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 144-6.

¹³ Miller, "Listening for the African Past," p. 8.

¹⁴ Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 40-69.

places and landscapes of the core images.¹⁵ However, the recognition that core images often appear as spatial images does not solve the problem of their interpretation. The first generation of historians to interpret oral traditions in Africa accepted the literal meaning of place names in migration or clan origin traditions resulting in untenable reconstructions of the movement of large and discrete groups of people over long distances.¹⁶ The internal meaning of spatial images is not always explicit and not all spatial images are core images.

How then does the historian discern which spatial images in oral traditions contain information about the past and how she should interpret them? For example, place-names can be added later to migration stories or even changed. The Ikoma origin story claims that the original ancestor migrated from Sonjo, on the other side of the Serengeti plains, and then lists a number of other places that are within the western Serengeti. The Sonjo, however, claim that the British gave them this ethnic name in reference to the Sonjo bean that was prevalent in the area (the Sonjo call themselves Wantemi). If this is true then this ethnonym-cum-place-name could not have been part of a precolonial tradition. Nevertheless, through a careful interpretation of the important spatial references in oral tradition the historian can analyze the historical connection between Sonjo and Ikoma. On closer examination of many Ikoma origin stories one notices that, in place of Sonjo, some narrators use the name Regata. A present day village named Rhughata in Sonjo claims its origins at Jaleti and Ngrumega (perhaps a transliteration of the Rivers Mbalageti and Grumeti in

¹⁵ Hofmeyr, "We Spend our Years," pp. 106, 125, 132-133, 160.

¹⁶ In his paper for the Bellagio Conference, "Words and Voices," 1997, David Newbury, "Contradictions at the Heart of the Canon," called this group the "fundamentalists," including: G. Hartwig, "Oral Tradition Concerning the Early Iron Age in Northwestern Tanzania," African Historical Studies 4 (1974): 3-115; J. B. Webster, D. H. Okalany, C. P. Emudong, and N. Egimu-Okuda, The Iteso During the Asonya (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973).

the western Serengeti).¹⁷ Ngoreme tradition mentions origins in Sonjo but specifically name the village of Tinaga, a village that Sonjo people claim the Maasai destroyed in raids, causing the people to flee to "Ikoma."¹⁸ The landscape described in these stories is the bush, inhabited by hunters following the wildebeest migration. Indeed, if one followed the wildebeest migration from Sonjo, he would end up in Ikoma or Ngoreme. The historian must conclude that a thick set of historical interactions from different time periods existed between Sonjo and Ikoma, expressed by oral traditions as the migration of a single ancestor.

Examples of prestigious places being added onto the beginning of origin stories to claim affiliation with powerful kingdoms also exist. The claim of association may be at the root of Jita claims to Ganda origins or Kanadi (Sukuma) claims to Hima origins. Both Ganda and Hima peoples represent royal clans who formed centralized states on the other side of Lake Victoria, states whose power people across the wider Lakes Region admired, feared and resisted. Many western Serengeti traditions that claim origins in the east name the specific places of Mount Kilimanjaro and Arusha, which are major points of reference for Tanzanian nationalism. In western Kenya many ethnic groups claim origins in Misri (Egypt) in a biblical exodus model.¹⁹ In each of these cases the place-names following the prestigious name are specific, localized places with rich cultural meanings attached to them. Usually, the direction of the place relative to the community's present location is important either symbolically or historically. The historian cannot simply identify spatial references and accept their unmediated historical veracity but must rather

¹⁷ Interview with Emmanuel Ndeni, Sale, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo *o*).

¹⁸ Interviews with Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995; and Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo *o*).

¹⁹ William R. Ochieng', "Misri Legends in East African History," *East Africa Journal* (October 1972): 27-31.

pay attention to the cultural meaning of these core spatial images and carefully interpret them alongside other traditions and other kinds of evidence. These images are important in any historical reconstruction because they are integral to oral memory itself.

The historian best approaches the interpretation of spatial images by first understanding how and why our minds spatialize memory. Studies of memory have shown that people store recollections of the past as spatial rather than temporal images.²⁰ We remember events and people by locating them in particular places. Thus memories appear to us as a sequence of places rather than as the orderly passage of time. In his exploration of the "poetics of space," Gaston Bachelard writes, "Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are."²¹ This insight has profound implications for the historian using the evidence of memory as a primary source. As Bachelard notes, "to localize a memory in time is merely a matter for the biographer and only corresponds to a sort of external history, for external use, to be communicated to others."²² The job of the historian, like the biographer, is to fix memories within a chronological sequence in order to understand change over time and its possible causes. Yet if Bachelard is right, memory cannot provide the historian with precise temporal sequences or duration.

This insight corresponds with my experience in listening to oral traditions in the western Serengeti. Elders took great care to give me sequences of place-names yet without narrative explanation. In the early stages of my research I was puzzled because people seemed to care more

²⁰ Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking, 1984); Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); George Johnson, *In the Palaces of Memory: How We Build Worlds Inside Our Heads* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

²¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964; first published by Presses Universitaires de France, 1958), p. 9.

²² *Ibid.*

about specifying place rather than time frame. When asked when they took place the narrators usually said either, "a very long time ago before the grandfather of my grandfather," or, for more recent memories, they would name a specific age- or generation-set. In contrast, specific place-names and spatial images were the central organizing features of oral traditions. For example, the Nata origin story took place at Bwanda, in the ecological space where farming and hunting landscapes meet. The last great battle with the Maasai took place at Ndabaka, which means "the plain of tears" in Dadog. In its starkest form narrators presented the period of settlement as a simple list of place-names or migration points with almost no elaboration. People attached great importance to the accurate recitation of lists of place-names and spatial features in oral narratives.

In his study of "Ilongot headhunting," Renato Rosaldo found that the Ilongot people presented stories about the past as sequences of the "names of places where they had 'erected their house posts' and 'cleared the forest.'" They conceptualized history as a movement through space, or as a group of people walking in a single file along a trail and stopping at a sequence of named resting places. Narrators named no dates or time periods in these stories because events were "mapped onto the landscape, not onto a calendar." Rosaldo called the Ilongot historical idiom a "spatialization of time" and convincingly reconstructed Ilongot history by making correspondences between place-name sequences and temporal chronologies from references in other sources.²³ Another example is Bruce Chatwin's description of how Australian Aboriginals conceptualize history as "song lines" or "dreaming tracks" that are particular paths on the ground, established when the ancestors "sang" the world into existence. Each track is a "song" or a "map" by which people remember the past.²⁴ Similarly, in the American tradition, the mention of Plymouth,

²³ Renato Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 42-58.

²⁴ Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (New York: Viking, 1987), pp. 2, 12.

Jamestown, Bunker Hill, or Gettysburg, for example, evokes an emotion-laden history in the popular consciousness.

Clearly, the historian cannot reconstruct the temporal framework of oral memory without an internal knowledge of its spatial component. To return to Bachelard's image, as "biographers," we are in the business of putting memory back into chronological sequence to present our "external history, for external use, to be communicated to others." To do this we need to pay particular attention to the indigenous conceptual frameworks that govern the use of time and space in oral narratives. As we have seen, oral traditions use space as a metaphor for time or as a mnemonic for social processes that are no longer temporally anchored. Oral traditions often use an epic spatial scale as a metaphor for emphasizing the importance or permanence of certain social processes. History itself is a cultural construct that determines the structure and use of oral narratives about the past. The historical interpretation of oral tradition must, in effect, attempt to reverse the spatialization of memory to recover what people originally meant these images to convey.

If the spatial elements of oral tradition are part of a mnemonic system then the historian can use them as "evidence in spite of themselves" that provide tangible information about the past.²⁵ The spatial elements of oral tradition—references to place-names, landscapes, topographical features and the social organization of space—are crucial elements in the historical reconstruction of this region, rather than geographical background. While historians have often disregarded these elements as useless details they provide bits of evidence from the past, transmitted to the present because of their function in oral memory. Imagined landscapes, embedded in oral traditions as core images, are artifacts from the past that, although people might understand their meaning

²⁵ Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954), p. 61; Feierman, *The Shamba Kingdom*, p. 4; Miller, "Listening for the African Past," pp. 6-8.

differently or lose their meaning altogether in different time periods, remain tenacious fragments of past social worlds transmitted in oral memory.²⁶ Like the ceramic artifacts that an archaeologist unearths, a particular shard may have been used in subsequent generations as a shallow water container for chicks in the yard or later picked up off the refuse heap by a child to be made into a toy. Still, the archaeologist can sometimes reconstruct its original use and historical context through careful comparison with similar shards found in other places, other kinds of artifacts found nearby, and contemporary pottery forms and their uses.

These encoded fragments yield information about the past only as historians interpret them within their cultural context and alongside other kinds of evidence. For example, when I was trying to decipher what the lists of settlement names meant historically, most elders could tell me where the places were located but few could tell me anything else about these places. However, once I began asking to go visit those places, I soon realized that only people from particular lineages could take me there because these are the sites of important ancestral graves. This gave me some idea of the social groups that inhabited these settlements, information about residential mobility and why some knew the names and not these more precise meanings attached to the place. When we arrived at those places, elders told the stories of the rainmaker or prophet buried there. I observed how settlements at these sites might have been situated ecologically or in relation to other settlements. The same places might be mentioned in other traditions, a redundancy that provided valuable alternate meanings for the place. The place-names themselves could sometimes be translated literally, suggesting historical association with the place. Mapping these sites in relation

²⁶ See Glassie's poetic treatment of the Irish landscape as a mnemonic artifact in which the past is entombed in *Passing the Time*, pp. 621-65. See also Barber, *I Could Speak*, pp. 27, 34 on *oriki* praise poems as "fragments of the past."

to each other showed how settlements were spatially related. The conclusions I draw from this evidence are not firm but do represent a logical set of possibilities.

Core spatial images also yield important historical content because they refer to particular forms of social relationship or identity. In his study of social memory, Paul Connerton theorizes that "our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group." Individuals preserve memories as members of a group and these memories are situated within the socially-specific spatial framework provided by that group.²⁷ Memories are not only spatially located but also socially located within particular groups. We can identify each oral tradition with the history of a particular social unit. Different social groups located in one place may preserve radically different memories about the same time period because each builds on its own "mental map."²⁸

Landscapes are not neutral backdrops to the events of history. They shape and are shaped by human action as people imagine and use the landscapes.²⁹ A classic argument, first articulated by Durkheim and Mauss in 1903, holds that the built spaces we inhabit represent the structure of our society. Scholars have demonstrated this mainly in the layout of homestead and village as well as the interior design of houses.³⁰ In this dissertation, I extend this observation to hypothesize that

²⁷ Connerton, How Societies Remember, p. 37, Connerton draws on the early work of the French social theorist, Maurice Halbwachs.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 28.

²⁹ For the social theory of space see for example, Edward W. Soja, Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (London: Verso, 1989); and Allan Pred, Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies: The Local Transformation of Practice, Power Relations, and Consciousness (Boulder: San Franciscan, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990).

³⁰ Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, Primitive Classification, trans. and ed. Rodney Needham (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963; first published in French, 1903.) Bourdieu enlarges this argument with his notion of *habitus*, Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977; first published in French, 1972), pp.1-71. For an application of spatial theory to African ethnography see the collection of essays,

oral traditions encode social relationships and identities by employing a spatial imagery that includes landscapes and topography. Different ways of imagining the landscape in the spatial images of oral traditions correspond to different social identities that can be situated in the past by understanding their cultural context and by using other kinds of evidence. These spatial images both represent forms of social identity and persons adopting these social identities use spatial images to represent them.

For example, oral traditions about the origins of clans describe each clan ancestor as a son of the founder of the ethnic group, within one territory. Yet, the spaces invoked by clan histories and praise names are dispersed, with each clan's spaces interspersed among those of other clans. This supports the inference, based on several kinds of evidence, that in earlier times, as in more recent ones, regional networks of trade and the movement of ritual experts, connected dispersed clan settlements. The same clan names with the same associations of place and ritual avoidance are found throughout the region in nearly every ethnic group. Oral traditions say that dispersed Hembra or Gaikwe clan members enjoyed access to trade with the Asi hunter/gatherers (who lived on the margins of the western Serengeti) through friendship oaths. Since clan networks like these do not function any more and because little evidence exists for them in the colonial period, one can reasonably assume that they belong to an earlier period. We cannot date precisely the period during which these clan networks functioned, but situating them relatively in time may be possible by mapping the regional distribution of clan names, words that refer to clan functions, and variations in lineage organization.

Anita Jacobson-Widding, ed., Body and Space: Symbolic Modes of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1991); and Denise L. Lawrence and Setha M. Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," Annual Review of Anthropology 19 (1990): 453-505.

Even relative chronologies for the forms of identity to which the core spatial images refer are difficult to identify, because oral traditions consist of layers laid down in different time periods. Some have described oral traditions as resembling palimpsests, or tablets that various people have written over with the older writing just barely visible beneath. Christopher Wrigley, writing on Ganda "mythical traditions," says that oral traditions are like textbooks of law, "which are being constantly re-edited to reflect new knowledge or interest but keep the basic shape given them by their original authors."³¹ Thus, origin stories may indeed contain both existential reflection on enduring realities of the human condition and very old historical content. Both of these contents may receive new interpretations when new identities, in relation to new communities, gain greater importance. In identifying which layer is older, the spatial images around which people tell the stories provide crucial clues.

For example, in the stories about the origins of western Serengeti ethnic groups, the core spatial images are not the spaces of bounded ethnic territories. They are instead the gendered spaces of the homestead and the ecological spaces of economic subsistence strategies. In addition, people tell the origin story of first man, the hunter, and first woman, the farmer, throughout the region, not confined to one ethnic group. Each separate group creates its own elaborations on a common story. The historian can date the economic subsistence patterns and homestead layouts represented in these spatial images to the distant past through historical linguistics and comparative ethnography. Thus, one can reasonably argue that the core images of these origin stories are based

³¹ Christopher Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 49. Thanks to James Ellison for his archeological explanation of this concept: "Imagine a landscape inhabited, people dropping artifacts that reflect relations of exchange over a great distance and to the south. Then people die, the site is covered by eolian deposits, and other people move in who drop artifacts that reflect trade in another set of directions and at a much closer radius. They die. Winds deflate the sediments leaving these quite different artifacts side by side," personal communication, 23 June 1997.

on the founding myths of much older social groupings that narrators have reconfigured into ethnic stories. Because the characters in these ethnic origin stories are sometimes members of particular clans, it also seems likely that people have used these stories to understand the relationship between clans.

In the search for historical meaning, this dissertation analyzes and contextualizes the core spatial images of each set of oral traditions. The relative age of these images may be suggested by interpreting their cultural meaning alongside of other forms of evidence and in light of commentary from other traditions. Through this process one can see how the different elements of a single tradition might have been added at different time periods. Origin stories may have begun as founding myths explaining the relationship between men and women and the interdependence of hunting and farming as economic strategies, or, the importance of farming in "civilizing" human families. Then particular variations of these stories about first man and first woman and their children became identified with the clans of those who first claimed the land. In this case the stories explained the relationships between clans and provided the basis for the priority in particular circumstances of some clans over others. Later, as ethnic groups began to define themselves, narrators turned the same stories that underwrote the rights of clans to tell of ethnogenesis.

Multiple, situational, and relational identities seem to be an ancient pattern in this region, perhaps as a result of the interaction of diverse languages, subsistence patterns and cultures from earliest times. Even if particular sets of oral traditions tell of particular forms of social identity and in relation to a relative time periods in the past, other forms of social identity surely existed too. People who lived on the marginal lands of the western Serengeti built their security by forming extensive regional relationships based on many different kinds of identities, rather than centralized hierarchies. We cannot imagine a time when no lineages or clans, age- or generation-sets existed,

but we can dimly perceive times when, in specific historical circumstances, regional clan networks played a more important role than they now do; when lineage was the idiom for asserting a relationship with the land and when the principle of age began to eclipse that of generation. The interpretation of spatial imagery thus provides tools for understanding these important shifts in social process over time.

In a society where identities were multiple, situational and relational, many different sets of oral traditions, describing the diverse histories of many different social groups, operated at the same time. If a particular social group remembers and performs a particular set of oral traditions, its people can only preserve the particular histories and landscapes of that group and cannot carry the weight of a more integrated social history. One elder, who is a member of many different social groups, may relate, for example, ethnic origin history, clan migration history, generation-set ritual history, age-set initiation history, and lineage settlement history all in one session, with each kind of history situated in a particular temporal frame. Each of these separate histories has become one ethnic history in the memory of one man. Yet how can we understand the indigenous chronology that orders these different kinds of stories in one man's narration of the past in relation to each other and in terms of a linear chronology?

Periodization of Oral Tradition and Concepts of Time

The organization of this dissertation follows the indigenous chronology implicit in the corpus of oral traditions told today, beginning with the stories of ethnic and clan origins and ending with the stories of the late nineteenth century disaster and recovery. I do not accept this chronology in any absolute sense but contingent upon an understanding of the kinds of temporalities reflected in oral tradition. However, indigenous periodizations of oral traditions bear some relationship to the relative age of information about the past carried into the present. They are not purely imaginative reconstructions of the past based on the present.

The historical consciousness of the western Serengeti, in spite of the preference for spatial rather than temporal organization of oral traditions, employs a division of time into chronologically ordered periods. Oral traditions can be grouped into three types of traditions according to this indigenous periodization. Ethnic origin stories of first man, the hunter, and first woman, the farmer refer to the oldest time period. They often include clan narratives in which the children of the ancestral parents disperse. Oral traditions of settlement sites or migration stories and accounts of rituals concerning the land characterize the middle period. The most recent period contains the historical accounts of the generations from the last two decades of the nineteenth century onward. These traditions tell of the disasters of that period and the ways in which people coped and even began to prosper in the early colonial period. We can understand only these last stories as "historical" in so far as they employ a linear chronology of past events ordered by cycles of age-set or generation-set names.

For the last or historical period, narratives are grouped according to the memories of a particular "generation." Those who were in their youth at the time of the disasters refer to this experience as the formative point for their generation. Those in the generation who were in their youth during the early colonial years oriented their identity around the cattle wealth acquired from new opportunities for trade. Rosaldo used the concept of "cohort analysis" to find structure in the individual biographies of age-peers set in a particular historical context. As he followed many of these lives through time he saw that age-peers began defining themselves by formative historical experiences when their "shared collective identity was formed." This then became the enduring characteristic of a self-conscious group.³²

³² Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*, pp. 110-113.

The division of time into three periods in oral tradition corresponds closely to what oral historians have found elsewhere in Africa. Rich oral traditions typically surround the period of origins and that of recent times, separated by a "floating gap" of scarce and cryptic information in the middle period. In the western Serengeti, the narratives of this middle period contain lists of place-names referring to settlement sites or stops on a migration route. Earlier historians of oral tradition in Africa accepted this indigenous periodization as representative of relative chronological time. Vansina assumed that these bodies of tradition referred to successive time periods and he explained the "floating gap" by the fact that beyond a certain time depth, oral memory reaches its limits. As traditions got older, they became more generalized and mythologized.³³

Anthropologists met this positivist method of ordering oral traditions into a chronological framework with an unsettling critique. Structuralists demonstrated that these three types of tradition do not refer to time at all but to structures of society in the present. They saw the mythical accounts as "founding myths" that justify the existence of the present social system. For these scholars the middle period represents a static model or "social charter" of the same system and only in the recent period do oral historians offer accounts of change and pose explanations as to causality.³⁴ While this understanding of indigenous periodization challenged the possibility of historical reconstruction, many historians went on to demonstrate that even as "mythical charters," oral traditions still contain evidence about the past.³⁵ Some historians, such as Feierman,

³³ Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 23-24.

³⁴ For a classic example of the structuralist interpretation of oral traditions see, Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Story of Asdiwal," in *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, ed. Edmund Leach (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967), pp. 1-47.

³⁵ Jan Vansina, *Oral Traditions as History*, p. 23; Spear, "Whose History?," pp. 165-181; Thomas Spear, *Kenya's Past: An Introduction to Historical Method in Africa* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1981); Miller, "Listening for the African Past," p. 4.

accommodated the critique by incorporating structuralist analysis into their historical reconstruction.³⁶

Thomas Spear picked up this challenge to the historicity of oral tradition by finding a different basis for maintaining that the three kinds of traditions represented time periods (recent, middle and early). He showed that each kind of oral tradition is characterized by a different sense of time (linear, cyclical and mythical respectively). His own work demonstrated that Kenyan Mijikenda oral traditions of the earlier periods "contain accurate historical narrative over four centuries and continue to describe accurately institutions that have not existed for 130 years." The different time sense in each type results from increasing abstraction, changing in "meaning from literal to intended to symbolic as the events they recall recede into the past." Thus oral traditions of the early period describe "things-as they became," the middle period describes "things-as-they-should-be" and the late period describes "things-as they-are."³⁷

Although a rough correspondence exists between these three types of oral traditions and three levels of historical time depth it would be a mistake to accept this periodization as corresponding to any absolute sense of chronological time. Any one of these types contains material from many different time periods. The function of oral traditions locally is not to archive the past in any "pure" form. Narrators have transmitted traditions because they provide useful information for negotiating the paths of present social relationship based on the experience of the past.³⁸ They represent wisdom from the past distilled into an idealized form.

³⁶ Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 40-69.

³⁷ Spear, "Whose History," pp. 167, 171-2.

³⁸ See Feierman, "Introduction," *The Shambaa Kingdom*, pp. 10-16.

However, this indigenous periodization of oral traditions according to a relative chronology does give some indication of time depth in that the spatial images of each genre can be correlated with a particular temporality (rather than time period). The core spatial images of the origin stories refer to ancient patterns of production and reproduction in the region, as they had developed out of the gendered interactions of hunters, herders and farmers in the deep past and as they have continued to exist in more recent periods. The lists of settlement site names refer to historic residence patterns in the not-too-distant past but before the more immediate memories of the late nineteenth century famines.

We can be reasonably sure that oral traditions do contain information about the past because of the remarkable congruence between historical reconstructions based on the core spatial images of oral tradition and that based on the evidence of historical linguistics, comparative ethnography, archaeology or written sources, which we assume to have historical validity. If those who tell oral traditions cannot have known about this other evidence how otherwise would they tell such similar stories concerning social processes in the distant past? Oral traditions provide a culturally grounded expression of historical processes partly available to us from other kinds of evidence.

The historians must also accept the limitations of oral traditions. The genres of oral tradition corresponding to "mythical time" and "social process time" cannot by themselves show change over time. Only the comparison of various versions of the same types of traditions throughout the region or among different social groups can accomplish this result.³⁹ Even then

³⁹ See Matthew Schoffeleers, "Oral history and the retrieval of the distant past: On the use of legendary chronicles as sources of historical information," in Theoretical explorations in African religion, eds. Wim an Binsbergen and Matthew Schoffeleers (KPI: London, 1985), pp. 164-188.

these lead only to tenuous hypotheses, usually confirmed by written sources (that are not available here before the late nineteenth century).

Traditions of the oldest indigenous time periods supply a description of the spatial organization of social relationships over the long period in which they unfolded.⁴⁰ The core spatial images of these traditions represent the underlying principles, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls the "generative schemes," of social practice, a practice elaborated and improvised on in daily life, according to the specific context. Generative schemes are not so much "rules" as "strategies" by which people choose from a range of options to enact social practice.⁴¹ These are the mental dispositions inculcated during the earliest phases of socialization, inscribed in the body and cultivated in the routines of life. People do not consciously understand how the system works but unconsciously know how to make it work. The basic principles by which one knows how to carry out relationships based on common parentage, age, generation, expertise or wealth can generate unlimited practical applications depending on the situation. For example in the western Serengeti, a stranger could be incorporated as a son to secure additional labor; peers, as age-mates, could be organized on a regional scale for raiding or reconciliation; wealthy men could be induced by followers to provide large communal feasts to gain legitimate respect; and networks of friendships sealed by blood oaths could be fashioned into long-distance trading partnerships. People make and maintain relationships when they are useful either materially or symbolically, rather than existing as the result of a disembodied social system. Social maps are not reified representations but various and changing according to the context.

⁴⁰ Randall M. Packard, "The Study of Historical Process in African Traditions of Genesis: the Bashu Myth of Muhiyi," in *The African Past Speaks*, ed. Joseph C. Miller (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson Archon, 1980), pp. 157-177.

⁴¹ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp.1-71.

Oral tradition rationalizes these generative principles that govern the daily elaboration of social practice into an "official" version of social organization to preserve the existing social order. Oral traditions turn what is a dynamic process into a static model. When we understand lineage as a strategy rather than a structure, we see people's everyday actions as significant because they are making choices rather than following a script. The core spatial images of early-period traditions present social organization in a rigid and timeless, "traditional" form. Although this is the "given" spatial text, people have "read" it in countless ways over time.⁴² The exclusive narration of the "official version" has now silenced some of these various interpretations. By understanding how various people have "read" these spatial "texts" since the time of documented historical sources, one can imagine a similarly varied spectrum of possibilities in the past. Another way of understanding the possible past readings that are now silenced is to look at the regional variation on these basic generative themes of social organization. Different historical contexts influence the regional variations.

An example of contextual "readings" of generative principles, reflected in the oral traditions as a static model, concerns gender relations represented in the spatial layout of the homestead. The house is represented as a female domain and the courtyard and cattle corral as a male domain. The oppositions of inside/outside, enclosed/exposed, passive/active are embedded in these spatial configurations. Through historical linguistics and comparative ethnography the historian can show that these gendered spatial patterns are very old and still exist today. However, from evidence in the colonial record and from my own observation, women have clearly turned these dichotomies to their own advantage and found ways to cross and blur the boundaries.

⁴² Ibid; Moore, *Space, Text and Gender*, pp. 79 - 86, who suggests that spatial organization is like a "text" that can be "read."

Embedded in the origin traditions (primarily as told by men) are hints of the ways in which women and men have reinterpreted these spaces over time.

The historian might better understand the three types of oral traditions, not as referring to different time periods or concepts of time, but to different temporalities or time scales. Because we can connect each set of oral traditions with a particular social group and the material spaces that it occupies, each of these identities also has its own temporality. The indigenous chronology places oral traditions connected with identities based on gender and subsistence economy in the oldest time frame, almost out of time. Comparison to other evidence shows that these identities are very old and relatively stable over time. The earliest traditions represent a different temporal frame of very slow changes over long time periods and enduring social forms. The origin stories do not objectively represent particular events and years but they do adequately represent long-term social processes.

This insight draws on Braudel's classic history of the Mediterranean in which he uses three different temporalities: the *longue durée* (history of imperceptible changes in the relationships of man to his environment), the *conjuncture* (the slow but perceptible rhythms of social process) and, the *événement* (the short term political time of remembered history).⁴³ Braudel's model allows for each type of analysis to supply a different kind of historical information through its own time frame. Each temporal scale implies a corresponding spatial scale and social unit. A narrative concerning the relationship of man to the environment demands a deep time scale and an extensive ecological field. In Braudel's analysis the geographical spaces of mountain and sea where people

⁴³ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds and ed. Richard Ollard (Harper Collins: London, 1992; first published in French, 1949.).

fished and farmed were set in the history of the *long durée*, while the courtly spaces of kings were the venues of short term diplomatic history.⁴⁴

However, if we analyze separately the temporality of each set of social identities, rather than the total society for each time period, than we cut social history on a "vertical" rather than a "horizontal" axis. In effect, each of these temporal slices represents a particular kind of social identity, over an ongoing period of time, rather than a picture of an integrated society during one time period. This moves the analysis from a simple past tense to a past continuous tense. For example, the space/time frame of origin stories refers to the demonstrably ancient strategies of subsistence and social reproduction that are still practiced today. These are basic generative schemes around which other social organization is elaborated. The space/time frame of the stories of settlement sites and land rituals refers to processes in the not-too-distant past by which people established the rights to the land that exist today. The space/time frame of stories concerning nineteenth century disaster and opportunity are within a chronological framework of historical change and refer to newly evolving forms of social organization--age-set territories and ethnic identities. Each space/time frame moves forward at its own rate to the present.

In reality, one individual simultaneously embodies each of these various identities represented by oral tradition. These diverse identities cannot be separated and are functionally interdependent. One cannot understand a woman outside her role as farmer, mother, sister or healing expert. A scholar cannot divide the history of an integrated society for analytical purposes into the separate histories of gender, economy, clans, age-sets or generation-sets. Braudel recognized that this dissection of history into "geographical time," "social time" and "individual time" was only a device that "divided man into his multiple selves" and "cut across living history

⁴⁴ Prins, *The Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 8, uses Braudel's model in his attempt to "study all the time scales of change" and their interplay with each other.

that is fundamentally one.⁴⁵ However, by making this "vertical" dissection one better appreciates the historical dynamics of social identities that were multiple, situational and relational in nature.

Using this method, the oral traditions retain their integrity, allowing for a translation that takes seriously local historical consciousness. Explaining nineteenth century changes in social identity without understanding the previous forms of social identity that operated over the long-term is impossible. Yet to understand these long-term processes without understanding the disasters of the late nineteenth century, through which oral traditions about the earlier periods are filtered is also impossible. Throughout the dissertation, I interpret oral traditions about the earlier period in light of the nineteenth century transformations in social identity, and understand representations of social organization in the nineteenth century as products of earlier cultural formation. In each chapter I present a different genre of oral tradition, explore its core spatial images and the references to social identity in its cultural and historical context.

Oral Traditions and Social Identity

People in the western Serengeti who tell oral traditions today refer explicitly to the social identity of ethnicity. Yet the stories themselves represent a variety of other kinds of social boundaries and they operate within a common set of regional assumptions, or generative principles. Similar stories for similar periods in each of the ethnic groups with whom I conducted interviews, suggest the possibility of a common regional history, with local variations corresponding to differing historical and geographical contexts. Telling this story as seven different ethnic narratives may have better represented western Serengeti historical consciousness in the colonial and postcolonial periods, but it would not fairly reflect precolonial consciousness.

⁴⁵ Braudel, "Preface to the First Edition," *The Mediterranean*, p. xiv.

These traditions show that social identity, in the past as well as in the present, is multiple, situational and relational rather than unitary and fixed. None but the most recent traditions use the space of the ethnic group as the core spatial image. Instead, the core spatial images that represent the identities of male/female, farmer/hunter/herder, lineage or clan member, age- or generation-set member seem to reflect older historical knowledge. The social identities based on locality, rank, authority, expertise, or wealth also figure prominently in these traditions. People today take on different identities depending on the identity of those to whom they are talking and the situation in which they find themselves.

Personal Names as an Illustration of Relational and Situational Identity

Practices surrounding personal identity and naming show people deploying multiple and situational identities to negotiate and strategize their interests. A quality not unique to, but certainly characteristic of, this region is the use of a multiplicity of names for any one person. A man may take a personal name, an ancestral name, a teasing name, a father's name, a mother's name, a clan name, a kinship term of address, a praise name, a youth name or an elder's name at different times in his life. Only certain people may have the right to call him a particular name. No single name fixes a person's identity. Young people use different names when they apply for a job or sign up to retake an exam. One of the first missionaries in the region reported that when he began teaching local children at his home the children, having been instructed at their homes not to give their proper names, called themselves "hammer," "saw," "stone," "cartridge," and "war."⁴⁶ After a person has a child, people call him or her in reference to the child's name, "Mama Bhoke" or "Baba Mwita" (in Swahili). Names position a person within particular kinds of social

⁴⁶ Valemur E. Toppenberg, Africa Has My Heart (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1958), pp. 52-53. "The parents believed that we would have some magic power over them if we were told their proper names."

relationships. Each lineage relationship has a name, age-mates call each other by another name, those who have been circumcised together or done one of the eldership titles together call each other by yet another name.

A partial list of these names that individuals with specific relationships would call one another was related to me in this way by a Nata elder:

- Bashori: the name for the one with whom you were circumcised, putting oil on together.*
Barogumu: the name for a "friend of oil," for whom a goat was killed.
Banchabo: the name for the person who sponsors you in achieving the Titinyo rank.
Banagera: the name for the person who runs behind you in the Titinyo ceremony.
Baguruki: the name for the one who sponsors you in achieving the Aguho rank.
Semung'anta: the name for the one brings you into the Eghise rank.
Omusani wa kusaragana: the name for your blood brother from another ethnic group.
Barera: the name for the man who marries your first daughter.
Basigero: the name for the man who marries your second daughter
Babusheni: the name for the one who marries your third daughter.
Bachoro: the name that the wife of your first son uses to greet her father-in-law.
Bangodu: the name that a daughter-in-law uses to greet her father-in-law.
Babogusi: the name that elders of the same rank call each other at a feast.
*Bagechoncho: the name for the one who takes off the headdress in the Aguho feast.*⁴⁷

These names could be mutually used whenever people met, not only in the particular situation to which it refers.

Greetings often refer to the relationship to the person being greeted, rather than to a personal identity. The younger or subordinate of the pair calls out the relationship in the greeting, "sister-in-law," "mother," or "paternal aunt." The person responding calls back the same name and then the greetings go on as to the day, the cattle, the fields and the health of those at home. People of the same generation most often greet each other as brothers or sisters. One can characterize each person she meets as belonging to her own generation, the generation of her children, parents or grandparents. Therefore, if she does not know what her particular family relationship is to this person, she can greet her as "mother," "grandmother," or "daughter." That person would return the

⁴⁷ Interview with Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 6 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

same greeting. I would greet a very old woman as "grandmother" and she would return the greeting "grandmother," not "granddaughter," as it names the relationship rather than the person.

Because any one person in the community may have multiple relationships to any other person, much latitude exists for "playing" with greetings and names. Depending on an individual's dealings with this person, she might want to evoke a relationship of superiority (older generation), comradeship (age-mates), obligation (a paternal aunt) or joking respect (brother-in-law). Since names are multiple, they are open to negotiation. Someone may refuse to greet a person as they were greeted, demanding a greeting of greater respect. A discussion over the basis of a claim to be greeted in this manner would then result, involving complicated genealogical or historical accounts. Since we were incorporated into a family in Nata, my own children of ten and twelve years could demand the greeting of "father" from youth twice their age according to the principle of generation (the father of these youth was a grandson of Magoto in the same way that my children were considered "grandsons" of Magoto, and thus their equivalence). The point of all this seems to be to acquire as many names, and thus social relationships, as possible, in the same way as other people might acquire material goods.⁴⁸

Relationship and situation define personal identity. Who I am depends on whom I am talking to, my relationship(s) to him or her, and the context in which we find ourselves, including what each of us wants out of the interaction. Social identity is relational and situational rather than immutable and unitary, or defined by an ontological sense of undivided being. Dr. Mekacha, a Nata professor of linguistics at the University of Dar es Salaam, told me that he is called a different name by his parents, his grandmother and his age-mates when he is home--besides being

⁴⁸ Just as Guyer and Belinga have postulated "wealth-in-knowledge" as a refinement of the "wealth-in-people" paradigm, this suggests a further elaboration of "wealth-in-relationships." Jane I. Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *Journal of African History* 36 (1995): 91-120.

named as an educated man from Dar es Salaam. In terms of social identity, when he is in Nata people identify him by his lineage or place of residence. When he is in Musoma, people identify him as Nata. When he is in Dar es Salaam, people identify him as Kuria.⁴⁹ Each of those positional identities is dependent on where he is and to whom he is speaking.

A person can never assert his social identity in a vacuum. He must state it in relation to someone else and to a specific space and time. It is only in Dar es Salaam that people name Dr. Mekacha as Kuria. If someone would call him Kuria in Musoma, he would be deeply offended because of the connotation, for others in the Mara Region and throughout Tanzania, of Kuria cattle theft. What it means to be Kuria today is different from what it might have meant, if the term was used at all, at the beginning of the century when people admired and imitated the Kuria for their courage and skill in cattle raiding. The boundaries of social identity are constantly in flux.

Social Boundaries

Each of these identities defines boundaries with people who are different and, at the same time, defines reciprocal obligations with those who are the same. Identity only functions in reference to what it is not and within an arena in which people define difference. Although farmers in the western Serengeti also hunted and farmed, they defined themselves in distinction to hunters and herders in order to establish relations of interdependence between communities which practiced different subsistence economies. Multiple identities flourished because they were the most important social resource in a harsh environment where land was plentiful and people scarce. It was only by successfully calling on the bonds of reciprocity within various groups that a family could survive a drought or grow wealthy and powerful. The way to authority was not a vertical movement through a hierarchy but a set of horizontal movements aimed at creating and

⁴⁹ Interview with Dr. Rugatiri Mekacha, Dar es Salaam, 24 May 1996 (Nata *o*).

maintaining intricate networks of relationship.⁵⁰ Jane Guyer and Samuel Belinga describe this as a "compositional," rather than an "accumulative," process for gaining "wealth-in-knowledge" through various social relationships.⁵¹

By looking at each of these social identities as it is portrayed in oral tradition, each with its own organization of space, I hope to illuminate the complexity and creativity of noncentralized societies. Without centralized hierarchies of chiefs or kings (but certainly not without hierarchy) western Serengeti people responded creatively to the stresses of the late nineteenth century. They fashioned new solutions out of the social resources at hand. Defining a multiplicity of identities in order to spread out social capital and minimize risk also maximized opportunity. The peoples of the western Serengeti not only survived the nineteenth century disasters but they forged an era of unprecedented cattle wealth in the early colonial years.

Because prosperity in this marginal environment rested on these identities and the networks of reciprocity that they composed, oral traditions preserved the knowledge necessary to maintain these relationships. We can understand oral traditions as "mental maps," or spatial representations of social relationships necessary in daily life.⁵² "Social maps" are a metaphorical way of

⁵⁰ Miller uses a similar model to explain the trade networks of the slave trade, Joseph C. Miller, Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

⁵¹ Guyer and Belinga, "Wealth in People," p. 103.

⁵² For some of the earliest work on "mental maps" see, Peter Gould and Rodney White, Mental Maps (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974); David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden, Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Honor of John Kirtland Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). For an application of "mental maps" in African history see, Barrie Sharpe, "Ethnography and a Regional System: Mental Maps and the Myth of States and Tribes in North-Central Nigeria," Critique of Anthropology, 6, 3 (1986):33-65.

representing social relationships and also a description of the organization of physical space.⁵³ Narrators transmitted and maintained these maps because they distilled into spatial form the wisdom of the older generation who had already walked the paths of these relationships. Yet in the transmission of oral tradition, narrators described, as well as reinterpreted, the spaces of social relationship each time they told the stories and lived them out in daily practice.

Each kind of oral tradition represents a different mental map to a different set of social identities, corresponding to a particular temporality and space in the historical consciousness. It is only by overlaying these maps that the shape of regional social history emerges. I define a region as the geographical extent of a historical set of significant social relationships that change over time.⁵⁴ These mental maps are the very framework within which people store group memories and without which social memory ceases to exist. The transmission of these maps to a new generation reproduces social identity and the new generation in turn represents these identities in its interpretation of the past through the present. This study necessarily encompasses a larger geographical area than that of a single ethnic unit because only within a larger region is it possible to see multiple maps on multiple scales representing multiple identities in action.

Research Methodology

Historians have recently been criticized for handling oral tradition as a "container of facts" using a "documentary model," rather than as living discourse.⁵⁵ As a result historians must now

⁵³ Shirley Ardener, ed., *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 13-14; and Hofmeyr, *"We Spend Our Years."* pp. 160-166, both use the concept of a "social map."

⁵⁴ For an analysis of "regions" in terms of the "mental maps" of oral tradition see Jan Bender Shetler, "'Region' as a Historical Product: Mental Maps of Western Serengeti Oral Tradition," a paper presented at the American Historical Association, Seattle, 1998 and to be included as an essay in a forthcoming book on African Regional History.

⁵⁵ Newbury, "Contradictions at the Heart," p. 32.

look carefully at their own subjectivity as researchers and participants in the process. To evaluate the historical analysis of this dissertation the reader must understand how the oral texts were created in the interview process, the place of the researcher, and how these texts were then used in conjunction with other kinds of sources.

Situated Knowledge

Rather than taking the vantage point of the all-seeing observer, this dissertation "sees" from the position of a guest in the community trying to understand how people conceptualize their pasts. This is what Donna Haraway calls "situated knowledge" in which only a "partial perspective" is claimed, allowing for other interpretations without the splitting of subject and object. The story told here is the result of a particular set of interactions, conversations and relationships between myself and people from the western Serengeti who agreed to share their knowledge with an outsider. I do not claim to speak for or on behalf of them, but only to bear witness to what I experienced and to what I could "see" from this vantage point.⁵⁶ Another way to understand the knowledge that this dissertation represents is as a dialogue between myself and those I encountered in the western Serengeti, Musoma, Mwanza, Dar es Salaam, as well as my colleagues and professors at the University of Florida and the University of Dar es Salaam, interaction with the literature and those people with whom I live and work everyday.⁵⁷

However, because this project was conceived and carried out as a collaborative project with so many colleagues in Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi, Ikizu, Ngoreme, Zanaki, Ruri, Kuria and even

⁵⁶ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 183-201.

⁵⁷ For the concept of research as dialogue see Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim, eds., "Introduction," *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 1-20; See also Dennis Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), pp. 285-338.

Sonjo, I am obligated to try to present an account that will do justice to their efforts. I have laid out some of these personal commitments in the Foreword. The constraint of these other voices on my work has been a constant source of inspiration as well as a reminder of the scholar's larger social obligations in a world of injustice and inequality. It is my hope that my readers will hear the voices of those in the western Serengeti who contributed their knowledge above the din of my own analysis.

Although I have attempted to understand the past as much as possible from the perspective of those in the western Serengeti, in terms of their categories, I cannot claim to present this past knowledge in an unmediated form, in which the oral traditions are left to "speak for themselves." The conceptualization of this material into a form contained in an academic historical argument is obviously mine. I interrogate the historical knowledge of the western Serengeti with all available professional and critical tools while striving to foreground the understandings contained in the oral traditions themselves. As the narrator is located in a particular place of knowledge, conversations with other forms of knowledge are not only possible but necessary for understanding, since all knowledge is ultimately relational. Although the dialogues that occurred with people in the western Serengeti are foundational to this project, other dialogues in Dar es Salaam and on this side of the ocean both before and after the research experience have significantly shaped the outcome. I also have access to information, through the linguistic analysis of words and the ethnographic analysis of cultural traits, that local people do not understand as evidence about the past. This "evidence in spite of itself" allows an outsider to construct bundles of cultural meaning which local people take for granted.

"Situated knowledge" also does not presume that the position from which history is "seen" is innocent or unitary. All knowledge about the past is contested and deeply implicated in relations of power. Attempts to see from the perspective of local historical consciousness require us to look

for the relations of power behind the texts and to comprehend how people use these texts in the struggles of everyday life. The multiplicity of knowledge implicit in Mayani and Nyawagamba's list of historical topics discussed in the Foreword demonstrates that no single perspective can do justice to all social positions. Conflicting positions are often evident even within one text. My position of power as a white, Swahili-speaking, Christian, American woman (wife and mother) was certainly a factor both in eliciting and interpreting these narratives.

Throughout my research I encountered suspicion about why I wanted to gather this information and how I would use it. My assistants usually explained my situation to those I interviewed, often when I was not present. Most of the elders agreed to share their knowledge with the hope of a book from which their grandchildren could learn about the history and culture of this region. Many were sure that I would make lots of money from this knowledge. At the heart of their suspicion was the sense that knowledge about other people gives one power over them. As I learned more, my questions began to reflect this knowledge, to which the elders often responded with a nervous laugh and an aside to my assistant, "how does she know that?" Elders respected this knowledge and took me more seriously in later interviews, resulting in more careful and detailed answers. On the other hand the elders also became much more wary and certain areas were deliberately hidden. By the end of the interview process I understood most of what people said in the local languages, since they are all closely related. Nevertheless, I still felt more comfortable asking the questions in Swahili. Therefore, some answers in local languages were directed toward my assistants, containing information that they would not otherwise have shared with me.

A general suspicion existed that an American would not bother living in the "bush" unless she had some ulterior motive. I heard many possibilities suggested. We lived near the park and since people were always suspicious about new plans to take their land away for park expansion,

they wondered if the park had sent me to gather information for this purpose. Since cattle raiding and game poaching are large security concerns of the government in this area, people also met these topics with some caution. Some thought we were prospecting for gold. A deeper and more vague concern was that, with rising U.S. power at the end of the Cold War, Americans would re-colonize Africa by first learning the secrets of its people. Just as I was doing my main interviews Tanzania was getting geared up for the first multi-party elections, so some people assumed that some party or candidate in the elections had paid me to promote their cause. Many communities in which I did interviews had known me as a Mennonite Church development worker (1985-91). I rented the car I drove from the Tanzania Mennonite Church that had the church name written on the door. The only time anyone totally denied me an interview was not because of my church connections but because I was white. The elder said:

These people are like God, they know where the sun goes at the end of the day because they can follow it with their airplanes: people like that are too powerful to be messed with, you cannot predict what they will do with the information that you give them.⁵⁸

The single most important factor in calming these fears and suspicions seems to have been that I am a woman, married with half-grown children. The general assumption is that women are straightforward, open and willing to work for altruistic reasons, while men always have an ulterior and deceitful motive, for personal benefit. Only women with children are treated as adults. In the system of generational relationships people in alternate generations have the most intimate relationships, while those in adjacent generations maintain a more distant and formal relationship. Some of the men I interviewed considered me as their grandchild but more often I was considered in their daughter's generation. Thus the interviews were formal but very serious and

⁵⁸ Interview with Simora Nyamotoma, Robanda, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

straightforward. Interviews with men who treated me like a granddaughter sometimes produced unexpected information but were harder to keep on track.⁵⁹

Tanzanian historians Buluda Itandala and Isaria Kimambo also reported dealing with similar issues of suspicion in their dissertation research. Kimambo stated that old men were loathe to discuss ritual practice openly because "such information formed the secrets of their society-- secrets that they revealed only to initiated members of the society." He slowly broke through this resistance by using the little information that he gained from those who trusted him to learn to ask the right questions of the elders. Both commented that they only began to get inside information when they used "well-known and trusted local people" to introduce them to the informants.⁶⁰ The personal bond of reciprocal relationship allowed for the possibility of divulging secrets.

A history told from the standpoint of "situated knowledge" may differ in its interpretation from the sources of its knowledge. The Nata, Ikizu, Ikoma and other elders who told me these stories of the past may not agree with my rendition. I must take into consideration a historical consciousness that the transformations of the late nineteenth century have seriously altered. I must in a sense privilege the knowledge of the ancestors and their ways of knowing over that of the living, seeking out the specific ways in which the ancestors live in the present and learning from them. If the pact of obligation for a fair rendition of the past is with anyone, it is to them, and their way of imagining the past, that I am held accountable. I strive to bear witness to each of these concerns, knowing that I am a product of my own multiple identities situated in time and space.

⁵⁹ Similar generational interactions during his research are described by Rugatiri D. K. Mekacha, The Sociolinguistic Impact of Kiswahili on Ethnic Community Languages in Tanzania: A Case Study of Ekinata (Bayreuth, Germany: Bayreuth African Studies, 1993), p. 51.

⁶⁰ A. Buluda Itandala, "A History of the Babinza of Usukuma, Tanzania, to 1890" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dalhousie University, May 1983), p. 9. Isaria N. Kimambo, A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania, c. 1500-1900 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), p. x.

Oral Sources

This research, conducted over a period of eighteen months in Tanzania (January 1995-July 1996), was primarily concerned with the search for the remains of this previous historical consciousness in oral traditions told today. Although people reworked oral traditions to fit new identities during the late nineteenth century disasters and the subsequent colonial era, they did not obliterate earlier understandings. Many versions of each kind of oral tradition remain, without a central dynastic account. The narration of oral tradition resembles a conversation rather than a recitation and history emerges in a process of dialogue. No formalized genres of oral literature exist, except perhaps the recitation of praise names and proverbs. Almost no local popular histories appear in print that would influence the content of oral tradition. Many versions of the same stories from different social positions and among different ethnic groups were collected for comparison and cross reference.

I collected historical narratives among five different Bantu-speaking peoples (Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi, Ngoreme and Ikizu) and two different Dadog-speaking peoples (Rotigenga and Isimajek) of the western Serengeti, as well as a few interviews among neighboring peoples (Sonjo, Kuria, Sizaki, Zanaki and Ruri).⁶¹ I asked open-ended questions, trying to solicit all kinds of knowledge about the past, without confining it to the expected ethnic narratives. The interviews were often four hours in length, following the interests and knowledge of the elder rather than a set list of questions. After many interviews among many ethnic groups I found repetition of some stories, with variations, as well as references to similar social and cultural institutions of the past. From these similarities and variations a wider regional history began to come into focus. When I put these accounts side by side, similar experiences and forms of organization emerged in

⁶¹ See References Cited for list of informants, ethnic origins and other personal data.

corresponding generations across ethnic lines. The elders were telling a common history as seven unique histories.

The Mara Region is an ideal venue for this kind of regional comparative study of oral traditions because so many different ethnic groups exist within a small geographical area, each claiming its own unique identity and history. It is also a region in which colonial penetration happened late and incompletely.⁶² A much different process was underway here than in neighboring areas, where the emergence of a pan-Sukuma, pan-Luo and pan-Maasai ethnic identity became an important political force, with clear implications for the transmission of historical knowledge. Without a tradition of chiefs or hierarchical leadership, the Mara Region also differs from the kingdoms of the Great Lakes Region where "big" dynastic history often overshadowed "little" commoner or clan histories. By the same token, no single, centralized tradition exists to use in comparison with marginal traditions.

A strategy employed in the research was to collect historical narratives from different positions in the social network. Elders who had reached the top titles in the *nyangi* system, leaders of the age or generation-sets, lineage or clan leaders, rainmakers and prophets each had a slightly different version of the past that highlighted the power and authority of each of these kinds of social relationship. Although colleagues usually took me to see people of respected position, I also tried to talk to ordinary participants in these social organizations and to people in their roles as farmers, hunters, herders, specialists and household members on a more informal basis.

I also began to collect manuscripts of ethnic histories written by local intellectuals, often primary school teachers or government clerks. They usually handwrote these in school notebooks

⁶² For an analysis of this process see Kirsten Alsaker Kjerland, "Cattle Breed; Shillings Don't: The Belated Incorporation of the abaKuria into Modern Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 1995).

and stored them away in trunks. One Ngonde man who worked in the parish church office had his manuscripts typed and duplicated but I had trouble finding even one complete copy twenty years later. These accounts, similar to "encyclopedic informant" narratives, were compilations of histories learned from elders and written in the same style. I am trying to get some of these histories published in Tanzania for local use.⁶³

Ethnographic participant-observation in a rural community and an informal household survey in one village augmented this study.⁶⁴ I went with the leaders of the different groups to the important historical places on the landscape, hearing the stories connected to those sites and observing their location, ecology and situation. All of this information added depth and insight to the historical processes described in oral tradition. Most of my cultural knowledge outside formal interviews is a result of living as a guest of the Magoto family in Bugerera/Mbiso Nata. My husband, two children and I lived there continuously from February 1995 through April 1996. My Nata language teacher was a sister-in-law of the family, my cultural vocabulary informant a brother and my main resources and colleagues for everything from interviews to logistics were two other brothers. Because of this locus of learning, my account is specifically situated with Nata at the center.

Oral traditions were collected in an interview setting because of the need to visit many ethnic groups in a large area. Elders do not normally perform these stories in a formal setting but tell them in small segments in the natural course of conversation, often among elders at their own

⁶³ See References Cited for a list of local manuscripts. On encyclopedic informants see Patrick Pender-Cudlip, "Encyclopedic Informants and Early Interlacustrine History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 4, 1 (1971): 198-210.

⁶⁴ The results and methodology of this survey will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. In brief, it consisted of asking a few key informants to tell me who lived in each household in the village, what their relationships to each other and to others in the village were, along with other personal information.

gatherings. Being a young woman I would not normally have had access to these situations. I conducted formal taped interviews with 164 informants and had at least as many informal encounters over fifteen months. Interviews usually took place in the home of the elder, always with a colleague to accompany and assist me. When I interviewed men, I went with a man from that community, when I interviewed women, I usually went with a woman from that community. Most interviews attracted an audience of family and neighbors who were important participants as audience. A young Nata woman did the transcription of most of the taped interviews in local languages and then went over their meaning with me. Tapes, translations and transcripts of interviews will be deposited with the African Studies Association oral data collection housed at the Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University, Bloomington. Translations and transcripts will be forwarded to the University of Dar es Salaam, History Department and the Musoma Regional Archives.

I was able to conduct interviews in each of these seven ethnic groups because of preexisting relationships in the region. I worked there for six years as a church development worker (1985-1991) and so had valuable social networks already in place.⁶⁵ A local assistant in each ethnic area arranged the interviews, accompanied me to them and helped with translation and explanation during the interview. These were not hired assistants but friends, colleagues and friends-of-friends. The class differences between informants and assistants was minimal and both were residents in the same community. In Nata I went with members of the family with whom we lived, in Ikizu a man from our village, in Ikoma an older pastor, and in Ngoreme a young development projects' coordinator from the program in which I had previous worked.

⁶⁵ 1985-1991, Co-Coordinator for the Congregational Development Department of the Tanzania Mennonite Church, Lake Diocese and Co-Country Representative for Mennonite Central Committee, North America, stationed in Nyabange, near to Musoma, Tanzania.

These people were not chosen because of their particular knowledge of history but because they knew their communities, people there respected and trusted them, and they were available. Some of the hardest work they did took place in the introductions, often involving a long period of questions and answers about my work. Each assistant was committed to the process because of an interest in history and because the bonds of reciprocity connected them to me. People did not see them as my dependents but as hosts of a guest to the community who could bring potential benefits. Because my assistants were also learners asking their own questions during the interviews, I learned by watching their interactions. They were a valuable source of cultural information and also colleagues for discussing how the interview had gone. I sometimes took an assistant from one ethnic group to interviews in a different ethnic area. Their questions often probed the places where the two groups differed, or where ethnic stereotypes were most intense. These assistants played a critical role in the formation of my own historical consciousness.

Written Sources

However, oral sources are not the only problematic sources of historical evidence, and as this section demonstrates, each of the other sources (archival, ethnography, historical linguistics, archaeology) have their own histories and difficulties as evidence of the past. The Mara Region itself also presents some problems for this kind of study. Almost no academic historical research has been done in this region, requiring the preliminary establishment of the most fundamental historical framework.⁶⁶ Early written accounts are scarce to nonexistent: a very few travelers'

⁶⁶ Gerald Hartwig, *The Art of Survival in East Africa: The Kerebe and Long-Distance Trade* (New York, 1970); and A. O. Anacketi, "Pastoralism and Development: Economic Changes in Pastoral Industry in Sorengeti 1750-1961" (Master's thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, June 1975), are the two exceptions.

accounts;⁶⁷ a little colonial ethnography;⁶⁸ and colonial archival sources. Both the German and British papers in the National Archives for this region have significant sections entirely missing.⁶⁹ The first missionaries in the region were the White Fathers, who only visited the western Serengeti from their lakeshore stations on rare occasion in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Seventh Day Adventist missionaries also came during this time but seemed more interested in obliterating local custom than in recording it. Mennonite Mission arrived in the 1930s, by which time other Europeans introduced them to local custom and history.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Oscar Baumann, Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle: Reisen und Forschungen der Massai-Expedition des deutschen Antisklaverei-Komitee in den Jahren 1891-1893 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1894); Paul Kollmann, The Victoria Nyanza: The Land, the Races and their Customs, with Specimens of some Dialects, trans. H. A. Nesbitt (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Ltd., 1899); and Max Weiss, Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas (Berlin: Carl Marschner, 1910; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971) are some of the few available.

⁶⁸ Edward Conway Baker, Musoma District Commissioner, his collected papers are available on microfilm from Oxford University Press, as well as in the Cory Papers at the East Africana Library, University of Dar es Salaam. Ethnographic accounts by other authors are also available among the Hans Cory Papers at the University of Dar es Salaam. For the Zanaki see, Otto Bischofberger, The Generation Classes of the Zanaki (Tanzania) (Fribourg, Switzerland: The University Press, 1972). For the Kwaya see Hugo Huber, Marriage and Family in Rural Bukwaya (Tanzania) (Fribourg, Switzerland: The University Press, 1973). For the Kuria see Eva Tobisson, Family Dynamics among the Kuria: Agro-Pastoralists in Northern Tanzania (Goteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1986) and various articles by anthropologist Malcolm Ruel.

⁶⁹ The National Archives in Dar es Salaam has excellent indexes for locating materials. Much of what is listed in the indexes on the Musoma District is unavailable. In comparing the amount of material listed in the index for the Tarime sub-district of Musoma to the Musoma office itself it appears that much of the Musoma district materials never made it to the National Archives. I do not yet have an explanation for this. I was not able to find any colonial papers in the Musoma Archives. Much of my archival materials are consequently from the Lake Province (Mwanza) and Secretariat files rather than from the district itself. This is unfortunate because what is largely missing is the original letters from the Musoma Chiefs in Swahili. The German files were also few. The story of the Germans burning their papers as they fled Musoma to Busegwe where th S.D.A. mission was used as their temporary headquarters is told in, Toppenberg, Africa Has My Heart, p. 67.

⁷⁰ White Fathers' sources were found in the archives of the White Fathers' Regionals' House in Nyegezi, Tanzania, a few other Catholic sources were located at the Maryknoll Father's Language School library in Makoko, Musoma. The White Fathers' stations closest to the research

If a full range of early written sources were available more comparison of versions written at an earlier time could be done. A more complete colonial record would also facilitate the understanding of how historical consciousness has changed in the last century. This work relies primarily on oral sources, with scarce written sources supplying confirmation at critical points.⁷¹

I worked in the Tanzania National Archives and the East Africana Collection at the University of Dar es Salaam over a period of three months. The archives of the White Fathers, Seventh Day Adventist, Mennonite, Bujora Sukuma and Mara Region were consulted while I lived in Nata. Given more time and resources I would consult the European archives as well. The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Archives and the Seventh Day Adventist Archives were consulted in the United States. Northwestern University holds seminar papers from Universities in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Makerere in Kampala. The Musoma District Books, E.C. Baker Papers and Church Missionary Society papers are available on microfilm.

area was Ukerewe Island and Nyegina station (established 1911). S.D.A. primary sources were unavailable in Tanzania. I located some in the General Conference Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. For an account of the S.D.A. mission in Tanzania see, K. B. Elineema, Historia ya Kanisa la Waadventista Wasabato Tanzania 1903-1993 (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1993). Mennonite Mission papers were also unavailable in Tanzania for the early years and located at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society in Lancaster, PA. For an account of the Mennonite Mission in Tanzania see, Mahlon M. Hess, Pilgrimage of Faith: Tanzania Mennonite Church, 1934-83 (Salunga, PA: Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1985); see also Joseph C. Shenk, Kisare: A Mennonite of Kisumu (Salunga, PA: Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1984); Joseph C. Shenk, Silver Thread: The Ups and Downs of a Mennonite Family in Mission (1895-1995) (Intercourse PA: Good Books, 1996); and David W. Shenk, Mennonite Safari (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1974).

⁷¹ In addition to my own collection of oral traditions I also made use of the collected oral traditions from North Mara of Zedekia Oloo Siso, manuscripts of ethnic histories from Ikizu, Ngoreme, Ishenyi and Sizaki written by local authors and published oral traditions of the Kuria, Maasai, Sukuma, Luo and Sonjo, see References Cited.

Historical Linguistics

Historical linguistics represents a form of historical reasoning from evidence gained by comparing languages spoken today to identify changes in words and sound patterns over time. The method of historical linguistics rests on the assumption that language is a system where sound and meaning go together arbitrarily. That condition allows historians to figure out how different languages are related to each other by regular changes in languages over time, how local language innovations came about and also how contact with other languages influenced the development of a language.⁷²

The classification of languages into families gives the historian an indication of historical events and processes that took place among the speakers of these languages. Genealogical trees of language families are constructed by comparing lists of core vocabularies from related languages to determine how many cognates they have in common (known as lexicostatistics). By identifying consistent sound shifts in cognate words for two closely related languages, historical linguists reconstruct words in the proto-language from the cognates in these languages. By comparing many related languages over a wide region it is also possible to reconstruct the nature of a proto-language itself and the relationship among all of the languages that descended from one proto-language. Historical linguists can suggest where speakers of a proto-language might have lived by looking at the geographical distribution of its descendant languages.

Splits in a family tree can then be dated very approximately by counting the differences in cognate percentages of core vocabularies between related languages (known as glottochronology).

⁷² For an overview of the methodology of historical linguistics see: Derek Nurse, "The Contributions of Linguistics to the Study of History in Africa," *Journal of African History* 38 (1997): 359-391; David Lee Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, a Good Place* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, forthcoming), pp. 34-48; Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 9-16.

This method rests on the observation that random replacement of items in the core vocabulary of any language accumulates at a regular pace over a period of centuries. For the Great Lakes Bantu family of languages Schoenbrun, following Ehret, assumes that sixteen out of 100 items in the list of core vocabularies "will be replaced each 500 years, either by morphological analogy, or by borrowing from another language."⁷³ Thus if the group averages for Suguti and Mara languages share 56 percent of their cognates, we know that these two branches of the East Nyanza family of languages must have been separated about 600 A.D. or 1400 years ago. Within the western Serengeti, languages like Nata and Ikoma share 86 percent of their cognates and thus diverged less than 500 years ago. These time scales can then be correlated with the independently derived chronologies of archaeology, where they are available, although both systems of dating are extremely vague with wide margins of error.

Historical linguists can also look at individual words in a language that may be different from the cognates in related languages, to determine innovations in the past. These innovations may be the result of adopting words from other languages (loanwords) or developing new words internally (innovations). Loanwords from other language groups provide evidence for cross-cultural contacts in the past that can be dated by the methods of glottochronology explained above. In western Serengeti languages many loanwords from Southern Nilotic languages, particularly words about livestock, suggest that Mara Bantu-speakers moving out into the drier areas of the interior learned from their neighbors how to diversify and expand their economic subsistence patterns by increased stock raising. From a reconstruction of the Southern Nilotic family tree we know that Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers were in the region about the same time that East Nyanza Bantu-speakers arrived.

⁷³ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 36.

Internal innovations of new words are also possible, providing the historian with some evidence of historical processes for which new words had to be developed. These words can be investigated by looking at how the root word from which it derives was used in other languages throughout the region. For example, in the first chapter I demonstrate the status of a post-menopausal woman, *omokuungu*, by looking at the etymology of the word. This word is derived from the old proto-Bantu verb *-kung*, "to gather, to assemble." In other places around the lake it refers to a rich person with followers, or to a chief.⁷⁴ Uniquely in the Mara languages this word refers to elderly women with many children. This would indicate that the "wealth in people" that women controlled through gathering their children was extremely important on this inter-cultural frontier.

Although correlating the speakers of a language with an ethnic group or even a distinct community of people in the past would be convenient for the historian, linguistic evidence alone cannot support this. Historical linguists can only talk about people who spoke the same language (but who might also be multilingual and practice a culture distinct from other speakers of the language). If one language disappears and another becomes dominant in the record of historical linguistics this does not necessarily mean that one group conquered or expelled the other. A language can spread ahead of its speakers and divisions in the family tree of a language do not necessarily mean that people had to move.⁷⁵ As Derek Nurse points out, "historians and archaeologists are frequently prone to interpret a linguistic tree as a literal historical development,

⁷⁴ David Lee Schoenbrun, *The Historical Reconstruction of Great Lakes Cultural Vocabulary: Etymologies and Distributions* (Cologne: Rhdiger Koppe Verlag, forthcoming), #209 and #210; Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 185-187.

⁷⁵ For a similar critique applied to archaeology see Martin Hall, "Origins: Unwrapping the Iron Age Package," *Farmers, Kings and Traders: The People of Southern Africa 200-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 17-31.

as a movement of people from one point in space or time to another, or as one component of a homogeneous 'cultural tradition'.⁷⁶

In spite of these pitfalls, historians can learn a lot about the ways that people lived in the past by reconstructing the cultural vocabularies—for example, what kind of subsistence patterns they followed, what their settlements and homesteads looked like and what kinds of authority they recognized. These reconstructions are based on the assumption that a word in a language refers to a real object. If historians have available a series of linguistic stages, with cultural vocabularies for each, then they can postulate a sequence of changes in social institutions and activities over time. It is often only through the evidence of historical linguistics that we can discern interactions with peoples whose culture and language have long disappeared.

I have relied heavily on the historical linguistic work already done in this region by Christopher Ehret and David Schoenbrun.⁷⁷ For example, Schoenbrun classified the Lakes Bantu languages and Ehret the Southern Nilotic and Southern Cushitic languages in the region. Both have published lists of loanwords and etymologies making it relatively easy to compare my lists of cultural and core vocabularies. I collected core vocabularies of 100 words (Ehret and Schoenbrun's list) in Ngorome, Ikizu, Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi, Sonjo and Dadog. I assembled a nearly complete 1563 cultural vocabulary list (University of Dar es Salaam list) in Nata and parts of it in some other languages. From these core vocabularies I constructed a dialect chaining chart

⁷⁶ Nurse, "The Contributions of Linguistics," p. 370.

⁷⁷ Christopher Ehret, Southern Nilotic History: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of the Past (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971); David Lee Schoenbrun, "Early History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes Region: Linguistic, Ecological, and Archeological Approaches, ca. 500 B.C. to ca. A.D. 1000" (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1985); Schoenbrun, A Green Place; and Schoenbrun, Etymologies. I used Ehret and Schoenbrun's 200 word list for core vocabularies and a combination of Schoenbrun's and University of Dar es Salaam's 1563 word list for cultural vocabulary.

of the cognate percentages that appears in Chapter 4. The cultural vocabularies and the etymologies of words are used frequently throughout the dissertation. I also had access to a few unpublished dictionaries of some languages in the region and a recently published Kuria-English dictionary.⁷⁸

By learning one Mara language, Nata, I could understand at a basic level the other four Bantu languages. I learned no Dadog. Knowledge of the local language was important for a more nuanced cultural understanding than would have been possible in Swahili. It allowed the elders the freedom to speak in their own languages, rather than translate into Swahili. Extensive previous knowledge of Swahili was an asset but was also an impediment to learning Nata more fluently.

Other Sources of Evidence: Archaeology and Ecology

Although historical linguistics and comparative ethnography are the primary sources of evidence used in conjunction with oral traditions, I also rely on published works in archaeology and ecology. Little archaeological work exists for the period of my study and in the precise area where I worked, however, a lot has been done on pastoral and hunter/gatherer communities during the Neolithic period in the Rift Valley and the Serengeti.⁷⁹ In addition, a vast body of scientific research exists on the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem that provides valuable information on climatic patterns, soil and vegetation types and distribution, wild animal ecologies and the effects of human

⁷⁸ Muniko, et. al., Kuria-English Dictionary.

⁷⁹ See for example Peter Robertshaw, ed., Early Pastoralists of South-western Kenya (Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 1990); John Bower, "The Pastoral Neolithic of East Africa," Journal of World Prehistory 5, 1 (1991): 49-82; Peter Robertshaw and David Collett, "A New Framework for the Study of Early Pastoral Communities in East Africa," Journal of African History 24 (1983): 289-301; Desmond J. Clark and Steven A. Brandt, eds., From Hunters to Farmers: The Causes and Consequences of Food Production in Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Closer to Lake Victoria see R. C. Soper and B. Golden, "An Archeological Survey of Mwanza Region, Tanzania," Azania 4 (1969): 48-53. North of the Mara Region see, J. E. G. Sutton, The Archaeology of the Western Highlands of Kenya (Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 1973).

induced perturbations such as burning or intensive livestock grazing on the ecosystem.⁸⁰ This research sets the material parameters that patterned subsistence economies and social interaction of early settlers in the region.

Throughout the dissertation I also represent the information provided in oral traditions on maps of a geographical grid. These maps are tools for understanding the spatial relationship between places on the landscape.⁸¹ The bird's eye view is an artificial device used by people who have not grown up walking to these places and provides insights into historical process not otherwise available. Because local people do not see the landscape from this perspective, these are not adequate representations of the "mental maps" of oral tradition but remain useful to the historian.

Historical Reconstruction and Chapter Organization

This dissertation is organized into four sections according to indigenous time frames. The first section concerns the present era in which the research was conducted, the colonial period in which these narratives were reformulated into ethnic accounts and the disaster years in which social identity was significantly transformed. Because the analysis of this dissertation is heavily dependent on the narrative form of oral tradition and its transmission, the next chapter looks at these issues in terms of the social organization of knowledge about the past. The third chapter familiarizes the reader with the events of the late nineteenth century disasters because of their significance in the reshaping of historical consciousness that must be "read" into the oral traditions analyzed in the rest of the dissertation.

⁸⁰ The classic study in this regard is A.R.E. Sinclair and M. Norton-Griffiths, eds. Serengeti: Dynamics of an Ecosystem (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁸¹ Thanks to Peter Shetler for his assistance and expertise in GIS and other forms of computer mapping in creating these maps.

The second section is concerned with the oldest period of indigenous history or time frame, looking at the traditions of ethnic and clan origins, analyzing them in terms of the social organization of space over the *longue durée*. Although they have been overlaid with material from other time periods, I concentrate on the core images of these traditions that correspond to the spaces of production, reproduction, regional networks of association and settlement. These traditions do not yield a sense of change over time, but they do provide a basic framework for understanding the social organization of space in the distant past in terms of generative principles.

The third section, on the middle period of indigenous history, looks at the lists of settlement sites names and descriptions of rituals concerning the land that refer to a period of time in which people established rights to the land that exist today. Long-term settlement patterns, methods for incorporating strangers and rituals for marking boundaries are described. These means by which people established a relationship to the land were used in the second half of the nineteenth century to create new territorial groupings in response to disaster.

The fourth and final section represents the climax of the story in which the creative changes in the spatial organization of social identity take place in response to the disasters of war, famine, disease and later colonial intrusion. It describes how ago-set territories emerged in the east to reconfigure settlement structure and how a sense of ethnicity developed in the early colonial years. It is only by setting the events of the late nineteenth century in the context of long-term social process that the full meaning of the nineteenth century changes are understood.

In each chapter successive layers in the interpretation of oral traditions are analyzed by looking at different versions as they shed light on various aspects of the form of social identity under consideration. In this way the oral traditions themselves set the terms of the analysis and other forms of evidence used to elaborate further these themes.

PART ONE:

THE SOCIAL SPACES OF ORAL TRADITION AND
HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE WESTERN SERENGETI

CHAPTER TWO
ORAL TRADITION:
THE GENDERED SPACES OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE
AND THE SECRETS OF THE PAST

To approach the history of the western Serengeti from the perspective of its oral traditions, the historian must first consider the performance context in which people tell these narratives. When and where are stories of the past told, to whom, by whom, for what purposes? Why are they remembered? How is this knowledge used in contests of power? How have shifting understandings of the past modified historical narratives over the generations?

Individual members of particular social groups formulate, transmit, and maintain historical knowledge within the physical spaces that they occupy in daily practice, physical spaces that structure their interaction with others. In particular, a gendered division of knowledge about the past is explored in the lived spaces where men and women transmit separate realms of knowledge. The present generation of elders developed their ethnic narratives within the expanded space of the colonial territory and its reliance on the written word. Although most people consider historical traditions as men's knowledge, women significantly influence the transmission of oral traditions through their informal knowledge of current community affairs. In addition, women occupying exceptional social positions cross these boundaries of gendered knowledge and gain access to men's knowledge.

The classification of some kinds of knowledge as "secret" and available only to insiders also confines knowledge about the past to particular social spaces. Inside or specialized knowledge represents a key social resource that initiates preserve in things and places as well as in

people. Cohen's caution against a formalist definition of oral tradition as a set of fixed texts allows us to see how historical knowledge is exchanged in "the everyday critical, lively, intelligence which surrounds the status, activities, gestures, and speech of individuals."¹ Yet the social spaces that people inhabit restrict the ways that they can share and alter that knowledge. Although historical knowledge crosses social boundaries, it does so in structured ways. Each kind of oral tradition contains the knowledge of a particular social group as they represent themselves in relation to others, within a field of multiple and overlapping sets of knowledge, rather than as a discrete subset of the collective knowledge of an integrated society. Social groups not only represent the spatial organization of social relations in their oral traditions but also maintain and transmit these narratives within the spaces that structure their relationships. Understanding the social organization of knowledge prepares the way to interpret oral traditions.

The Social Spaces of Historical Knowledge

Historical narratives are not disembodied social facts but are inseparable from the historical context and geographical space in which people tell them. Discerning the social units defined by oral tradition and the social definition of the people who tell oral tradition provides key insights into the historical meaning of these narratives.

Locating the Western Serengeti as a Region

The largest social space of western Serengeti oral traditions defines a region within which the narrators of these traditions locate themselves. The principal narrators of oral tradition analyzed in this dissertation include the Bantu-speaking hill farmers of the western Serengeti—the Ikoma, Nata, Ishenyi, Ikizu and Ngoreme ethnic groups. They now occupy the Serengeti and Bunda Districts in the southeastern portion of the Mara Region of Tanzania. However, hill

¹ D. W. Cohen, "The Undefining of Oral Tradition," *Ethnohistory*, 36, 1 (Winter 1989): 12.

farmers have not been the only inhabitants of this region over the long-term. The adaptation of farmers to the ecology of this region and their ongoing prosperity depended upon interaction with pastoralists and hunter/gatherers. The story of Bantu-speaking hill farmers is integrally connected to that of Dadog-speaking pastoralists in the western Serengeti, the Rotigenga and Isimajek Tatoga.² I cannot do justice to the Tatoga story here, but will use it to shed light on the development of the region as a whole. I hope that their story can one day be published in its own right. The other set of actors in this story, the Asi hunter-gatherers, do not have a voice here because I could not identify any Asi descendants in the western Serengeti who knew these traditions. Regrettably, they are only represented here in the stories of others. I hope that the research will someday be done to gather what fragments remain of this tradition. [See Figure 2-1: Regional Setting of the western Serengeti.]

No local designation exists for this group of Bantu-speaking farmers as a whole except *Rogoro*, or "the people of the east," yet even the area to which this refers varies relative to the location of the speaker. These people feel a diffuse sense of collective identity due to their common historical background, shared cultural assumptions, and proximity to each other. Another way to define this group would be to use the colonial term, "South Mara." I rejected this term because it also includes peoples along the shores of Lake Victoria, whose traditions are significantly different from those in the interior. No absolute set of boundaries defines the regional unity of western Serengeti. My research was concerned with five ethnic groups, given the limitations of field research, but logically could have expanded to include Zanaki, Sizaki and, at a larger scale still, Kuria or the Mara Region as a whole. Limited interviews among these neighboring groups allow for a regional comparison.

² I use Dadog to refer to the language and Tatoga to refer to the people, including both Rotigenga, Isimajek and the larger Tatoga community in other places in Tanzania.

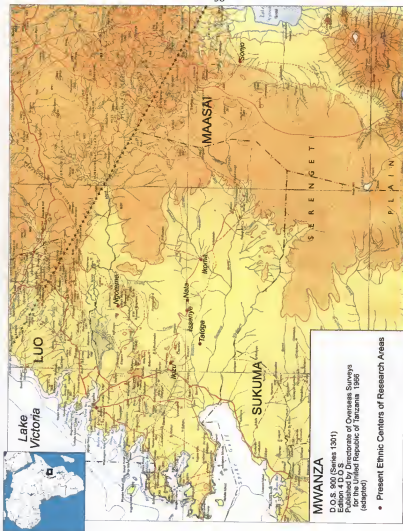


Figure 2-1: Regional Setting of the Western Serengeti

I use the term "region" to refer to the western Serengeti or to the Mara as a whole in the sense that they represent the geographical boundaries of intercommunicating, interacting sets of people. "Region" defines neither a homogeneous cultural or social unit nor economic relations of exchange or formalized marketing systems, as has been the trend in much of the recent regional analysis. Regions are rather historical products constantly negotiated and transformed.³ Even the most rigidly conceived regional boundaries with the Maasai to the east or the Sukuma to the south were frequently crossed through trade, marriage, prophecy or refuge. Although the case could be made for defining a western Serengeti region based on linguistic and cultural unity, it would then only include the Bantu-speaking farmers. This region, both past and present, has functioned based on its linguistic, cultural and economic diversity.

I have chosen to call this group "the peoples of the western Serengeti," rather than of eastern South Mara, because of their orientation east toward relationships in the Serengeti during the late nineteenth century, when the social transformations this dissertation narrates took place. "Serenget" is a Maasai word, referring to a historical Maasai section and meaning "wide-open

³ On some recent theoretical work still using the concept of hierarchical relations of exchange to define regions see for example, Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, "Concepts for the Study of Regional Culture," *American Ethnologist* 18, 2 (May 1991): 195-214; Eric Van Young, "Introduction: Are Regions Good to Think?," *Mexico's Regions: Comparative History and Development* (San Diego: Center for U.S.- Mexican Studies, UCSD, 1992), pp. 1-36. For a review of the literature see Carol A. Smith, "Regional Economic Systems: Linking Geographical Models and Socioeconomic Problems," *Regional Analysis, Vol. 1: Economic Systems* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), pp. 3-63; Mary Beth Pudup, "Arguments within Regional Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 12, 3 (September 1989): 369-391. As applied to a historical study in Africa, see Charles H. Ambler, *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late-Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and Allen M. Howard, "The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone - Guinea System," *Journal of African History* 17, 3 (1976): 365-388. My use of "region" is closer to that of Richard Waller for interior East Africa in "Ecology, Migration and Expansion in East Africa," *African Affairs* 84 (July 1985): 356-7.

spaces.³ I use this word simply because of its widespread recognition. The peoples of this region would not recognize this name as their own but would recognize their common story.⁴

The western Serengeti is bounded on the east by the Great Serengeti Plains and Maasailand, on the north by the Mara River and Kurialand, on the west there is a gradual shift, without any natural division, toward the peoples of Lake Victoria, and on the south by the Mbalageti River and Sukumaland. These boundaries define an ecologically unified area, called the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem by ecologists, in which the interdigitation of hills, woodlands and grasslands allowed farmers, hunters and herders to develop interdependent specializations. Yet the ecological unit is not fixed either, as a gradual change in ecology occurs as one nears the lake with no natural boundaries.

From the colonial period on the peoples of the western Serengeti began to see themselves as part of the Mara Region, or Musoma District as it was then known. These were the boundaries within which the colonial imagination of place shaped the image of the Musoma "tribes" and reoriented historical vision toward the lake and to the west.

Narrative Forms and Narrators

Historical narratives in the western Serengeti are, like those of many other non-centralized societies in Africa, weak and loosely structured. They appear more in the form of conversation than as epic poetry in set verse.⁵ No particular word exists in local language for this genre of oral tradition except as *amang'ana ga kare* (matters of the past). No formal experts control this

⁴ I had many interesting discussions with local people about what to call this group. Many voted for *Rogoro*, the people of the east, but just as many declared it was not an encompassing term. Some wanted the name of a mountain to designate their unity but could not agree on whether that should be *Bangwesi* or *Chamuriho*.

⁵ Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years," p. 4; and David W. Cohen, Womunafu's Bunafu: A Study of Authority in a Nineteenth Century African Community (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 8-9.

knowledge although some are considered more knowledgeable than others. Those who know more about "matters of the past" acquired their knowledge through personal desire or aptitude, rather than purely as a function of their position. Some people have a "gift" for it, given by the ancestors. Elders attain legitimacy as narrators of "matters of the past" through a combination of ability, respect, experience and the sanction of the ancestors, manifested in the effectiveness of the tales.

In the western Serengeti individuals tended to specialize in particular kinds of knowledge depending on their own interests and experience. Each was a historian in his or her own right because they not only mastered this knowledge but organized and found new meaning in it. Similarly, Guyer and Belinga emphasize that the preservation and transmission of knowledge in Equatorial Africa were personalistic: "different people took on different parts of the overall expanding corpus, largely by choice rather than the ascription of parentage or assignment within secret societies."⁶

A profile of the person most often recommended to me as one who knew about these "matters of the past" consists of a man more than sixty years of age who occupied some position of authority or respect in the "traditional" structures of society.⁷ If that man also had education and political office, the community valued him as an able intermediary with an outsider. On the other hand, many felt that educated people disparaged "traditional" knowledge. Educated men often presented the past simplistically as "warring tribes" ruled by "clan headmen." Material wealth was not a particular criterion for recommendation. All were respected elders who people in the community consulted for their wisdom. Some highly respected community leaders did not have much to say about the past, although people assumed that they must. Almost all had some

⁶ Guyer and Belinga, "Wealth in People," pp. 110-111.

⁷ By contrast among the Tatoga I was often taken to interviews with men in a younger generation.

experience in the colonial labor force but the most knowledgeable elders had spent much of their lives at home. Those with the most extensive social networks, and thus prestige, in the community tended to be the ones most knowledgeable about the past.

Gendered Knowledge

The formal restriction of historical knowledge to elderly men stands out most in the social organization of knowledge. Women, elderly or not, possessed entirely distinct forms of knowledge about the past. When I would ask to speak with those who knew about history, local colleagues led me almost exclusively to interviews with older men. Both men and women alike agreed that men of this generation were the keepers of historical knowledge. When I insisted on talking to women, I found that most women did not know the larger ethnic accounts of origin, migrations, clans, ritual and battle, which made up the spontaneous content of interviews with men. At first I thought that women were just reluctant to give me their versions of the past, but I later became convinced that women possessed not just another version but wholly different kinds of knowledge about the past. In South Africa, Hofmeyr describes a similar gendered division of oral literature in which people said that men told "true" histories while women told "fictional narratives." She goes on to claim that the content and style of these stories are similar, the only difference being the spaces in which they are told.⁸

I argue, however, that because people learn about the past in particular gendered spaces, men and women share neither styles of oral narration nor types of knowledge about the past. They transmit and maintain knowledge by the ways in which gendered space is represented and organized in daily practice. Men and women occupy separate spheres of interaction in their daily routines, sharing the same world but participating in different, though intersecting, sets of

⁸ Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years," p. 6.

discourses about that world.⁹ They keep and transmit historical knowledge by the paths that they walk each day and the positions that they occupy in the imagined male and female spaces that permeate their world. Women may learn some of men's knowledge about the past but they do not transmit those stories in the narrative style of men nor in the formal setting of men's courtyard meetings.

The Colonial Contexts of Men's Historical Narratives

Men's public knowledge of the past is now almost entirely represented as a body of unique ethnic traditions, for example, of the Nata or the Ishenyi. As I demonstrate in later chapters, western Serengeti people created ethnicity in its present form as a result of the late nineteenth century disasters, solidified by the colonial experience. The stories they tell about ethnogenesis, however, do not date from this period. Men reworked narratives from many different kinds of social units, representing different kinds of social boundaries, into a unified corpus of ethnic history. While I analyze the specifics of these changes in oral traditions in later chapters, here I am concerned with how the space of "tribes" within the larger colonial territory shaped knowledge about the past.¹⁰ The creation of ethnic history was not only an imposition of colonial hegemony but also a creative adaptation of old knowledge to new circumstances. It was a product both of opportunistic men reaping the benefits of the new system and of common people trying to make

⁹ See Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 5-7, on the analysis of spirit possession cults controlled by women as a counter hegemonic discourse to the dominant male, Islamic discourse.

¹⁰ I use the term "tribe" only as it refers to the colonial creation of "tribal" units for administrative purposes and not as a traditional category of social identity. I use quotation marks to remind the reader of this interpretation. As will become clear in later chapters the way that "tribe" came to be defined locally differed significantly from other places in Tanganyika.

sense of a new world in which old relationships took on new meaning and new relationships were assimilated into old patterns.

Men's Colonial Experience

The colonial experience deeply affected men's oral narratives of the past. With the advent of indirect rule the social unit of political significance became the "tribe." Nevertheless, because colonial officers failed to define the boundaries of "tribe" and no traditional system of chiefs existed in the Musoma District, local people enjoyed ample room in the negotiations to set boundaries. Certain individuals, families or groups gained significant benefits by defining "tribal" boundaries to promote their own interests. Wambura Igina of the Simbiti chiefdom became the second German chief by translating the people's questions to the German officer as their call for Igina's appointment as chief.¹¹ Fundi Kenyeka of Busegwe became a German chief because he was a blacksmith and provided them with nails.¹² Both made themselves useful to the Germans and thereby attained the status of representing their "people," among whom they had but little "traditional" authority.

Within the colonial system of indirect rule, many men had the opportunity to negotiate a beneficial reconfiguration of "tribe" and authority in their narrations of the past.¹³ When the colonial officers of Musoma realized that the system of chiefs was not working, because the chiefs lacked traditional authority, they began investigating "pre-European tribal organization" to restore

¹¹ Zedekia Oloo Siso, Buturi, "The Oral Traditions of North Mara," unpublished manuscript in author's collection, 1995.

¹² E. C. Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," 9 December 1929, microfilm, Musoma District Books (MDB).

¹³ For the wider application of this observation in the Lakes region see David Schoenbrun, "A Past Whose Time Has Come: Historical Context and History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes Region," *History and Theory* 32, 4 (1993): 32-56.

the "ancient rights and powers" of the clan elders as the basis for indirect rule.¹⁴ In 1945, Hans Cory led the effort to visit each chiefdom, or to call elders to Musoma, to question them about "tribal" practice and history. A major reorganization of "tribes" and a new Constitution for North and South Mara resulted, in 1948.¹⁵ This colonial way of interpreting the past through the lens of "tradition" and "tribe" became widespread and strongly influenced local historical narrative.

Men formulated ethnic histories, not surprisingly, in this era when they had increasing opportunity to travel and meet people from other places. Some among the present generation of elders were the first to go to school in Musoma; some had careers as government clerks or mine supervisors throughout the Territory; others went as far as Burma with the K.A.R. (King's African Rifles) in World War Two or to Nairobi, Tanga and Magadi Soda as migrant laborers. Away from home, men began to see themselves as part of larger communities, seeking out people who came from areas neighboring their homes and who spoke similar languages. Laborers in Nairobi popularized Kuria identity by forming the Kuria Union in 1945, expanded one year later to "The South and North Mara Tanganyika Union," based on a common tradition and origin. Their goals were to promote modernization, help the sick, arrange for funerals, and return fugitive women from Nairobi.¹⁶ Migrant laborers walking to Magadi Soda in Kenya found hospitality among the Sonjo,

¹⁴ District Commissioner, Musoma, "Memorandum on the Revival and Application of the Clan Regime in the Musoma District," 4 July 1945, CORY #347, EAF, UDSM.

¹⁵ Hans Cory, "Report on the pre-European Tribal Organization in Musoma (South Mara District and Proposals for adaptation of the clan system to modern circumstances," 1945, CORY #173, EAF, UDSM; Hans Cory, "South Mara Constituent Assembly, a new constitution for the South Mara Council...", 1959-60, CORY #385, EAF, UDSM. Hans Cory, "Report on the general situation in Kuria Chiefdoms of North Mara and proposals for its improvement...", 1945-49, CORY #171, EAF, UDSM. For a discussion of this process as a territorial model see, C. Winnington-Ingram, "Reforming Local Government in a Tanganyika District," *Journal of Africa Administration* 2, 2 (April 1950): 10-12.

¹⁶ Tarime District Office, Native Administration, Kuria Union Meetings 1946-52, 83/3/2, TNA.

in the midst of Maasailand, based on a shared *ntemi* scar on the right breast. Subtle shifts in the historical imagination took place as narratives began to account for a larger nation of "tribes."¹⁷

The Colonial Concept of "Tribe"

The peoples of Musoma District reworked existing identities to comply with the need of the colonial government for "tribes," but they did it on their own terms and created small units that were responsive to local control. However, as these units became the basis for political action they took on a life of their own and the "tribal" assumed the status of the "traditional." To understand the idiom in which elders cast oral traditions today, we must look at how they adopted and transformed European notions of "tribe" in this region.

The "tribal" model of African society is a nineteenth century European idea developed as emerging nations sought their ancient origins in self-conscious "tribes."¹⁸ This model sees "tribes" as discrete and bounded entities whose movement and influence the observer can trace, like billiard balls rolling across space and time as a unit. The influence of this model on colonial officers is apparent as they characterized each "tribe" in the western Serengeti with distinct origins and customs, despite their obvious linguistic and cultural similarities. One of the first Musoma District Officers stated, based on oral tradition, that the Ikizu and Sizaki "are Sukuma" who "arrived

¹⁷ For similar processes throughout Africa see: Leroy Vail, ed., The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); in Tanganyika see John Iliffe, A Modern History of Tanganyika (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); in other places E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds. The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Terence O. Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa," in Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa, Terence O. Ranger and O. Vaughan, eds. (Oxford: St. Anthony's College, 1993), pp. 62-111. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983).

¹⁸ See an analysis of the "tribal model" in Igor Kopytoff, "Introduction: The Internal African Frontier," in The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 3-4.

fourteen generations ago," and that the Nata are "an offshoot of the Ikizu from whom they separated owing to floods." The same officer described other western Serengeti peoples (the Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme) as Sonjo, who have "become somewhat mixed owing to the settlement of Bakuria in the area."¹⁹ The Musoma District Book records a single, static precolonial "tradition" for each group—discovered by seeking the "true" origins of peoples who had come into contact with many other groups in their "tribal" migrations.

In the "tribal" model colonial officers sought the origins of a "tribe" using the concept of biological parentage or "blood," rather than adoption, incorporation or assimilation. The image of blood relations underwrites the larger historical scheme of evolution in which not only the plant and animal kingdoms, but also humans, follow a unilineal trajectory toward a higher state of being. Each "tribe" can thus be located according to its social and cultural development, with western culture at the pinnacle. The development of humans is represented as a tree in which many branches emerge on the way to the top, with one set of roots. Each "tribe" is similarly imagined to have one set of roots with many branches that diverged during migration.²⁰

However, colonial observers found the heterogeneous composition of the peoples of Musoma District difficult to reconcile with these preconceived notions of "tribe." The inconsistencies that they record provide the historian, from another perspective, with a unique glimpse of people in the process of becoming "tribes." The fluidity of the situation and the ways in which local people were reworking their own histories is obvious. Migration histories of the Musoma peoples told of ancestors coming from every direction, rather from a single point of

¹⁹ Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," 9 December 1929, MDB. See also Native Affairs Census 1926-1929, Chiefdom Census 1926, 246/P.C./3/21, TNA.

²⁰ For a comprehensive review of anthropology and the "tribal" paradigm in Africa see Sally Falk Moore, *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene* (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1994).

origin. They spoke Bantu languages and yet appeared in dress, circumcision rites and age-set organization to be Nilotic-speakers. Kinship systems did not consistently follow matrilineal or patrilineal patterns, and did not form a neat segmentary system of clans. A "tribe" was nearly as likely to raid one of its own clans as those of another "tribe."²¹ Traditional chiefs did not exist and the "tribal" units themselves were difficult to identify. The smaller units, sometimes called "sub-tribes," warranted their own chiefs, but were too small and numerous for effective administration; while the larger "tribal" units had no inherent cohesion or unifying institutions of authority.²²

Since "tribes" were assumed to be biologically separate, though related, societies and cultures, colonial writers most often explained heterogeneity as a result of "mixed stock." For example, the District Officer characterized the Zanaki as consisting of "an admixture of Kuria blood from the north and a heavy strain of Sukuma from the south."²³ The German colonial encyclopedist, Schnee, described the Ruri as a people, "strongly coursing with Massai and Wageia [Luo] blood, shot through with Bantu, who have also adopted Massai armaments and military tactics."²⁴

²¹ An example of a contemporary scholarly formulation of the "tribal model" is colonial anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. 120-122. Here he identifies the important characteristics of a tribe: 1) a common and distinct name; 2) a common sentiment; 3) a common and distinct territory; 4) a moral obligation to unity in war; 5) a moral obligation to settle feuds and other disputes by arbitration; 6) a segmented structure with opposition between its segments; 7) an important structural relation between the lineage structures of the dominant clan and the territorial system; 8) a unity within a system of tribes; and 9) the tribal organization of age-sets.

²² Edward Conway Baker, "North Mara paper," 1935, Tanganyika Papers, microfilm project of Oxford University Press.

²³ E.C. Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," 9 December 1929, MDB.

²⁴ Heinrich Schnee, ed., Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon, 3 Vols. (Leipzig: Quelle and Meyer, 1920), p. 679.

A closer look at the social realities behind these observations demonstrates that other boundaries were at work besides the ethnic in these ascriptions of various groups to a particular parentage. For example, elders did not describe the relationship of Nata to Ikizu as one of a "splinter group" from parental stock but rather of a shared system of eldership titles. I interpret the relationship of the Ikizu and Sizaki to Sukuma in their origin stories not as one defined by "blood," but by Ikizu and Sizaki acceptance of the limited authority of a Kwaya rainmaker clan from Kanadi, Sukuma, to gain access to power over fertility. The language, society and culture remained Mara and not Sukuma. Similarly the Ikoma, Ngoreme and Ishenyi, whom oral traditions say came from Sonjo, share very few cultural, linguistic or social elements with Sonjo. What they do have in common is a shared experience of extreme Maasai pressure in the second half of the nineteenth century that created refugees on both sides of the Serengeti plain. Yet, spokesmen from each group were willing to present these diverse connections as "blood" relations in the "tribal" idiom.

The categories and terms of classification for the Musoma "tribes" subtly shifted throughout the colonial period as those who implemented indirect rule constantly redefined "tribal" identity in their search for "tradition." This confusion is evident in the population statistics of the various chiefdoms. In 1909 the German officer in Shirati reported a total of twenty-six Sultans (Chiefs) north and twenty-eight Sultans south of the Mara River with a total estimated population of 110,000.²⁵ A German classification of "tribes" listed more than thirty, with the major classifications including the Nata and Ikoma as Maasai peoples and the Sizaki, Ngoreme, Ikizu and

²⁵ Schultz, Shirati, to Governor, Dar es Salaam, 25 December 1909, Shirati, 1909-1910, G/45/2, TNA.

Ishenyi as "Shashi" peoples.²⁶ The first British census in 1928 listed a population total of 199,520 with nine major "tribes" (Kuria, Girango, Rangi, Jita, Sizaki, Zanaki, Ngoreme, Simbiti and Ikoma).²⁷ A 1937 report on governance identified "upwards of forty petty chiefs" and thus corresponding "tribes."²⁸ The 1948 census recorded nineteen chiefdoms south of the Mara River-- the largest, Majita, at a population of 28,696 and the smallest, Buhemba, at a population of 1,505 or Nata at 1,519.²⁹ However, the "Tribal Map and Classification of Tribes of Tanganyika Territory," also of 1948, listed twelve "tribes" of the Musoma District (Jita with one sub-tribe, Kwaya with one sub-tribe, Ngoreme, Kuria with twelve sub-tribes, Zanaki with eight sub-tribes, Ikizu, Ikoma with three sub-tribes, Sizaki, Kerewe, Suba with five sub-tribes, Luo with eight sub-tribes and Tatoga now being recognized as Musoma natives rather than aliens.)³⁰ [See Figure 2-2: 1948 Tribal Map of the Musoma District.]

This constant renegotiation of "tribal" identity would not have been possible were social identity primarily defined by firm and discrete ethnic units. "Tribal" boundaries were not just the imposition of the whims of colonial officers, but the result of local people willing to name themselves differently depending on the opportunities. Local chiefs and other notables found

²⁶ Musoma District, "Notes from the Musoma District Books on Local Tribe and Chiefdoms in German," [c.1912?], CORY #348, EAF, UDSM.

²⁷ Native Affairs Census 1926-1929, Chiefdom Census 1926, 246/P.C./3/21, TNA. On recount the final census figure was 180,136 with the largest being Kuria with a population of 50,632 and the smallest being Ikoma with a population of 6,454.

²⁸ E. C. Baker, "System of Government, Extracts from a Report by R. S. W. Malcolm," 1937, MDB.

²⁹ East African Statistical Department, Nairobi, East African Population Census, 1948, African Population of the Musoma District, Secretariat Files, 40641, TNA. The population of the sub-district south of the Mara River was 141,547.

³⁰ Tanganyika Territory Classification of Tribes and Tribal Map, Population Census, Secretariat Files, 36816, TNA.

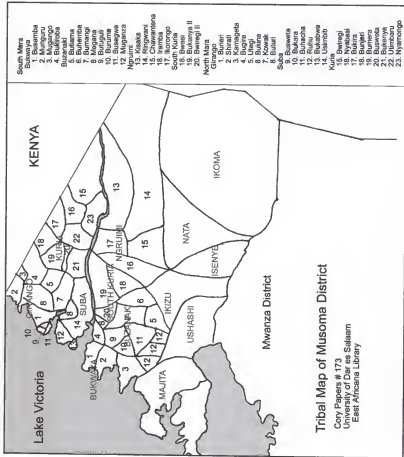


Figure 2-2: 1948 Tribal Map of Musoma District

historical precedent for moving boundaries and redefining the boundaries themselves to fit their purposes, with the implicit consent of the population. All of this evidence from colonial sources presents a much less solid image of ethnicity. The negotiable quality of "tribal" boundaries that allowed colonial officers to move from separate chieftaincies to federations, to paramount chiefs and back to chieftaincies again, indicates a different kind of system at work. Men reworked disparate kinds of knowledge about the past into the ethnic histories that they needed to maintain smaller locally controlled units.

Much of the recent work on ethnicity in Africa has stressed the "flexible" nature of ethnic boundaries before colonialism.³¹ However, here, the social boundaries negotiated within the system of indirect rule were not so much flexible as they were multiple. Elders brought different kinds of boundaries besides the ethnic into play, depending on the situation. Each set of boundaries was specifically inscribed on the landscape and related to a particular set of social relationships. Local people did not make up new identities or necessarily change preexisting boundaries as much as they called on different sets of boundaries, related to other kinds of social identities that both united and divided them in different ways. Ethnic identity of a certain kind may have existed in the precolonial past but it was only one of many kinds of relational boundaries in operation and only became predominant and fixed in the colonial years.

Literacy and Orality

A central element in the political cultural of colonial rule, and thus of men's evolving concepts of legitimate historical narrative, was the imposition of literacy. More than any other single feature, writing or the pen became the symbol of the inherent power of the colonial regime. Local people both feared it and sought to harness its power for themselves. The colonial chiefs at

³¹ See for example, Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds., Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993); Vail, The Creation of Tribalism.

first resisted sending their sons to school to learn to read and write, but later prohibited any but their own sons from attendance. This ambivalence manifests itself in their attitude toward writing oral tradition.

Today's elders and their juniors demonstrate an increasing willingness to rely on written versions of the past, products of the colonial historical imagination. One educated elder brought out Moffet's Handbook of Tanganyika to prove his migration account of the Ngoreme.³² Tatoga elders insisted that I read Zamani Mpaka Siku Hizi, a wide-ranging account of precolonial Tanganyika, uncritically combining historical tradition and colonial anthropology.³³ Although my whiteness and association with education may have provoked these comments, respect for the written word is far more pervasive.

Some local intellectuals among the first school leavers have written their own accounts of "tribal" history. These manuscripts often lie buried in trunks, moth-eaten, with pages torn out. In Ikizu a committee, formed under the Ikizu Development Association, wrote a book of history that remains unpublished.³⁴ A secretary from the Catholic mission wrote a Ngoreme history, getting it typed and stenciled at the mission office.³⁵ Many people promised me manuscripts and then could not locate them, others were still in the process of writing. Many Ishenyi elders told me I should find a copy of their manuscript and not waste my time doing interviews. There was rumored to be

³² J.P. Moffet, Handbook of Tanganyika (Dar es Salaam: Government of Tanganyika, 1958). Interview with Judge Frederick Mochogu Munyera, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995 (Ngoreme *o*).

³³ Institute for Swahili Research, Zamani Mpaka Siku Hizi (Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1930, revised edition, 1962).

³⁴ P. M. Mturi and S. Sasora, "Historia ya Ikizu na Sizaki," 1995, unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

³⁵ P. Haimati and P. Houle, "Mila na Matendo ya Wangoreme," unpublished mimeo, Iramba Mission, 1969.

an Ikizu history commissioned by Chief Makongoro in the 1950s hidden because of the secrets it contained. These books are a source of pride because they legitimize the group as a "tribe" among "tribes."³⁶ No famous spokesperson has arisen from among these authors, like Sir Apolo Kagwa for the Baganda or Samuel Johnson for the Yoruba, as elsewhere in Africa.³⁷ Yet the instability of "tribal" identity in this area has produced a much more widespread, grassroots effort to record the history of "tribes."³⁸

Writing itself is an instrument of power clearly recognized by the generation of elders today. The Germans gave the first colonial chiefs a book and a pen as signs of their authority.³⁹ Many elders told me that my own use of pen and paper was a source of anxiety for them (the tape recorder was not usually an issue). One remarked,

In the time of our grandfathers and fathers they were afraid of people with skin like yours: they were afraid of the pen. When they saw someone writing, they said that this

³⁶ See Jan Bender Shetler, "A Gift for Generations to Come: A Kiroba Popular History from Tanzania and Identity as Social Capital in the 1980s," The International Journal of African Historical Studies 28, 1 (1995): 73-77.

³⁷ Sir Apolo Kagwa, Basekabaka be Buganda [The Kings of Uganda], trans. and ed. M. S. M. Kiwanuka (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971, first published 1906). Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas from Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate, ed. O. Johnson (Lagos: CMS (Nigeria) Bookshops, 1960, first published 1921, reprinted 1960). There are few academic histories of the Mara Region on which people might base their oral narratives. One popular Kuria history in Swahili is Gabriel Chacha, Historia ya Abakuria na Sheria Zao (Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1963).

³⁸ While I was in Tanzania I contacted some publishing houses on behalf of the authors to investigate the possibility of publishing some of these manuscripts. When I left three of them were being reviewed by Ndanda Press, a Catholic publisher in Mtwara, Tanzania. Marwa Kishamuri, "Historia ya Abakiroba: Desturi na Milla Zao," unpublished manuscript in the author's collection, 1988.

³⁹ Interview with Mohera Mogoye, Bugerera, 25 March 1995 (Nata ♂), mentions this in connection to the story of how Megasa was made the first Nata chief. It is a clear motif in all of the chief-making stories throughout the region.

*person would take us with them in the writing. So that is why they did not want us to go to school, they said those who go to school will be taken away by the white people.*⁴⁰

In my own research, when we visited the site of a rainmaker ancestor's grave the elders told me to put the pen and paper away because the spirit of Gitaraga would not like them.⁴¹

The power of the colonial officers resided in their ability to capture words and then control their use in other contexts. Confronted with written accounts that conflicted with their own versions, elders would often accept the veracity of the written version. Commitment to the written word automatically legitimizes a particular version of the past. Many manuscripts that I saw named no author and often listed their sources as "the elders of X." Colonial officers seldom cited sources by name or position for the "tribal legends" they collected. In the trihal paradigm, only one true version of the past may exist if the "tribe" is organically integrated. Writing constitutes a powerful instrument of control because it fixes knowledge, and at the same time dissociates that knowledge from the explicit interests of individuals.

Local intellectuals learned how to use this power in their letters of complaint to the colonial government. Those who wrote these letters used "tribal" history to support or to protest against a chief and his claim to power. A 1949 letter from "the people of Zanaki" to the Honorable Chief Secretary in Dar es Salaam affirms that Ihunyo is the legitimate Chief (*Mwami*) of Zanaki because he is 21st in the line. The authors cite the fact that even the District Commissioner, E. C. Baker, in 1928, investigated these claims and found them to be true, while they suspect that "Bwana" Cory's investigations in 1945 may have brought on the present movement to have Ihunyo removed. The precolonial *Mwami* title was inherited through a line of important rainmakers in the area, though in governance each territory was relatively independent. Lacking any traditional Zanaki-wide

⁴⁰ Interview with Tetere Tumho, Mhiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁴¹ Interview with Keneti Mahemhora, Gitaraga and Mochuri, 9 February 1996 (Nata ♂).

authority, the written word gave some the means to convert the *Mwami* title into a chiefly claim over a much wider area.⁴²

In Sizaki, a continual barrage of letters from 1927 to the 1950's that railed against Chief Ruhaga, claimed he was the son of a Sukuma dream-prophet, welcomed in Sizaki not as a chief, but thanks to his medicine to catch fish. His son later convinced the Germans that he was the chief and had many of the opposition elders killed. The protesters established their claim as "original" inhabitants, now ruled by "alien" Sukuma. A 1944 petition, written by soldiers of the King's African Rifles, reminded the Governor of their service and loyalty. They likened the Sukuma rulers to "Nazis" and themselves to "slaves," appealing to the League of Nations Charter. The same group wrote another letter speaking for the *Abanyase*, a high ranking group of eldership title holders, whom they represented as "the ruling Sizaki clan." The colonial government could not entertain these claims because the Sukuma had since become the majority in Sizaki and the Chief had been elected by popular vote. In 1952 the colonial government deported the author of some of these letters.⁴³ Because of the high potential gain or loss in the colonial system men were encouraged to rethink their pasts as "tribal" pasts and to commit them to writing to enter the colonial field of historical debate.

Men's Extensive Geographical Knowledge

Besides their participation in the colonial political economy, men had other reasons for possessing historical knowledge that was more extensive geographically than that of women. Men

⁴² Letter from the Zanaki people to the Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 20 June 1949, and letter from D. Dowsett, DC Musoma to PC Lake Province, 21 August 1950, 1949-50, Native Chiefs, Musoma, Secretariat Files, 29626, TNA.

⁴³ From Soldiers of the K.A.R. to the Governor, T. T., 1 December 1944, Petition to the Governor from the Secretary of the *Abanyase*, Sizaki, 16 May 1945, Native Chiefs, Musoma, Secretariat Files, 29626, TNA. P.C. Lake Province to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 1 September 1952, Complaints, 215/P.C./50/5, TNA.

hunted, raided and traded in the domestic economy, activities that took them far from home seasonally and for long periods of time. These activities required an expert knowledge of landscape, terrain, and ecology. Men had to know where game could be found at any time of the year, how to track them for days and still find their way home. They relied on generational knowledge for the location of the best hunting camps, water holes, shooting blinds, hunting pit sites and arrow-poison trees. The retired generation was obligated to escort the new generation on their first hunting or arrow-poison gathering journeys. The youth carried the elders' packs and protected them at night as repayment for this service.⁴⁴ As they went, elders named each hill and rise, and noted each river, seasonal water source and pool. The names of these places often corresponded to people who lived there or incidents that took place there.⁴⁵ Walking the trail, or around the fire at night in the hunting camp, the younger generation heard the stories behind these place-names. Remembering was crucial to their survival in the wilderness and their ability to bring home meat.

When men followed cattle raiders to recover their loss, they would often cross hundreds of kilometers of bush into Maasailand or north to the Kenya border. An important trade route of the late nineteenth century lay toward Sukuma, where western Serengeti men traded wildebeest tails and other wild animal products for goats, tobacco and salt. An even earlier trade route took them to Geita in Sukuma for iron hoes. On the routes of raid and trade, local men found hospitality and formed friendships with those who had been strangers. Sometimes they sealed these friendships with oaths of blood brotherhood. Men maintained their friendships by visits in both directions, providing more opportunities for trade. Through these friendships men learned the stories of other peoples and had to modify their own stories to account for historical similarities and differences.

⁴⁴ Interview with Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995 (Nata *o*).

⁴⁵ In an interview with Yohana Kitena Nyitanga, Makondusi, 1 May 1995 (Nata *o*), he named 113 such places, north, south, east and west of his present home.

Finding that other peoples used the same praise names, cattle brands or claimed the same origin places caused them to rethink their own stories of the past to incorporate lost brothers or joking relations. Men's stories ordered and maintained wide-ranging regional relationships by solidifying reciprocal obligation and responsibility.

The Spaces of Men's Historical Knowledge

When asked where they learned their historical knowledge most men said that a father, grandfather or uncle taught them. One man told me that the ability to learn history is a gift from God, just like healing, prophecy or wealth. Like these other gifts it, too, runs in the family.⁴⁶ Others said that boys learned from older men while working on grain storage bins, fixing the corral, building a house or herding. Girls were not usually around at these times.⁴⁷ Fathers had a responsibility to teach their sons specific historical information that affected the ongoing survival of the lineage. This included information like prohibitions against certain marriage partners or food, activities required by the ancestors, the location of grave sites, the histories of important ancestors for propitiation, and unresolved blood feuds with other families. Without this kind of historical knowledge a son might bring ruin on the household.

Many elders related that in their own childhood experience, elderly men gathered regularly in local courtyards to visit and play *baò* (a board game common throughout Africa), eating their meals together there. They had practically no work responsibilities at their homes. Leisure was the reward of age. Most people told me that they learned stories of the past from sitting quietly at the feet of elders when they were children.⁴⁸ The elders were not teaching the children but carrying

⁴⁶ Interview with Samweli M. Kiramanzera, Kurusanda, 3 August 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

⁴⁷ Interview with Nyawagamba Magoto (Nata ♂), Kinanda Sigara (Ikizu ♂), Dhahabu Gambamara (Nata ♀), Mugeta, 9 March 1996.

⁴⁸ There were almost always children in attendance at my interviews.

on their own conversations. The youngest children of the family often heard the discussions of old men, since they were more likely to be the ones left in the compound to run errands for the elders when the older children and wives went to work in the fields. Young men could also listen if they did not interrupt. There is a saying that, 'a youth who does not sit with the elders is like a wild animal, running here and there with no home.'⁴⁹ Those who learned history had both the natural inclination and proximity to these groups of elders.

Older men prefer to do their socializing with beer and so try to arrange as many opportunities for this as possible. While today this is often done at "clubs" where they sell beer, in the past other occasions facilitated elders' storytelling over pots of beer. Within one neighborhood they each might agree to contribute a certain portion of the required grain and wives' labor for making beer; only those who contributed got an invitation to drink (*msororo*). A man might also call his neighbors to help him weed a field; in return he gave the fathers of the young men who worked a beer party (*risaga*). In the past only the elders were allowed to drink beer and thus to engage in the protracted discussion of social relations and the past.⁵⁰

Other opportunities for men to gather at leisure to talk were, and still are, the formal celebrations of weddings, funerals, circumcisions or eldership titles, which often last for many days at a time. At these gatherings, as I observed them, smaller groups eat or drink separately, according to age and gender—old men, young men, old women, young women, and children. Most of the women are involved with preparing food, hauling water or gathering firewood. Younger women are constantly shuttling back to their own homes to make sure that the children they left

⁴⁹ Interview with Tetero Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata σ).

⁵⁰ Interview with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi σ).

behind are being cared for and have food. Even the oldest women hold babies or sort beans. Women do not have as much leisure time at these gatherings.

Testimonies of elders and my own observations concur on the format and content of discussions about the past at these gatherings of elders.⁵¹ At a beer party or an afternoon *baa* game the conversation usually begins with the news of the day, leading in turn to the necessity for action by the community: what should be done about the young woman who ran away from her husband, the approach of cattle thieves, a suspected case of witchcraft or the lack of rain? In the discussion of these events elders use stories of the past to explain behavior and its consequences, to figure out relationships between those involved and their obligations to each other, or to cite precedent for the required action.

People highly value the gift of speech and these discussions often become intense arguments as each man elaborates his point by invoking stories from the past. Only after the elders chew over these problems can more formally constituted authority take action. Men do not learn their historical knowledge from a formal cycle of fixed narratives but from the bits and pieces of the past that they deploy to debate community problems. Because these are cases of judgement, history is negotiable and used to support a particular agenda. The frequency with which elders tell and remember any particular story about the past depends on its power to explain current relationships. Few occasions exist when men narrate the historical corpus for its own sake.

Many rituals that people rarely perform anymore, such as eldership initiation ceremonies, circumcision and the propitiation of spirits at sacred places included the recitation of historical traditions. At dances (formerly, but no longer, held every full moon) youth sang songs and shouted

⁵¹ As a young woman I did not have formal access to men's beer parties but did overhear enough of their conversation or was told enough about what goes on in them to make these generalizations.

praise-names that told about the past. Historical information was woven in and out of all these rituals of everyday life. The stories that grandmothers told children after dark included historical characters and events. Learning history was not the memorization of a corpus of oral tradition but was, rather, a familiarity with "matters of the past" from all these everyday encounters. Many of these occasions no longer exist. Elders still recount historical knowledge as a matter of course in preparation for weddings (learning about the background of the intended) and at funerals (hearing about the life of the deceased and dividing the inheritance).

Elders fear that they no longer have the opportunity to pass on historical knowledge to young people who do not care about these "matters of the past." Old men still have beer parties but the young men are at school, in the cities or at their own disco parties. One of the few ways that a youth can still learn history is by asking his father, very much in the way of an interview, just as colonial school boys did when their teachers sent them home to collect historical information from their fathers for composition class. In each research area I found young men with a deep and intimate knowledge of the past, committed to its survival. Still, they are the exceptions. As this generation of elders fails to pass on its knowledge in a general way through discourse, historical knowledge is increasingly becoming the property of ritual experts. The common perception that historical knowledge will be forgotten in the next generation is more a result of its changing form, than its absolute loss.

Women's Intimate Community Knowledge

During the colonial era, when belonging to a "tribe" with a specific history became imperative, men significantly reshaped their historical narratives. It was in walking the paths outside their home communities in hunting, cattle raiding, trading and migrant labor that they formulated their account of a "tribe" among a nation of "tribes." Women did not participate directly in the construction of these narratives of ethnic origin and migration, settlement and

conflict, in part because of the position imposed on them during the colonial era. While women had some latitude for formal influence in the community before colonialism, as rainmakers, prophets or titled elders, the colonial administration systematically denied them a voice in formal politics.⁵² Women marrying outside their homes often functioned in the past as intermediaries between clans and ethnic groups. When the emphasis shifted to ethnic unity and exclusivity in the colonial era women became outsiders and strangers, rather than valued links to others. This structural position of women, as outsiders in the homes of their husbands, denied them a formal role in the creation of ethnic histories.

My experience living as a woman in the company of other women in Nata during the year and a half of research allowed me to observe women's daily activities and exchange of information in a rural setting. I describe the female spaces that structure the kinds of information that women share in the present, as I observed them. However, these observations are also consistent with the testimonies of elderly women about their youth and with the few ethnographies for the area that do exist. This leads me to believe that what I describe here would also apply to the colonial period and perhaps into the late nineteenth century. Shifts in gender relations that affected the transmission of knowledge may have taken place during the disasters when the dangers of unsettled times increasingly restricted women's movements and sphere of influence.

My experience interviewing women demonstrates the differences in narrative style and setting of narration between men and women. Older women found the interview process much

⁵² This is another story to be told elsewhere but concerns the 1) the colonial refusal to acknowledge the leadership role of healers/prophets/rainmakers, 2) the denial of a woman's right to have an independent household without a man or to obtain offspring through what is known elsewhere as "woman-to-woman" marriage, giving woman access to independent wealth, and 3) the shifting of "traditional" inheritance and marriage laws to favor men. For an analysis of the changing role of women in colonial society see Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 181-203.

more intimidating than men, particularly when many men were listening. I had the best interviews with women when I used a woman assistant and no men were present. When men were present, the woman would defer to the men, or the men themselves would correct the woman. Areas considered within a woman's sphere, such as women's circumcision, were not acceptable topics to discuss in mixed company. Older women were less likely to understand Swahili than were their male counterparts. While men easily launched into long uninterrupted historical narratives, I had to ply most women with a continual barrage of questions to solicit more than brief answers. Women preferred a dialogue among their peers rather than the monologues demanded by formal interviews. Women often loosened up when they sang songs, told a story about one of their grandparents, a folktale, or reminisced about the past with their friends.⁵³

The Paths of Women's Daily Interactions

Women have not been privy to ethnic histories, at least in recent times, because of their interior position within the gendered construction of space. Women's knowledge of the past consists of the details of family genealogies, family histories (both natal and marital) and community stories—all of which concern how everyone is related to everyone else inside the community.⁵⁴ When I questioned one male elder about the relationships between members of households in his village, he frequently went out to consult his wife, who would not budge from the kitchen to join us. Women command expertise in this kind of knowledge because this is their

⁵³ For an analysis of the interview process as part of the "male sociocommunication subculture" and thus intimidating to women see, Kristina Minister, "A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview," in Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 31.

⁵⁴ This has been observed by many observers in Africa, including early anthropologist, Lloyd A. Fallers, Bantu Bureaucracy: A Century of Political Evolution among the Basoga of Uganda (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 90, who states that "lineage males must often draw upon the genealogical knowledge of wives and mothers.... women often remember genealogical complexities better than men."

source of power and prestige. Women are responsible for feeding their households and raising their children. The household is still the basic unit of production and exchange, and women carry out their tasks by relying on relations formed by reciprocal obligation rather than cash. In this situation the better a woman understands relationships within the community, the more adept she can be at establishing mutual obligations for all of the large and small matters of daily life.

Women's knowledge grows out of the community networks of reciprocal exchange that they construct to ensure survival and prestige for themselves and their children. A new bride begins this process as a stranger in her mother-in-law's house. Marriage is fundamentally the transfer of a woman from her natal home to that of her husband's family, under whom the new couple must live, at least until the first child is born.⁵⁵ The new bride will have less daily interaction with her husband than with her mother-in-law, on whom the bride's successful assimilation into a new set of relationships depends. A mother-in-law looks forward to the day when her daughter-in-law comes to relieve her of all of the difficult household chores—farming, grinding, hauling water, gathering firewood and some cooking.

A good mother-in-law, who is also a stranger in the patrilineage of her husband, gives her daughter-in-law a thorough knowledge of everyone in the family, the genealogical tree as well as individual character and reliability. This often happens when guests come and news of the community begins to circulate, or when she tells stories about ancestors. A woman gradually begins to form her own relationships in the community and among her husband's kin, while still

⁵⁵ See Huber, *Marriage and Family*, pp. 69-91; and Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 134-137; for the relationship of a woman to husband's family in this region.

under the tutelage of her mother-in-law. Families entrust continuity of the most intimate knowledge about insiders to those in the family who are structurally outsiders.⁵⁶

A woman does not, however, give up knowledge of her natal community, which is crucial to the survival of herself and her children. A married woman maintains her relationship to her parent's home and kin by regular, if not frequent, visits and the exchange of gifts. Her mother is also required to visit on specific ritual occasions.⁵⁷ These exchanges allow a woman to pass on the knowledge of these relationships to her children. A woman depends on her father and brothers, or her mother's brothers, to be her advocates if something goes wrong in her marriage. Her husband also strives to maintain a good relationship with his father-in-law, to gain sympathy in case of a conflict (direct contact with his mother-in-law is prohibited). A woman continues to play a critical ritual role in her natal home as the paternal aunt (*mwisenge*) to her brother's children. Her brother (*mame*) has special responsibilities to her children and in some Mara societies they inherit from him rather than from their father. Many people described their maternal kin as a place of acceptance and refuge in times of trouble. A man could turn to his mother's family to pay the blood compensation fine if he were charged with murder.⁵⁸ Families value women as wives,

⁵⁶ Interviews with Susana Nyibikwabe Mayani, Bugerera, 10 February 1996 (Nata ♀); Kimori Gamare, Bugerera, 28 February 1996 (Nata/ikoma ♀); and Sumwa Nyamutwe, Mugeta, 9 March 1996 (Nata ♀). In the case of a second or third wife the role of the mother-in-law would be taken over by the first wife and is more tenuous. Part of the power of the first wife is this position in and knowledge of her husband's family.

⁵⁷ Interview with Weigoro Mincha, Kemegesi, 29 March 1996 (Ngoreme ♀).

⁵⁸ Many of the Lakes peoples as well as Zanaki and Ikizu. Interviews with Samweli M. Kiramanzera, Kirusanda, 3 August 1995 (Ikizu ♂); Zabron Kisubundo Nyamamera and Makang'a Magigi, Bisarye, 9 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂). For the role of the maternal uncle in Tatoga Rotegenga society see, Interview with Ghamarhizisiji (Uyayehi) Nuaasi (Tatoga ♀) and Gesura Mwatagu (Tatoga ♂), Issenye, 8 May 1995.

mothers, sisters and daughters both for the links that they create between families and the spheres of knowledge they manage.⁵⁹

Women also specialize in knowledge of community relations. A woman's daily relationships take place in the space of home and the community, revolving around the exchange of food, household implements and services. Women are responsible for feeding themselves and their children through control over their own fields, storage bins and tools. To do this they constantly manage an intricate set of reciprocal relationships, involving an ongoing exchange of goods between neighboring homesteads. When a woman runs out of millet flour for the staple porridge she goes to her neighbor to ask for some, who in turn would ask her when she ran out of something else. Women understand these exchanges as "gifts" and do not repay them one for one. A woman does not return borrowed flour until the neighbor that she borrowed it from runs out and comes to ask for it. If she borrows a tool not constantly used by her neighbor in everyday work, that item stays at her house until the owner needs it and comes to get it. Ideally, a woman wants to have both credits and debits outstanding at any one time. It is not to her advantage to balance all relationships. People who owe a debt represent potential sources for future needs; those who have credits will come to visit when they collect. Women move around the community daily as they carry these things from house to house.

Women visit each other most often as a result of maintaining these relationships of exchange (*asire*), but they also make purely social visits on the occasion of marriage, death, illness, ritual, celebration, or friendship. The exchange of gifts, most often food (*omotoro*), marks these social visits. They say that, 'a house without visitors is a house without blessing.' The most obvious sign of a prestigious woman is a homestead constantly filled with people. Women praise

⁵⁹ Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

and seek out a woman known for her generosity, not only for the exchange of goods but also for advice and good conversation. They insult the greedy woman, saying that she "does not like people," and will eventually isolate her. However, the prestigious woman who gives away a lot must also ask for things in return. Otherwise, the circulation of goods and visits ends. A generous woman calls in these obligations when she puts on a large feast or a work party. Such events last for days and require a lot of women's labor, both before and after the feast, in cooking, hauling water, gathering firewood, making beer and grinding grain. This is the ultimate test of how skillfully a woman has maintained her community networks. All these situations bring women into daily contact with each other.

A woman's main source of information about the community and respite from work comes from these social interactions of daily exchange. Women acquire certain kinds of knowledge in these interactions in which men do not participate. Women know the news of the community. Information spreads along the paths of women going to each other's houses to exchange favors. They must greet everyone they meet on the path and exchange pleasantries.

The spatial structure of the community facilitates the exchange of news. Paths usually pass directly through a household courtyard or alongside it, so that someone walking by must naturally greet the people working there. Houses are small, mostly used for sleeping and storage, and the daily work takes place outside in the courtyard. A woman on her way to get some flour from her friend learns who is going to town that day, who was sick, who has guests, and who is harvesting millet. She hears news from the next village and political discussions from the national radio station. Men's paths run in direct, rather than circuitous routes, and men seldom visit in courtyards during the day except on specific business or social occasions.

Yet men seek out the informal community knowledge of women before they engage in their formal negotiations and exchange of information. They value the wife who attracts many visitors,

even if it means a bigger outlay in food. The networks of women and their exchange of flour and beans inform the big decision-making in the community that men do over pots of beer.

One of the few formal ways in which women pass on knowledge to future generations is by storytelling. Grandmothers or elderly widowed aunts tell stories to their grandchildren before they sleep at night or as they do some time-consuming, repetitive work like sorting cotton or beans [See Figure 2-4: Women's Story Telling, p. 91]. The stories that women tell to children include the typical African animal and monster (*mwinani*) stories as well as the adventure stories of past ancestors. [See Figure 2-3: Mwinani by local artist Deus Nyahega Tumbago, 1995.] Only girls hear the stories that grandmothers must tell at night. When girls approach puberty, they move out of their mother's house and into another house with other girls their age from the neighborhood, supervised by an elderly single woman of the family. Young boys sleep with age mates, without supervision, until they marry. These older women must make sure that the girls do not get pregnant before circumcision. Because these women are in an alternate, rather than an adjacent, generation to the girls they can talk to them frankly and openly about sexual matters. They teach the girls about sex, the duties of a good wife, and use stories from the past to illustrate these lessons of morality. Because of their position in the community, these single women often know a lot about the past.⁶⁰ Folktales intersect with oral traditions of a historical nature by providing the moral themes that recur in each. As more families live in urban areas, in nuclear family units, within a common house, these storytelling spaces are disappearing. Grandmothers now live back in the village, where the younger generation rarely visits.

⁶⁰ Folktales on videotape, Bugerera, 17 August 1995. Interviews with Raheli Wanchota Nyanchiwa, Morotonga, 16 March 1996 (Ikoma ♀); Weigoro Mincha, Kemegesi, 29 March 1996 (Ngoreme ♀). See also David William Cohen, "Doing social history from pim's doorway," in Olivier Zunz, ed., *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 191-235.



Figure 2-3: Mwinani by local artist Deus Nyahega Tumbago ©1995

Men fear women's knowledge because women know too many intimate details about them. Men often ridicule women's knowledge as "foolish gossip" because women can expose their misadventures. One elderly woman said that her husband restricted her friendships with other women so that she would not gossip. Women are often accused of witchcraft because they hold so much power over men with their knowledge.⁶¹ In the past women openly used this power over men in their grinding and hoeing songs. A Ngoreme woman told me that women used to form self-help groups (*chesiri*) to weed each other's fields. As they worked, they would sing songs to make fun of someone who was lazy or to expose another fault. Other songs would tease men about their lovers and chide them for leaving their wives. By singling out a particular man for ridicule, the songs served to discipline him and cause change in his actions. Women, singly or in pairs, ground grain within a homestead where many people passed by or worked within earshot. A woman sang a grinding song to praise or ridicule her lover, or that of her friend. She sang out the attributes, or abuses, of a lover in explicit detail, much to the embarrassment of the man. Thus women used the power of their intimate community knowledge to change the decisions or actions of men whom they could not influence directly.⁶² Women brought to the attention of elders the men who needed to be disciplined and shame forced the deviant to seek correction. [See Figure 2-4: Women's Story Telling.]

Women also have some knowledge that they explicitly keep secret from men. In interviews, some women claimed that only men had secrets and that women's eldership titles involved no *masubho* or secret initiation knowledge. Yet women do have secrets, that preserve an

⁶¹ Interview with Sumwa Nyamatwe, Dhahabu Gambarara (Nata ♀), Nyawagamba Magoto (Nata ♂), Kinanda Sigara (Ikizu ♂), Mugeta, 9 March 1996. Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, p. 45, discusses the relationship between women's knowledge and "gossip."

⁶² Interview with Weigoro Mincha, Kemegesi, 29 March 1996 (Ngoreme ♀).



Dhababu Gambamara with daughter Kimori, Bugerera,
12 August 1995, Pounding Cassava



Weigoro Mincha and friends, Kemgesi, 29 March 1996, women's songs.

Figure 2-4: Women's Story Telling

autonomous sphere of female authority over aspects of fertility and reproduction. A woman specialized and initiated into this knowledge (*omwikarabutu*) directed Nata women's circumcision ceremonies, the proper disposal of flesh after the ceremony, and the critical days of healing.⁶³ Other women with specialized knowledge supervised the rituals for a young woman's first pregnancy and birth. Women maintained this ritual knowledge through eldership titles that ran parallel to and separate from men's eldership titles. During the ceremonies of first pregnancy men had to leave the homestead. An Ikizu woman could rise through the ranks of eldership titles, which involved powerful initiation secrets, despite the rank of her husband.⁶⁴ Elderly women expressed the most concern about keeping this knowledge secret by questioning how much others had told me. They said that men would sell this information for their own benefit rather than look out for the good of the community. Women maintain autonomous control over the precious community resource of fertility and reproduction with their secrets.

Extraordinary Women Privileged to Men's Knowledge

Beyond influencing men's historical knowledge and actions, women also found ways of crossing the gendered boundaries inscribed in the social spaces of the community. As scholars have argued for other parts of Africa, biological sex and gender are not necessarily correlated.⁶⁵ In the western Serengeti categories of women exist with access to men's knowledge. Because of their special position in the community these women often exceed men in their knowledge of the past as defined by men. I identified these categories by noting what kind of women could tell me the

⁶³ Interview with Sumwa Nyamutwe, Mugeta, 9 March 1996 (Nata ♀).

⁶⁴ Interview with Baginyi Mutani and Mayenye Nyabunga, Sanzate, 8 September 1995 (Ikizu ♀).

⁶⁵ Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, p. 56; Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1987), p. 15.

commonly recognized historical narratives. Because of the situational nature of gender identity, these women crossed gender boundaries in particular contexts. The words to describe these women predate the colonial period and are used across the region in various ways, making it reasonable to assume that these institutions have been in existence at least since the last half of the nineteenth century, changing to meet new circumstances over time.

Perhaps the most obvious but least accessible category of extraordinary women in the western Serengeti is that of dream-prophets, healers and diviners, who used historical knowledge to practice their art. The general word for prophecy, including healing, *obugabho*, does not seem to have been gendered. Narratives about the past often mention women as rainmakers, healers and prophets, including the eponymous ancestresses in the line of Ikizu and Zanaki "chiefly" rainmakers. A woman became a prophet, not from her own volition, but because an ancestral spirit chose her. When clients came to the prophet for help she used her knowledge of past relationships and networks to interpret the problem. The prophet might advise her client to perform a ritual for the Maasai or Tatoga ancestors of his grandmother or to sacrifice a goat at the grave of another ancestor. These women spoke only reluctantly, if at all, about this knowledge in interviews because they understood it as part of the secret of their craft. They said that their historical knowledge came from the ancestral spirit in dreams.

My colleagues often recommended to me elderly childless women as those most knowledgeable about history. A childless woman (*omogomba*) has very little status in a society that emphasizes growth and fertility. Her dependency on the goodwill of kin rather than the obligation of her children puts her in a particularly vulnerable position.⁶⁶ I heard stories of

⁶⁶ On the position of these women as widows more widely in Africa see, Betty Potash, *Widows in African Societies: Choices and Constraints* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1986) and Michael C. Kirwen, *African Widows* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979).

husbands who drove their childless wives out of the marriage (although bridewealth is not returned because of infertility). Others allowed them to stay but in a subordinate position to their co-wives who gave birth. People assume that childlessness results from a woman's infertility, because if a man suffers from infertility he quietly allows his wives to become pregnant through relations with other men in order to extend his own lineage.

An *omogomba* does not have the labor of children on the farm or in the house. She builds and repairs her own house unless someone offers to help (as a son is obligated to do). She has no children to care for her when she gets too old to farm. Women do not inherit directly from their husbands but only indirectly through their sons, who are bound to support their widowed mothers. A widowed *omogomba* formally stands at the mercy of her brother-in-law, appointed by the family to care for her. If she does well, she can pay bridewealth for a *mkamwana* (a "daughter-in-law" under the institution of "woman/woman" marriage) who will provide children to take care of her. Most elderly women without children live out their lives moving from relation to relation, without a home or security beyond tomorrow.⁶⁷

On the other hand, childless women possess a paradoxical kind of power in the community. They are female and yet anomalous because they are not mothers. They lack fertility and yet have access to the source of community fertility through the tasks often assigned to childless women as midwives and caretakers for young unmarried women. Because they do not care for their own children these women often find themselves in a position to help others raise children, deliver babies and dispense wisdom. Nata elders propitiate the ancestral spirits at a place called Nyichoka (female snake). They ask for rain and fertility at the grave of a childless woman who despaired because of the ostracism she felt from her community and threw herself into the pool. She appears

⁶⁷ Interview with Mwenge Magoto, Bugerera, 5 November 1995 (Nata ♀).

as a snake and her hearthstones lie at the bottom of the pool. A menstruating woman cannot draw water from the pool or the water becomes churned up and misfortune comes to the community. Women dance the *eghise* at the pool to make her happy.⁶⁸ Throughout the Lakes Region people have solved the problem of infertility by initiating these women as spirit mediums, who then beget spirit children.⁶⁹

A childless woman often has access to men's knowledge, in part, because of her social position: without children to care for and feed she can move beyond her household. She has more time to go to the fields to farm, to visit friends and family, and to circulate around the village. Because of her increased availability, a man often chooses the childless wife to carry his beer straws and stool to the beer parties of the elders as a sign of his prestige. When he gets to the beer party his wife sits between his legs, drinking beer with them, and hears men's stories about the past.⁷⁰ When I insisted on interviewing women, colleagues often took me to meet an *omogomba*, though they never consciously recognized this as a reason for her knowledge. These women said that they learned so much more history than other women because of their interest and the opportunity.

An independent woman without a husband, managing her own family and property, called an *omosimbe*, also has no man to tell her to stay in the homestead, and so walks about the village at her own time and inclination. In the past a woman would not have preferred this status; it

⁶⁸ Interviews with Mokuru Nyang'aka, Nyichoka, 9 February 1996 (Nata ♂); and Mahiti Kwiwo, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂).

⁶⁹ Renee Louise Tantala, "The early history of Kitara in Western Uganda: Process Models of Religious and Political Change" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989); Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 438.

⁷⁰ Interviews with Nyangere Faini, Bugerera, 22 November 1995 (Nata ♀); Nyawagambwa Magoto (Nata ♂), Dhahabu Gambamara (Nata ♀), Kinanda Sigara (Ikizu ♂), Mugeta 9 March 1996.

would indicate she was the victim of some unnatural circumstances. Nevertheless, the community respected independent women, a position found throughout the Lakes Region.⁷¹ A woman most often becomes an *omosimbe* if her father either has no sons or does not think any of them capable of handling his property. He then designates a daughter to take over for him when he dies. She takes on a man's role as head of the homestead, having children fathered by a casual lover.⁷² A woman specialized as a healer or a rainmaker sometimes assumes the role of an *omosimbe* because of restrictions against marriage imposed on her by her *erisambwa*, the spirit who directs her work.⁷³

One woman that I met had run away from her home in Kuria when her marital family accused her of witchcraft because of the deaths of her five infants. She walked to Nata and found refuge with a man for a time. Her sister, who also left Kuria because she could bear no more children, later joined her. Together they set up their own homestead in another village and two more single women, one from Buhemba and another from Ikoma, came to live with them. Each sister paid bridewealth for a *mkamwana* ("daughter-in-law") who also took up residence with them and bore them children.⁷⁴ Many young Nata women I talked to preferred the life of an *omosimbe* to that of a wife, setting up independent households, often with small businesses in the towns. Betty Potash supplies many case studies of East African widows who found ways of avoiding

⁷¹ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 238-247.

⁷² Interviews with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 2 October 1995 (Nata ♂); Nyawagamba Magoto, 16 July 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁷³ "In North Forest society, patriarchal and lineal idioms of inheritance and descent politics gave rise to an institution unique in Kivu Rift society, the spirit wife (*kehanga*, creator's wife). This woman was consecrated by her lineage to a spirit who resided either on one of the many nearby volcanoes or who was the shade of a departed member of her patriline. As such she remained in her natal lineage." Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 243.

⁷⁴ Interview with Paulina Wambura, Bugerera, 16 April 1995 (Kuria ♀).

levirate marriages to remain independent.⁷⁵ In Ngoreme, *omosimbe* has taken the connotation of a prostitute, and they call an independent woman a "widow" (*omosino*).⁷⁶

An *omosimbe* assumes many of the characteristics and roles of a man in her relationships. She goes independently to men's beer parties and sits with them, exchanging stories. In the past, men did not allow women to attend these parties unless specifically brought by their husbands. An *omosimbe* confers as a man, often with the assistance of her brother, in negotiations over bridewealth and at other points where her property is in question. One man told me that men often hold their secret meetings to plan for age-set rituals or other important community matters at the home of an *omosimbe*. She cooks for them and is allowed to sit in on their council. The role of an independent woman obligates her to make beer for her lover and his friends, who help her to farm or herd, but also allows her to participate in their conversation. The same man added that married men prefer to drink beer at the home of an *omosimbe*, confiding in her many things they would never think to tell their wives.⁷⁷ Thus *abasimbe* and *abagomba*, acting in men's roles or outside women's roles, participate in discussions that most women do not hear.

Elderly, post-menopausal women have considerable power and respect in their communities, particularly if they have a lot children, and also mediate the boundaries of gender in particular circumstances. The word for "old woman" in Nata is *omokuungu*, derived from a Lakes Bantu root meaning a "rich person," itself derived from the proto-Bantu verb *-kung*, "to gather, to assemble." In other places around the lake the word refers to rich men with land and followers or

⁷⁵ Potash, *Widows in Africa*, pp. 1-43.

⁷⁶ Interviews with Baginyi Mutani, Mayenye Nyabunga, Stella D. Katani, Sanzate, 8 September 1995 (Ikizu ♀); Alphaxad Magocha Matokore, Kemegesi, 29 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂). *Ngoreme-English Dictionary*, Parish Office, Iramba, n.d.

⁷⁷ Interview with Nyawagambwa Magoto (Nata ♂), Dhahabu Gambamara (Nata ♀), Kinanda Sigara, Mugeta 9 March 1996 (Ikizu ♂).

the clients of the king. Uniquely in Mara languages it refers to elderly women and their wealth in children. The verb "to grow old" in Mara languages, *-kungaha*, is also derived from this root but the noun form refers only to older women.⁷⁸ Sarah LeVine's study of Gusii women (also Mara speakers) notes that elderly women enjoyed the freedom to talk in public, even appearing "raucous and openly aggressive" and drinking beer at parties. Women achieved status as elders with others to help them, some leisure and a say in family and community affairs.⁷⁹

Concepts of Gender Identity:

The discussion of extraordinary women and their access to men's knowledge brings us finally to a consideration of concepts of gender. Are these extraordinary women then male? Janice Boddy reminds us in Wombs and Alien Spirits, that gender is a "symbolic construct," varying over time and from one society to the next. As women researchers interviewing women in other places we may share the same biology but we cannot assume that we share the same gender.⁸⁰ In her book, Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Ifi Amadiume notes how Nigerian Igbo daughters could become sons (male) and women could become husbands (male).

While the Igbo institution of daughters becoming sons appears similar to the *omasimbe* of the western Serengeti described above, the practice of "female husbands" (often known in the literature as "woman/woman marriage") also occurs as a Mara institution which sheds further light on local concepts of gender. Amadiume postulates that this separation of gender from sex is necessary in a society where women's worlds operate separately from men's. The ability for

⁷⁸ Schoenbrun, Etymologies, # 209 and #210. For a discussion of these terms see, Schoenbrun, A Green Place, pp. 185-187.

⁷⁹ Sarah LeVine and Robert LeVine, Mothers and Wives: Gusii Women of East Africa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 12-14 and Conclusion.

⁸⁰ Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, pp. 56-57.

women to take on men's gendered roles and authority in certain situations mediates these gendered barriers.⁴¹ Regina Smith Oboler's study of "woman/woman marriage" shows that the Nandi, in western Kenya, classify a childless woman who pays bridewealth for another woman to bear her children as male, in specified socio-cultural domains. She becomes the social and legal father of the children and plays a male role in all negotiations over the property rights involving the children. In other areas of life not involving property, people continue to recognize her in a female role.⁴²

All languages in the Mara Region use the term *ukamwana* (the institution of "daughter-in-law") to designate "woman/woman marriage." Here they conceptualize the "female husband" as the "mother-in-law" who pays bridewealth for the marriage of her dead or fictional son. Because of the functioning of the "house-property" system, sons inherit through the "house" of their mother. The "mother-in-law" or "female husband" has control over the dispersal of the property from her "house," although her husband has overall control of the joint property of the homestead. Thus "woman/woman marriage" constituted one way of assuring that 'the house would not die.' People said that the bride in a *ukamwana* arrangement 'married the house.'⁴³

The "female husband" represents another category of extraordinary women who occupy a liminal position, mediating between male and female roles in different domains of life. Recent

⁴¹ Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*, p. 89.

⁴² Regina Smith Oboler, "Is the Female Husband a Man? Woman/Woman Marriage among the Nandi of Kenya," *Ethnology* 19 (1) (January 1980): 69-88.

⁴³ Hugo Huber, "'Woman-Marriage' in Some East African Societies," *Anthropos* 63/64 (1968/69): 745-752. Fieldwork for this article was done among the Simbete, Iregi and Kenye of the northwest portion of the Mara Region. With little variation the practices are similar to what I found operating in the Serengeti district in the southeast of the region. See also Denise O'Brien, "Female Husbands in Southern Bantu Societies," in *Sexual Stratification: A Cross-Cultural View*, ed. Alice Schlegel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 109-126. Eileen Jensen Krige, "Woman-Marriage, with Special Reference to the Lovedu — Its Significance for the Definition of Marriage," *Africa* 44, 1 (1974): 11-36.

literature on ethnicity and social identity in Africa has shown that ethnic, clan, lineage, or age-set identities are situational and relational rather than immutable biological fact.⁸⁴ In the same way, gender identity in these societies is variable in particular contexts and for particular people.⁸⁵ The structured mediation of gender boundaries allows certain women access to men's knowledge. While I found little evidence that these women shared this knowledge with other women in their female roles, they did seem to bring their female knowledge to bear on men's discussions of the past. They failed to share this knowledge with women, in large part, because the spaces that women occupied and the forms of narrative in which they engaged, did not present the opportunity for telling ethnic histories among women. These extraordinary women thus acted as the tributaries that flowed in one direction between these streams of knowledge.

Secret Knowledge

Besides the public historical narratives told by men in their gatherings over beer, the family histories passed on to children and daughters-in-law, the place-specific knowledge given to young men on hunting and raiding trips, and the bits of historical knowledge shared at funerals or in the preparation for weddings, a realm of crucial historical knowledge remains that people cannot share publicly. This knowledge, specific to the functioning of particular social groups, must be kept within those channels or bring risks to the entire group.

For example, in the system of eldership titles, initiates learn *masubho* or "medicines" during the ceremony to join the rank.⁸⁶ They must not tell these secrets to anyone outside those

⁸⁴ For Africa for example see: Vail, The Creation of Tribalism; David Newbury, Kings and Clans: Ijwi Island and the Lake Kivu Rift, 1780-1840 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); and Spear and Waller, Being Maasai.

⁸⁵ Oboler, "Is the Female Husband a Man?," pp. 69-88.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 10 for a discussion of the *nyangi* system of eldership ranks. One of the top ranking elders in Nata decided that the heart of Nata was contained in those secrets and that unless

initiated on threat of death, through an oath. Women go through initiation separately from men and learn different *masubho*. Although I did not learn these secrets, elders told me that they include a recitation of historical information. Whether in the form of historical chronicles or not, the secrets of these ranks represent important sources for understanding the historical development of eldership titles.⁸⁷

As young people leave the villages for school and jobs in the city fewer pursue initiation into these titles. Young people also complain that the feasts required for taking a rank cost too much. The highest ranking elders face a serious crisis in which they cannot pass on their knowledge to a new generation because no has the means to be initiated. This information may die with the present generation of elders. Concern about this has resulted in attempts to lower the feasting requirements to encourage young people to join. No movement has arisen to write down these secrets to preserve this information for future generations.

Elders cannot write down the secrets of the past or they would lose their efficacy. The written histories that educated elders have produced do not contain this kind of information. Elders keep these "books" as personal property, rather than get them published or make them available for public consumption.⁸⁸ The books most often contain fairly superficial and basic narratives, including almost none of the crucial historical information concerning specific social institutions

I learned those I would not understand Nata. He wanted to initiate me, which would involve me giving a feast for the elders. We had already planned a feast at which time the Nata elders would tell Nata history together to preserve on videotape. At that meeting his ranking counterparts decided that I could not be initiated because I would have to swear an oath never to leave Nata. I suspect that a reason for initiating me would have been the fear that I already knew too many secrets and that the oath, and my lack of mobility, would keep me silent.

⁸⁷ Interview Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 April 1995 (Nata ♂) on the *nyangi* system.

⁸⁸ The elders in the village where I lived requested help in building a museum for the preservation of history at my farewell feast. Yet it seemed that most were more interested in the material infrastructure and access to tourist dollars than in preserving their own past.

such as eldership titles. I pursued a highly recommended Ishenyi written history for months before those involved finally gave me access. It turned out to be five short pages of elementary Ishenyi historical knowledge. Clearly, having the "book" itself was more important than what it actually said. The content of these written histories usually consisted of a predictable and pleasing "tribal" narrative, calculated to secure status among other "tribes" rather than to pass on the secrets of power.

One can only interpret this situation within a wider understanding of local concepts of knowledge. Much of what I observed in the western Serengeti corresponds to Guyer and Belinga's descriptions of Equatorial Africa where knowledge is "particularly highly valued and complexly organized." They noted that, "knowledge was a primary resource that was elaborated, differentiated and cultivated far beyond levels that can be explained by the mundane adaptive need to exploit land, labor, capital or any other material or social resource."⁸⁹ Knowledge was multiple, diverse and ever expanding, not contained within one coherent body of truth. Individual specialists controlled their own personalistic knowledge acquired by birth, sale, capture or initiation.

A person's knowledge can be embodied in medicines that take on the identity of the person, as well as a power of their own. People acquire these medicines of personal knowledge at a cost. In the western Serengeti, after someone joins an eldership rank, he or she may add to his or her secret knowledge by going to a more experienced member and giving "tobacco" in return for knowledge. In the same way, elders often asked me for "tobacco" in return for an interview.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Guyer and Belinga, "Wealth in People," pp. 93, 117.

⁹⁰ I had no clear policy on offering gifts or money to informants. I followed the lead of my assistant. Sometimes when we left I gave the man the equivalent of about 1 US dollar for "tobacco." Cues on whether to give or not from my assistants seemed to depend on a number of factors—how well they knew the man, what their relationship to him was, whether he was poor, what his position was, how long we had stayed, how helpful he had been, or whether he asked for it.

Guyer and Belinga report that knowledge or medicines that were not "purchased" lost their power.⁹¹

Western Serengeti people also commonly condense powerful knowledge about the past in objects such as medicine bundles that they pass on to the next generation. The lineage of the person who made the medicine bundle chooses an individual whom they entrust with the secret of its composition. The entire lineage faces severe consequences if they neglect the medicine bundle. Guyer and Belinga note the equivalence of people and things as repositories of knowledge as an important aspect of Equatorial society.⁹² Similarly, in the western Serengeti, the ancestors guard and ensure continuity of the most important knowledge about the past, whether embodied in medicine bundles or at the sites of their graves, through which the living communicate with the dead.

Local history books, analogous to medicine bundles, represent knowledge embodied in things. Elders passed on and preserved the books within the lineage like medicine bundles. People assumed that these history books contained more knowledge than what appeared in writing. Elders often asked me to pay for the privilege of reading locally produced manuscripts. Although many of these groups of elders wanted to have their books published, they did little to pursue this objective. If they published the books, the authors would lose personal control over these "medicines." The mass production of medicine bundles or books of knowledge is antithetical to the concept of the singularity of knowledge situated within particular social channels.

Written knowledge bypasses the necessity for a personal relationship and reciprocal exchange. In village primary schools today teachers complain about the lack of textbooks, but

⁹¹ Guyer and Belinga, "Wealth in People," pp. 111-112.

⁹² *Ibid.*

many prefer to be the only one with a book to dispense the knowledge at their discretion. Some say that storerooms are full of unused textbooks. Secrecy and orality render knowledge a scarce commodity that is accessible only through personalized reciprocity. Secrecy is a general principle used in many social interactions to gain power in that relationship. The concept of knowledge as a freely accessible resource open to all is foreign and threatening to this system of exchange.

Even if groups could control written secrets, this knowledge might then lose its most important attribute, its flexibility.⁹³ In the case of the eldership titles, writing this knowledge would ossify ritual and prevent its elaboration and development by individual adepts. It would cease to be a living tradition.⁹⁴ Written knowledge does away with the need for elders to imagine and shape the past as they discuss the case at hand over beer. It destroys the context in which oral tradition is preserved. Written histories demand conformity to one "true" history rather than a host of different kinds of histories told differently in different contexts, especially here, where publication is too expensive and rare for democratic use.

Another example of secret knowledge is the rituals of the "ruling" generation-set for healing and protecting, or "cooling" the land and its people. Every eight years the generation-set distributed medicine around the community's boundaries in a way prescribed by a prophet. Knowledge of the generation-set secrets by outsiders would render the group vulnerable to enemy attack, disease and witchcraft. Elders were reluctant to divulge details about the work of the

⁹³ This is a classic anthropological insight, see for example, Laura Bohannon, "A Genealogical Charter," *Africa* 22, 4 (October 1952): 301-315, discusses the Tiv genealogies as a validation of present relationships, the genealogies must change over time and in different situations to be consistent with present social relationships. She argues that writing down these genealogies would make them rigid and this incompatible with their usefulness as social charter.

⁹⁴ This was the case in the 1993 coronation of the Kabaka Ronald Mutebi II in Buganda where some of those officiating referred to the missionary/anthropologist John Roscoe's account of the ceremony. John Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs*, 2nd ed. (London: Cass, 1965).

generation-set in protecting the land and often avoided my questions or generalized their answers. In Nata, elders told me repeatedly that the ruling generation-set's only task was to walk together across the land every eight years and feast at different people's houses—like a solidarity walk.⁵⁵ Just understanding how this ritual functioned in each ethnic group, apart from the particular medicines, required patient piecing together of this cryptic information. Although generation-sets figure prominently in colonial ethnographies of the region, I have found in them no discussion of the generation-set function in protecting the land.⁵⁶

Elders consider it crucially important that the knowledge of medicines to protect the land and the people not fall into the hands of those with malevolent intent toward the community. Those who possess knowledge give it to those who deserve to know. If anyone can gain knowledge in a book, the elders cannot regulate the integrity of those who have access to this knowledge. In my own research, much of the talk and visiting before interviews involved an appraisal by the elders of whether I was worthy to deal with the knowledge they held. They considered some kinds of information better lost than to be made available to those who would misuse it. Greet Kershaw's study of Kikuyu oral traditions about land demonstrates that the elders intentionally allow some kinds of knowledge to be forgotten. Only the most senior Kikuyu elders know about events of the past which brought evil. They decide whether this knowledge should be passed on or not.⁵⁶

People understand the giving and receiving of historical information not as a quaint antiquarian hobby but rather as a tremendous source of power. This was made abundantly clear to me during my research. The people in Robanda, only a few kilometers from the Serengeti National

⁵⁵ Malcolm Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," *Africa* 32 (1962): 14-36, Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*.

⁵⁶ Greet Kershaw, *Mau Mau From Below* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), p. 16.

Park, Ikoma Gate, feared to tell me about their origins in Sonjo, because general knowledge of this might lessen their claim to land that the Park wanted for expansion and the Park might send them back to Sonjo.⁹⁷ In Ikizu a noticeable rift exists between two factions of the ethnic group, each with its roots in the stories of origin. The Ikizu fight out this conflict in the political and economic arena, with each side appealing to history for its legitimacy. Both sides insisted that I write the "true" story of Ikizu, the "full" story of Ikizu, not the lies of the other side. In each interview a different set of political issues subtly intruded as elders spoke about the past.

Knowledge vested in places such as springs, hills or rocks, called *emisambwa*, comprises another kind of knowledge about the past outside the recognized ethnic narratives. These sacred places for ritual and sacrifice, appear most often in connection with the grave of an ancestor. The stories of these ancestors as great prophets or rainmakers provide important information about past events as well as social organization. The landscape can be "read" like a "book" by walking over it and hearing the stories connected with each site. Only those in the lineage of the ancestor buried there have access to the secrets of the *emisambwa*, the rituals used to propitiate the ancestral spirits.

The ancestors themselves, whose spirits reside at those places, preserve the historical knowledge embodied in these sites. Elders often related stories about serious misfortune visited on a community when its people forgot the grave sites of ancestors, the rituals of propitiation, or the meaning of past events. The elders of the community would then consult a dream-prophet (*omugabho*) who got in touch with the ancestor involved and told the people what was needed to make things right again. A few generations back, a prophet told the Nata lineage (who went to ask for rain at the grave-site of Gitaraga) that Gitaraga wanted them to make an offering first at the

⁹⁷ They had good reasons for these fears from past interactions with the Park and it did not help that my husband was doing his research with Serengeti National Park at the same time.

grave of his wife before they visited him. Through this experience, elders learned the story of Nyaheri and her grave site.⁹⁸ People gain crucial historical knowledge through the dead, even if the living forget.

Elders continue to keep a certain kind of knowledge secret precisely because they highly value it and treat it with caution, either to maintain its efficacy or to prevent disaster. Knowledge about the past cannot be divorced from its connection to relationships that have ongoing meaning. People remember and pass on stories about the past because this knowledge is part of the social landscape of particular groups of people. Secret knowledge, like gendered knowledge, is maintained by the organization of social space. Only titled elders can enter the house where the secrets are told to a new initiate taking the rank. Only those in a certain lineage can approach the sacred places with ritual sacrifices. Only those of the generation-set in power can walk the boundaries of the land to spread the medicines of protection. Knowledge about the past flows in these particular channels, kept within its banks by the social organization of space.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that different kinds of historical knowledge are confined to the social spaces of those who transmit them, to the extent that women and men sharing the same household do not share the same stories about the past. Over the past two decades, much of the debate among historians of oral tradition has centered on a critique of Jan Vansina's early work, where he postulated "chains of transmission" for oral traditions, making it possible for the historian to compare separate versions. David W. Cohen, and others, made a case for the flow of historical information in all kinds of informal channels, an argument that destroyed any hope of establishing

⁹⁸ Interview with Keneti Mahembora, Sangang'a, 17 February, 1996 (Nata ♂).

separate and "uncontaminated" sources.⁹⁹ Yet this literature has failed to note that most historical knowledge is not randomly shared.¹⁰⁰ This chapter has demonstrated the social spaces of knowledge in the case of gendered knowledge and the secret knowledge of particular social groups such as the medicines of eldership ranks, the rituals of generation-sets and the sacred sites of lineages. This evidence returns the flow of historical tradition, as opposed to more ubiquitous stories about the past in popular culture, to particular channels, given the inevitable floods and tributaries that establish linkages with other streams. Historical knowledge follows the channels and direction established by social practice.

On the other hand, I have also shown that institutionalized means for bridging these channels also exist. Women, acting in men's roles as prophets, childless women, independent women and post-menopausal women learn men's knowledge and participate in both men's and women's storytelling experiences. Whether these women tell men's ethnic narratives or not, they must use this knowledge in their telling of women's narrative genres. Everyone knows the basic outline of the ethnic origin story, although few have opportunity or the expertise to tell it. Men know the fundamentals of family and genealogical history but do not have the personal stake in memorizing its details. The same men who take eldership titles are also members of the generation-set and of a lineage with responsibility to maintain ancestral sites or medicine bundles. The secrets

⁹⁹ This insight thanks to personal communication with Steven Feierman. The debate over chains of transmission is summarized by Hamilton, "Living with Fluidity," in papers from the International Conference, "Words and Voices." See also David Newbury's paper in the same collection. Cohen, *Womunafu's Bunafu*, p. 8-9. J. Vansina, "Some Perceptions on the Writing of African History: 1948-1992." *Itinerario* (1995): 77-91. Cohen's critique is most fully developed in David W. Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994) and Cohen, "The Undefining."

¹⁰⁰ Even though Cohen argued this in the case of Luo women taking care of young women, see Cohen, "Pim's doorway," pp. 191-235.

of historical knowledge controlled by each of these social groups influence the secrets of the others because they are stored as one man's memories.

I have explored the "lived circumstances" of men and women in the western Serengeti to understand how different realms of historical knowledge develop and are transmitted. People transmit and maintain this knowledge by the ways in which they imagine and organize social space in daily practice. Similarly, in Purity and Exile Malkki demonstrates how "historical consciousness is embedded in and emerges from particular, local, lived circumstances." She traces the construction of a Hutu identity and national history in the refugee camps as opposed to the cosmopolitan identity and denial of history among town refugees.¹⁰¹ The lived circumstances of different social groups confine particular domains of knowledge to the memories of individual members of that group. Yet their knowledge is influenced by other realms of knowledge because individuals frequently cross social boundaries and are simultaneously members of various social groups.

The channeling of historical knowledge in the spaces of social practice does not mean that oral historians can return to the easy assumption of discrete "chains of transmission." The banks of those streams of knowledge are often breached and numerous tributaries connect one with another. Nevertheless, because knowledge crosses the boundaries of social space in structured, rather than random ways, the historian can develop tools for interpreting these various representations of the past in relation to each other.

The understanding of historical narrators and their narrations within particular social spaces built in this chapter must be kept in mind when specific sets of oral tradition are explored in the remainder of the dissertation. The social organization of knowledge provides key insights for

¹⁰¹ Liisa Malkki, Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 241.

the interpretation of oral tradition. Nevertheless, before the oral traditions of origin are presented, in Chapter 4, it is necessary to look more specifically at the form of historical consciousness in the western Serengeti that divides history into two major periods, before and after the disasters of the late nineteenth century.

CHAPTER THREE
HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS:
THE DISASTERS OF THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AS RUPTURE

The previous chapter demonstrated how men reworked oral traditions into unique "tribal" histories, during the colonial period. The lens of the "tribe" filters much of what we know about past forms of social identity, while the social spaces of gendered discourse and secret knowledges structure the transmission and maintenance of knowledge about the past.

This chapter argues, however, that events of the period immediately preceding colonial rule in this region, 1870-1900, also influenced oral traditions in a fundamental way. The disasters of the late nineteenth century precipitated radical social transformations that fragmented continuity with the past and altered historical consciousness. Although elders remember these disasters as a horrible experience, the transformations that resulted constitute a tribute to the creative and indomitable spirit of the peoples of the western Serengeti, who not only survived the disasters but found in those experiences new ways to prosper.¹

History, from the perspective of oral traditions, in some sense begins with the disasters. The oral traditions concerning earlier times take the form of either mythical and abbreviated stories of origin and migration or cryptic lists of settlement sites and clan names. They provide no coherent account of events or personalities of the earlier period. By contrast, elders narrate the

¹ For others accounts of social transformation during period of disaster see, James L. Giblin, "Famine, Political Authority and Foreign Capital in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991); Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*, and Gregory H. Maddox, "Leave Wagogo, You have no Food: Famine and Survival in Ugogo, Tanzania, 1916-1961" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1988).

stories of battles with Maasai, suffering during famines, and the walk to Sukuma with elaborate precision.

Although a middle period of vague and timeless traditions appears as a structural feature of oral narrative throughout Africa, the moment at which traditions become historically grounded in verifiable events seems to represent a point of transition in social identity. Among societies with centralized states, the traditions of historical time often begin with the consolidation of the kingdom under a known king, even if the antiquity of the kingdom is extended by reconfigured genealogies.² In the oral traditions of the Maasai historical time begins with the leadership of prophets in the late eighteenth century.³ In comparison to these examples, historical time in the western Serengeti begins relatively late and, significantly, with the events of the disasters. From the perspective of oral tradition this period represents a rupture in social time.⁴

In the western Serengeti this era initiated not only a break in time but the introduction of new concepts of time altogether. A new way of calculating social time, embodied in the succession of cycling age-sets, emerged during this period of disasters. Because the age-set names cycled after every three generations, this way of calculating time could be, anachronistically,

² For kingdoms in Eastern African see Feierman, *The Shamba Kingdom*; Newbury, *Kings and Clans*; Randall Packard, *Chiefship and Cosmology: An Historical Study of Political Competition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Wrigley, *Kingship and State*.

³ John Lawrence Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets: Maasailand in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979), p. 112.

⁴ Rosaldo describes a similar phenomenon in his study of Ilongot society in the Philippines. He found that history was divided into two major periods—before and after the Japanese invasion of 1945. Rosaldo wrote: "The stories of 1945 were so numerous, so vivid, so detailed, so often told that it took me over a year to realize that they represented but a narrow strip in time." This amplified moment in the historical imagination became "the great divide that separated a bygone past from one that merged into the present." Rosaldo's interpretation of various oral narratives had to take into consideration that this brief period had been generalized to represent the whole period before 1945. Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*, pp. 38-54.

projected back to represent the passage of time before the disasters. With this device people could maintain continuity with the past in extremely uncertain times. The process of reformulating age-sets is discussed in Chapter 9. Here, I use these transformations in concepts of time as evidence for discontinuity in social time and the radical reformulation of identity during the period of disasters.

The rupture in historical consciousness indicates that fundamental changes in social identity took place during the period of disasters. As has already been shown, particular social groups maintain and transmit knowledge that has no independent existence outside that group. People cannot integrally maintain and transmit historical knowledge if the social group in which that knowledge is based radically reconfigures itself. The emerging stories of new groups, which take their heritage from a variety of former identities, incorporate bits of knowledge from older traditions.

Scholars have made a similar case to explain why Maasai oral tradition begins at the end of the eighteenth century, when it is clear from other evidence that Maa-speakers were present in the Rift Valley beginning around 1600. Lamprey and Waller propose that, "traditions cannot survive the communities that produce them and for which they have meaning." They suggest that if the identity and composition of a community changes dramatically during a period of stress, "it is unlikely that the emergent community will assimilate the old corpus of tradition, except in fragmented form, since these traditions again refer to events and processes in which the community now has no collective part."⁵

⁵ Richard Lamprey and Richard Waller, "The Loita-Mara Region in Historical Times: Patterns of Subsistence, Settlement and Ecological Change," in *Early Pastoralists of South-western Kenya*, ed. Peter Robertshaw (Nairobi: British Institute in East Africa, 1990), p.19.

For the historian it becomes problematic to interpret the meaning of these dramatic social transformations without access to evidence that is not itself a product of these changes. The way in which western Serengeti people reconfigured social identity during the period of disasters is the product of much longer-term social processes. Yet knowledge of times before the disasters is only accessible to the historian through oral traditions, which the new communities that survived the disasters and established new identities to deal with the changing situation have fragmented and reworked. The fragments of oral tradition that survived have been taken out of context and given new meaning.

The historian must interpret the traditions of the earlier period with knowledge of how people transformed social identities during the disasters. Yet the historian cannot understand these transformations without knowledge of social process in the earlier period. To understand the historical development of this region from earliest times on, through the interpretation of oral traditions, a basic knowledge of the events of the late nineteenth century disasters and the subsequent changes in social identity is necessary. The changes of this period provide the context in which I interpret oral traditions throughout the dissertation.

The experiences of ecological breakdown, indirect contact with the Swahili caravan trade and Maasai raids each caused specific social transformations that were in turn reflected in oral traditions about earlier periods. The historical interpretation of pre-disaster traditions depends upon an awareness of these changes in the oral traditions. The ecological breakdown, which resulted from famine and disease, demanded the reformulation of the networks of security previously provided, in part, by the interdependent regional economies of hunters, herders and farmers. Western Serengeti farmers did this by developing their own interdependent relations between kin living in different ecological niches and practicing slightly different economic strategies. Because of this change oral traditions now obscure this earlier reliance on hunters and

herders, making it extremely difficult to reconstruct the earlier regional system. The ecological disasters also required changes in settlement structures. People now understand the new patterns as "traditional" and forget what came before.

The caravan trade, which introduced new diseases and increased trade of wild animal products, resulted primarily in ties of dependency to Sukuma and the commercialization of hunting. The origin traditions of Ikizu, Nata and Sizaki claim a connection to Sukuma, which we can date to this period. People have also accepted forms of eldership titles borrowed from Sukuma during the time of disasters and grafted onto the older system as "traditional" ranks. Oral traditions may also distort the past significance of hunting, due to the identification of forest products as a source of cattle wealth during this period.

Finally, the experience of intensive Maasai raiding had far reaching effects on historical consciousness. Although contact with the Maasai probably began gradually and peacefully around mid-nineteenth century, oral tradition tells us that this enmity dates from the beginning of time. Although other evidence tells us that the period of most intense raiding took place after the intrusion of colonial rule, oral tradition dates the most severe raiding to an unspecified earlier period and attributes all of the disasters that later took place to the effects of Maasai raiding. In this period, western Serengeti communities drew on Maasai culture to reorder their age-sets. In doing so, they revised their concept of time.

All these changes dating to the period of disasters have fundamentally affected the way that people understand their past and what they consider to be "traditional." The historian cannot interpret oral traditions of earlier periods without understanding this period. The story of how people coped with these disasters and the social transformations that resulted are the subject of the last two chapters in this dissertation. This chapter acquaints the reader with the major events and material conditions based on oral and written sources from this period. It describes the cycle of

disease, famine, raids, ecological disaster, and eventual social collapse in which many people moved to Sukuma or to other places of refuge. The effects of the caravan trade and the increased pressure of Maasai raiding contributed to the cycle of crisis. Oral traditions represent the disasters as the turning point between distant and recent history.

Rupture in Social Identity at the Time of Crisis

Oral traditions about the period of disasters provide the core images for understanding what this rupture meant for historical consciousness. The Ishenyi story of disaster is perhaps the most extreme case of rupture in social identity. Its content reveals local interpretations of many aspects of the disastrous events of the late nineteenth century.

The following story comes from the Ishenyi people, who now live between Nata and the Ikizu. Nyeberékera, where the story begins, is located on the western edge of the Serengeti National Park today [For map see Figure 3-1: Ishenyi Dispersal from Nyeberékera.]. The Ishenyi need special permission from the park to revisit this site for propitiation of ancestral spirits who still reside there. The landmark for Nyeberékera is a tall rock outcropping, Bwinamoki, which one can see for miles away over the plains and which functioned as a lookout for Maasai raids [See Figure 3-2: The Ishenyi Story of Nyeberékera.]. Nyeberékera refers to a general area of settlement and to a pool on the Grumeti River that is an ancient site of ancestral spirits.⁶ Mikael Magessa Sarota, the son of one colonial Ishenyi chief, told this version of the story:

Long ago the Ishenyi lived at Nyeberékera, over to the east of Mugumu, inside the park. There are hills there, a fertile land that cries buabuabu . . . when you walk on it. The land was called Nyeberékera. This is where we came from. When we left there, we came to Nyigoti. The Maasai drove us out in the time before my grandfather. The Maasai raided us. We were farmers and they were herders. The Maasai came to steal the few cattle that the Ishenyi kept. The Ishenyi had a dream prophet at that time named

⁶ Interview with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi *o'*). He says this is where people went to fish and got swallowed up, the clan of Abang'ohé from Bene Okinyonyi, but all Ishenyi go there to propitiate the spirit. This is not the site where Shanyangi is propitiated.

Shanyangi. When the Maasai would come, just enter their land, Shanyangi would make biting ants appear which would fill the river and prevent them from crossing. Then he would make bees that would swarm all over and drive them back. They would be unable to raid the Ishenyi. Then one day the Maasai sat together to decide how to defeat this Ishenyi prophet who sent ants and bees against them. They went to their own prophet who could stop the rain from coming. This prophet stopped the rain from falling on Nyeberekera. At this time the Ishenyi were farming with wooden hoes because the soil was so fertile and loose. They had ample food and there was no hunger. This Maasai prophet stopped the rain from falling for eight years. All of the food stores were exhausted. When this happened, the Ishenyi went to their prophet Shanyangi and asked him to send rain. He said that he was not a rainmaker and only knew the medicine of war against the Maasai. Nevertheless, they would not listen and sat in their meetings over and over again, asking him to make rain. Finally they decided that Shanyangi must be lying to them — how could he be such a powerful prophet and not know how to make rain? Surely it was not true! When the drought continued, they decided to kill Shanyangi. They tied him up on a tree and chopped down the tree, which fell and killed him. Yet of course once he died there was no one to protect them and they were driven out, dispersed here and there by the Maasai raiders. Some came to Nyigoti, near to where the Nata were living. Others refused to come to Nata because the Nata were sick with kaswende (syphilis). Many Ishenyi warriors impaled themselves on their own spears rather than go to Nata and suffer the slow death of kaswende. Others went to Kuria where they became the Iregi of today, those of the clan of Sarega. The Iregi are really Ishenyi people. Those who moved near to the Nata settled and began living there. Then another famine came and they were forced to go to Sukuma to beg for food. After the drought lifted, they returned from Sukuma and came to live where they are today at Nagusi. They did not return to Nyigoti. This terrible famine was called the "Hunger of the Feet." It was called that because of the sores people got in their feet as they walked to Sukuma in the dust.⁷

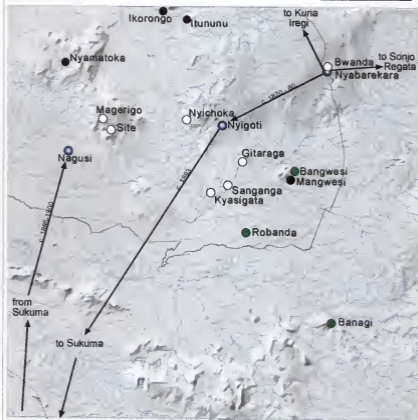
All of the elements of the disaster appear in this story—pressure from the Maasai, drought, famine and new epidemic diseases. These events result in dispersal and regrouping in a new place with a new identity. Famines bracket this story, beginning with the "Hunger that Finished the Cattle" and ending with the "Hunger of the Feet."

Some hint of former identities is evident in this story. Although elders tell this account as an "Ishenyi" story, many elders agreed that those who lived at Nyeberekera called themselves "Regata" and those who went to Kuria at the dispersal were known as "Iregi." In Sonjo today the inhabitants of a village named "Regata" tell the same story of dispersal. The Maasai Loitai of the

⁷ Interview with Mikael Magessa Sarota, Issenye, 25 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

Ishenyi Dispersal from Nyeberekera c.1870 - 1895 The Generation of Disasters

- Nata
- Ikoma
- Ishenyi
- Ngoreme
- Seregeti N.P.



Graphics by

Peter Shelier
Dove Creek Information Services
IDRISI, Adobe Photoshop and Macromedia Freehand

Scale

30 km

Figure 3-1: Ishenyi Dispersal from Nyeberekera



Bwinamoki Rocks at Nyeberekeru, 16 February 1996



Mikael Magessa Sarota, Issenye, 25 August 1995, narrator of the Nyeberekeru Story.

Figure 3-2: The Ishenyi Story of Nyeberekeru

Loliondo highlands, whose territory extended north into Kenya and east to Lake Natron, reported to colonial anthropologist Henry Fosbrooke that the original inhabitants of this area were the "Ilmarau," the Maasai name for the Ikoma or Bantu-speaking peoples of the western Serengeti in general.⁸ Collectively these narratives point to a previous community that straddled what is now the Serengeti National Park, dispersed and divided by this series of disasters.⁹ This older community may have called themselves the Regata or in Ngoreme traditions they are referred to as Masabha or "the people of the north."¹⁰

During this period of stress, people determined what it meant to be "Ishenyi." They connected their identity as a people to their relationship with the land. Therefore, moving demanded a reformulation of identity. The murder of the Ishenyi prophet Shanyangi by his own people symbolizes this change of identity. Although some Ishenyi now return to Nyeberekera to propitiate his spirit, this is an innovation of recent years. Why would Shanyangi choose to help those who killed him? Shanyangi's murder was the final break with Nyeberekera and their identity as a people under his leadership. The Ikoma also have a story in which a prophet forbade them to return to Sonjo, forcing them out to new lands and the formation of new communities.¹¹

⁸ Henry A. Fosbrooke, "Sections of the Masai in Loliondo Area," 1953, (typescript) CORY #259, EAF, UDSM.

⁹ This community was perhaps linked to the deserted irrigation villages of Engaruka. J. E. G. Sutton, "Becoming Maasailand," in *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), p. 54; and J. E. G. Sutton, "Engaruka etc.," *Tanzania Zamani* 10 (January 1972): 7-10; Louis Leakey, "Preliminary Report on Examination of the Engaruka Ruins," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 1 (March 1936): 57-60.

¹⁰ P. Haimati and P. Houle, "Mila na Matendo ya Wangoreme," unpublished mimeo, Iramba Mission, 1969.

¹¹ Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenyi, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

So powerful was this period of disaster for identity formation that the core images of these stories are of new beginning and decisive break with the past. The present generation of Ishenyi elders seems to have forgotten the entire origin story except the names of the ancestral parents and the place where they lived.¹² Mikael's description of Nyeberekera as the place "where we came from" reconfigures it as an origin story. The versions of this story that emphasize the pre-dispersal paradise of Nyeberekera tell that the people produced so much milk there that the Ishenyi dumped it into the river and so attracted the Maasai. The consequences for the Ishenyi were not only dispersal and famine but the curse of the prophet Shanyangi that denied them another Ishenyi prophet.¹³ The Ikoma also experienced a prophetic curse during this time that kept the hunters from returning to Sonjo.¹⁴ Elders point to some rocks near Ikoma Robanda where witches were pushed off to their death during this generation. That elders would remember this period as a time of witchcraft is one indication of extreme societal stress.¹⁵

Dating the Nyeberekera dispersal by oral accounts is difficult because of the present value placed on histories that are very old. Elders tend to exaggerate the time depth to make ancient territorial claims. Many elders, however, agree that the prophet Shanyangi belonged to the generation of Maina (C. 1840) and that the Ishenyi left Nyeberekera during the time of the Saai and Chuma (C. 1860-1880). This matches Mikael's assertion that the dispersal from Nyeberekera

¹² Guka, on the eastern side of what is now the northern extension of the Park. Mugunyi and Iyancha are the ancestral parents.

¹³ Anacleti, "Pastoralism and Development," pp. 182-184.

¹⁴ Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

¹⁵ Interview with Moremi Mwikicho, Sagochi Nyekipegete and Kenyatta Mosoka, Robanda, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂). See Hartwig's analysis of this period on the Lake Victoria Island of Kerewe and the witchcraft accusations as a result of social stress, Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, p. 121.

happened in the time before his grandfather. The Ishenyi lived at Nyigoti during the generation of the Saai and the Nyambureti (C. 1870-90). Ishenyi elders further agree that the "Hunger of the Feet" and the eventual move to Nagusi took place during the Kihocha age-set, just before the turn of the century.¹⁶ Traditions of other ethnic groups in this area relate similar tales of disaster during these age-sets.

This correlation of generation and age-sets with events of the time further shows a break in social time with the reformulation of identity. Note that in the above testimonies the narrators marked earlier events by association with generation-sets, and the later events by association with age-sets. One Nata elder said that they formed the first *saiga* or age-sets during the generation of the Maina, living at Site, where they divided that generation into the three age-set cycles of Bongirate, Busaai and Borumarancha.¹⁷ An Ishenyi elder confirmed that they divided the cycling age-sets or *saiga* when they left Nyeberekera, during the generation of the Maina.¹⁸ These cycling age-sets replaced the generation-set as the way of reckoning time.

Age-sets were not new to the western Serengeti. What was new was the switch from a system in which linear age-sets functioned parallel to the more dominant generation-sets, to a system in which territorially-based cycling age-sets were incorporated into the patterns of generational succession. These complex transformations are explored in more detail in Chapter 9. Here it is only important to note how elders reconciled these two systems in historical memory. Since each of the cycling age-sets would ideally rule for eight years, elders often produced age-set

¹⁶ Interviews with Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995; Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995; Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

¹⁷ Interview with Kirigiti Ng'orita, Mbiso, 8 June 1995 (Nata ♂). Kirigiti is the last surviving Nata generation-set leader of his section.

¹⁸ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

lists with cycling names that extended back two hundred years.¹⁹ Although the memory of the change to cycling age-sets still exists, the projection of cycling age-set time onto earlier history is increasingly erasing that memory.

For the historian, this makes dating by age-set chronology particularly difficult.

Historians of East Africa have long recognized that age-sets provide the possibility for constructing relative chronologies that correspond to calendar dates.²⁰ Scholars have rightly criticized these methods for presuming to establish precise dates by projecting average age-set intervals back in time and assuming that the age-set rituals that promoted the new set would remain constant through time.²¹ For the western Serengeti, the introduction of a whole new system of dating past events in the last quarter of the nineteenth century destroys the historian's hope of establishing accurate dating before this point, except through the relative succession of named generations. Clearly, we should read these age-set lists primarily as ideological statements rather than chronological records. They establish a continuity with the past and the orderly succession of time through the cycling death and rebirth of the generations.

¹⁹ Anacleto reproduced this pattern back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, sometimes using age-set praise names which referred specifically to the events of the 19th century as cycling names, for example, *abaSanduka*, those who carried boxes as porters. Anacleto, "Pastoralism and Development," pp. 14-15.

²⁰ See Alan H. Jacobs, "A Chronology of the Pastoral Maasai," in *Hadith I: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya*, ed. Bethwell Ogot (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), pp. 10-31; H. A. Fosbrooke, "An Administrative Survey of the Maasai Social System," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 26 (December 1948): 11; and H. A. Fosbrooke, "The Maasai Age-group System as a Guide to Tribal Chronology," *African Studies* 15, 4 (1956): 194-195.

²¹ See Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," pp. 83-93.

Ecological Breakdown

By all accounts "the generation of disasters," across the western Serengeti, experienced a series of devastating epidemics combined with drought and subsequent famine that eventually led to ecological collapse.²² One Ishenyi elder said that they called the famine at Nyeberekera the "Hunger that Finished the Cattle" in which the Sonjo or Regata peoples also left Nyeberekera and went to their present homes in Sonjo.²³ This may have been the rinderpest panzootic of 1880-1890 that killed up to 90% of the cattle in East Africa. After this, pastoralist peoples such as the Maasai were reduced to "walking skeletons," as the German traveler, Baumann, described the starving Serenget Maasai who had taken refuge in Ngorongoro Crater highlands in 1892. He also found Maasai sick and dying on the Lake Victoria coast.²⁴

More likely the Nyeberekera story refers to a series of cattle diseases before the rinderpest. Ikoma and Nata elders also refer to the "Hunger that Finished the Cattle" (*rimara n'gombe*) as *rihaha* (rinderpest), while others confirm them to be different diseases at different times.²⁵ Other

²² For an account of the environmental disasters in Tanzania see: Iliffe, *A Modern History*, Chapter 5; Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East Africa History. The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977); and James Leonard Giblin, *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). For a critique of the "degradation narrative" see James McCann, introduction, *An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1996*, forthcoming; and Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).

²³ Interview with Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

²⁴ The section on the Maasai at the lake in Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 44-46; the section on Ngorongoro crater is available in English translation, H. A. Fosbrooke, *Ngorongoro's First Visitor, by Dr. O. Baumann's Journal of 1892*, trans. G. E. Organ (Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1963), pp. 12-14.

²⁵ Interview with Tirani Wankunyi, Issenye, 7 July 1995 (Nata ♂). Kjerland cites evidence from the Kenya District Books that *rihaha* was a different cattle disease which preceded rinderpest by a considerable period. Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," pp. 134-5. Among my informants *rihaha* was also used to describe the cattle diseases of the colonial period including rinderpest and East Coast

sources in East Africa provide evidence for an epidemic of cattle lung disease (C. 1880) which swept through before the rinderpest.²⁶ The Maasai in the Nyeberekera story are clearly ascendant and not suffering from the rinderpest or cattle lung disease. Because age-set chronologies also date the Nyeberekera story to the years between 1860 and 1880, this famine was most likely a localized hunger (C. 1870), occurring before the rinderpest panzootic.

The Nyeberekera famine illustrates the interdependence of pastoralists, farmers and hunter/gatherers in a regional economy that eventually broke down because of the disasters.²⁷ Drought and disease affected each community differently because of their specialized micro-ecologies and economic strategies. The Ishenyi describe themselves as farmers and thus often in the position of giving out food when pastoralists or hunter/gatherers suffered, as the description of bountiful food at Nyeberekera attests. The Ishenyi avoided a localized drought, as severe as it was, by moving a day's walk away, to Nata for example, to find food. Maasai and Tatoga herders settled near the western Serengeti farmers after the rinderpest panzootic and traded their children or worked as herders for food. Baumann went through Ikoma in 1892, just before the "Hunger of the Feet," and described the surplus of grain brought for trade by the "peaceful inhabitants," enough

fever, incidence of these diseases confirmed in a report by District Veterinary Officer, Musoma, to the D.O. Musoma, Annual Report 1927, January 1928, Mwanza Province 1927-28, Provincial Administration, Annual Report, 246 P.C./1/30, TNA. Cattle lung disease said to have been introduced only after 1916 by Maasai stock crossing the Kenya border. F.G. (?) Mc Call, Chief Veterinary Officer, Annual Report of the Department of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, Tanganyika, 1921, Veterinary Department Annual Reports, 1921, 3046/22, TNA.

²⁶ Richard Waller, "The Maasai and the British, 1895-1905: The Origins of an Alliance," *Journal of African History* 17 (1976): 530-32; Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," pp. 276-79, 83; and A. H. Jacobs, "The Traditional Political Organization of the Pastoral Maasai" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1965), pp. 95-99; show that the rinderpest followed nearly three decades of livestock diseases and just previous to it an epidemic of livestock pleuropneumonia.

²⁷ For a description of this regional economy see: Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, p. 2. Waller, "Ecology, Migration and Expansion," pp. 347-370.

"to pass through Masailand again if we wished." Kollmann, some years later, also reported full granaries and fat cattle.²⁸ This period began with a series of smaller localized famines, which could be overcome by dependence on connections in neighboring ecologies/economies, developing into a generalized disaster by the 1890s.

The "Hunger of the Feet" (*agecha ya maghoro*) which closes this generation, was a new kind of famine because of its regional scope, a result of the cumulation of disasters rather than a simple lack of rain. Confirmation of the extent of this famine comes from the White Fathers who established themselves by 1893 on Kerewe Island. They date the "Great Famine" (presumably the "Hunger of the Feet") on the mainland to 1894.²⁹ During this period many people from the mainland came to Kerewe Island in search of food. The Kerewe station reported that a small village of Christians had grown up around the mission station, most of whom were former slaves and famine victims from Maasai raiding in the interior, particularly Ngoreme.³⁰ As the famine abated these converts returned home and the White Fathers made journeys in 1902 and 1904 to maintain contact with them and also to establish the mainland station of Nyegina, with the specific purpose of reaching their converts in Ikizu, Ngoreme, Zanaki, Majita and Ruri.³¹ By 1919 most of the famine victims had gone home, leaving the mission practically deserted. The White Fathers

²⁸ Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, pp. 38-42; Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza*, p. 176.

²⁹ Visitations Book, Nyegina, Mwanza I, 1931-1932, pp. 67-69, White Fathers Regionals' House, Nyegezi.

³⁰ Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), "Ukerewe," *Chronique Trimestrielle de la Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique* (Pères Blancs) 27me Année, 1905, p. 133.

³¹ Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), *Rapports Annuels*, Sixième Année (1910-1911), p. 383; and L. Bourget, Trip Diary, 1904, White Fathers Regionals' House, Nyegezi.

referred to this far-flung group of converts as, "our Christians of the diaspora."³² [See Figure 3-3: White Fathers' Mission, Nyegina, Musoma, Founded 1911.]

Ngoreme elders confirm the exodus to Kerewe while Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata drought victims were more likely to go to Sukuma seeking food. All tell tales of being forced to sell their children for food to stay alive. Elders remembered their grandparents, who would have been children during the famine, telling the stories of lost siblings. Parents found it more advantageous to "sell" girls or to dress their boys as girls, with the understanding that the price was an early bridewealth payment.³³ The White Fathers also describe refugees selling their children into slavery on Kerewe to get food.³⁴ Gerald Hartwig's reconstruction of Kerewe history shows that from 1850-1870 the mainland "Ruri" people brought children, probably kidnaped from neighboring peoples, to Kerewe to sell for food. Then from about 1875 on the Kerewe themselves actively searched for children to buy for slaves during the famines by taking boats along the lakeshore and up the Mara River.³⁵ Although these children were not heard of again, it seems likely that some of them would have made it into the wider slave trade, ending up on the clove plantations of Zanzibar.

³² Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), "Nyegina," *Rapports Annuels*, No. 11, 1915-16, p. 328-330; and in *Rapports Annuels* see "Nyegina," No. 13 (1919-20), p. 354; "Nyegina," No. 17, 1921-1922, p. 520. For background on the White Fathers Mission see, J. Bouniol, *The White Fathers and their Missions* (London: Sands and Co., 1929).

³³ Interview with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenyi, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

³⁴ Visitations Book, Nyegina, Mwanza 1, 1931-1932, White Fathers Regionals' House, Nyegezi, pp. 67-69.

³⁵ Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," p. 135, cites the Mwanza District Books, and Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, p. 127-128. Hartwig also states that there were a lot of Luo, "Gaya" slaves on Kerewe, p. 125-6, for an assesment of Ukerewe slavery, 114-128; Confirmed by Kuria informants in, Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 12-13.



Ruins of Original White Fathers' Mission Chapel, Nyegina



White Fathers' Mission House, Nyegina

Figure 3-3: White Fathers' Mission, Nyegina, Musoma, Founded 1911

Most would have been incorporated into Sukuma families as sons and daughters, and into Kerewe families as slaves.

Elders described the stay in Sukuma lasting for a number of years, during which time they found Sukuma patrons who provided support and protection. Western Serengeti people established these ties of friendship before the drought through a trade of wildebeest tails, wild animal skins and arrow poison brought to Sukuma in exchange for tobacco, salt, iron hoes and livestock.³⁶ Sukuma hosts provided the refugees with a plot of land to farm and a place to build their house in return for clearing the land and labor on the host's farm.³⁷ When the drought was over western Serengeti peoples, began moving back, settling for a growing season or two at a time along the way. One of the best remembered of these way-posts was the settlement of Hantachega, now in the western corridor of the Serengeti National Park. There, Nata, Ishenyi, Ikoma and Sukuma all built together, according to age-set organization.

The Ishenyi tradition told above mentions *kaswende* or syphilis in Nata. That young men would consider suicide preferable to exposure means that they had some knowledge of the disease. Scholars have assumed that the nineteenth century caravan trade introduced sexually transmitted diseases (S.T.D.s) such as syphilis.³⁸ Nata people must have been in at least indirect contact with

³⁶ Interview with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

³⁷ See description of a similar process during a famine in central Kenya, Ambler, *Kenya Communities*, pp. 134-135.

³⁸ The epidemiology on syphilis is not well understood. By the 1870s syphilis is assumed to be rapidly rising along trade routes. The problem is that this may also have been yaws, which appears with similar symptoms. The vast majority of childhood complaints were yaws, not syphilis while, lesions developing in adults after the turn of the century were probably syphilis. Yet with the 800 years or more of precolonial contact on the coast with Arabs and 300 years of contact with Portuguese, it is difficult to say when and where it was introduced. It is improbable that yaws mutated into syphilis so we can assume that it was introduced. Personal communication with Anne Stacie Canning Colwell, M.D., 5 February 1998.

the caravan trade through their friendships in Sukuma. Another indication of the prevalence of S.T.D.s at this time is an Ishenyi and Ikoma story about going to a Tatoga prophet in the Ngorongoro crater because of general fertility problems.³⁹ Many elders said that infertility, probably related to S.T.D.s, was a significant problem during the early colonial period. In one area, intercourse with a barren woman became taboo for fear of the transmission of disease.⁴⁰

Other "foreign" diseases mentioned in narratives about this period may have been small pox, cholera and measles, collectively associated with dysentery and dehydration.⁴¹ One Ikoma elder described a disease called *nyekukundi*, where everyone in one homestead would all die suddenly, during the age-set of the Rumarancha (c. 1890). They went to see a Tatoga prophet, Gamurayi, for a cure but he was afraid of exposure and would not open the door. Gifts of cattle finally induced his wife to open the door.⁴² The Ishenyi story mentions the foot sores that gave the famine its name, most likely chiggers from the dusty ground on the path to Sukuma.

When the Germans began to administer this area from their base at Schirati on the lake, near the Kenya border, they quickly identified an epidemic of sleeping sickness in 1902, that had killed 2,000 people by 1905. This was one of the first areas in East Africa where they identified sleeping sickness and the site where Robert Koch and F. K. Kleine did much of the pioneering work on the disease. They postulated that sleeping sickness had spread from the west lake, ultimately

³⁹ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). Dating of the Tatoga leaving the Crater due to Maasai pressure around mid-century according to Maasai age-set chronology.

⁴⁰ Interview with Masosota Igonga, Ring'wani, 6 October 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Sira Masiyora, Nyerero, 17 November 1995 (Kuria ♂).

⁴¹ Interviews with Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995 (Nata ♂); Maarimo Nyamakena and Katani Magori Nyabunga, Sanzate, 10 June 1995 (Ikizu ♂). These diseases are known locally as *kyamunda* in Nata or *nyamugwa* in Ikizu, also *oborondo*, *egesaho*, etc.

⁴² Interviews with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

from West Africa and the Congo, by the canoe trade and then to the eastern mainland. That the disease vector, the tsetse fly, was indigenous to the area was clear, but deciding whether sleeping sickness was also indigenous proved harder for early researchers. Researchers gathered local traditions as evidence that sleeping sickness existed before the colonial period.⁴³

More recent analyses of sleeping sickness in East Africa link the outbreak of the disease with the environmental catastrophes of the 1890s, rather than with the introduction of the disease by human hosts from the Congo. They propose that sleeping sickness had been endemic in East Africa, kept at bay rather than eradicated, by local patterns of bush clearing, cattle grazing and farming.⁴⁴ Colonial officers in this district correlated the spread of sleeping sickness to times of drought when men increasingly sought scarce grazing for livestock in the tsetse infected bush areas. Though the government resented the "illegal burning" of bush, this was probably one local measure that kept the disease in check.⁴⁵ Just as the colonial officers feared, men may have spread sleeping sickness during this period of disasters because of their increasing mobility across the region in search of food, trade or hunting grounds to cope with the drought.

⁴³ David F. Clyde, *History of the Medical Services of Tanganyika* (Government Press: Dar es Salaam, 1962), pp. 28-29. Clyde cited traditions from Kerewe Island and Ikoma describing a disease which resembled the symptoms of sleeping sickness as evidence of sleeping sickness as an ancient disease. In Ikizu and Ikoma this disease was said to have almost depopulated the province over the last one hundred years. Local informants said that the disease was contracted by the bite of the fly, beginning when the Ruwana and Mbalangeti rivers were in flood. There was a great deal of confusion as to whether this was sleeping sickness or severe hookworm disease in man coincident with animal trypanosomiasis.

⁴⁴ Juhani Koponen, *Development for Exploitation: German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884-1914* (Finnish Historical Society, *Studia Historica* 49: Helsinki/Hamburg, 1994), pp. 475-84; John Ford, *The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology: A Study of the Tsetse Fly Problem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*.

⁴⁵ District Veterinary Officer, Musoma to the D.O. Musoma, 19 January 1928, Annual Report 1927, 19 January 1928, Mwanza Province 1927-28, Provincial Administration, 246/P.C./1/30, TNA.

The outbreak of sleeping sickness in the early colonial years indicates that the cycle of disasters had, by the turn of the century, resulted in loss of control over the environment. Depopulation had reduced the number of settlements and farms, as well as the ability to burn the old grass, thus allowing for the encroachment of bush as a habitat for tsetse flies. The landscapes of the western Serengeti have changed significantly in the past one hundred years. Many areas that were once open plains have been replaced by bush within the lifetime of elders today. Though people did not recognize the relationship between tsetse fly, sleeping sickness and bush encroachment, they saw the replacement of open plains areas with impenetrable bush as alarming and unhealthy. Western Serengeti people began to rework important social relations during this period in order to regain their own health and the health of the land.

Ecological collapse brought an end to the interdependent regional economy of hunters, herders and farmers as it had existed before the disasters. Tatoga herders, defeated by the Maasai, moved south, following their prophet Saigilo. Bush encroachment also squeezed them out as it rendered formerly productive pastures unusable and dangerous for cattle.⁴⁶ Asi hunters increasingly moved east, as they accepted the patronage of the ascendant Maasai, and Bantu-speaking farmers moved west, further into the hills, to avoid raids. Little evidence of the former relationships between these three groups remains in oral tradition, which now focuses on the opposition between Bantu-speaking ethnic groups, rather than relations between peoples practicing other subsistence economies. Settlement and subsistence patterns of Bantu-speaking farmers before the disasters are also difficult to reconstruct because ecological collapse demanded new coping strategies, later understood as "traditional."

⁴⁶ H. A. Fosbrooke, Senior Sociologist, Tanganyika, "Masai History in Relation to Tsetse Encroachment," Arusha, 1954, CORY #254, EAF, UDSM.

Indirect Effects of the Caravan Trade

The influence of the caravan trade brought about many of these disasters and yet little oral evidence exists for the direct presence of caravans in the western Serengeti. Few elders had heard anything about caravan traders in the region except in Ngoreme, just south of the Mara River. Wakefield's publication of "routes of native caravans from the coast to the interior of Eastern Africa," based on Arab testimony, attests to a route from Sonjo, through Ngoreme, to the coast of "Ukara," north of what is now Musoma. Otherwise, the western Serengeti remained a blank space on the map until almost the turn of the century. The "native" routes across the plains from Maasailand usually ended in Kavirondo among the Luo, in what is now western Kenya, near Kisumu.⁴⁷ However when coming into Ikoma in 1892 the German explorer, Baumann, noted that local people immediately recognized his party as a coastal caravan and greeted him in a "Kinyamwezi dialect." Some of Baumann's porters deserted in Ikoma, hoping to stay "as slaves to the natives until another caravan passes." Baumann thought this foolish since many years could pass between caravans in Ikoma.⁴⁸ "Native" caravans, though scarce, were not unknown in the region.

Swahili caravans were afraid of following the Maasai route from Kilimanjaro to the Lake and consequently did not often attempt it. Europeans did not find a way through until Thomson's expedition in 1883-4, which went considerably north of the Mara Region.⁴⁹ The peoples of the

⁴⁷ T. Wakefield, "Wakefield's Notes on the Geography of Eastern Africa, Routes of Native Caravans from the Coast ...," Journal of the Royal Geographical Society 40 (1870): 303-339. T. Wakefield, "Native Routes through the Masai Country," Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, n.s., 4 (1882): 742-747. Hartwig, The Art of Survival, p. 78.

⁴⁸ Baumann, Durch Massailand, pp. 38 - 4. The coast was in a state of upheaval in 1892 and Ikoma may have looked good by comparison to coastal porters.

⁴⁹ Joseph Thomson, Through Masai Land: A Journey of Exploration Among the Snowclad Volcanic Mountains and Strange Tribes of Eastern Equatorial Africa... (London: Sampson Low,

eastern lake had a reputation for being "warlike" and "inhospitable to travellers." Kollmann reported that they "massacred whole caravans that were merely crossing the country to purchase ivory in Ugaya" (Luo).⁵⁰ Jacobs, however, cites evidence that the Arab and Swahili traders had exaggerated the dangers of entering Maasailand to "keep the door to the interior closed to European exploration as long as possible."⁵¹

The main caravan route went to the south in Sukuma and then across the Lake to Buganda. Hartwig claims that the Lake Victoria island of Kerewe was involved in long-distance trade from the rule of Chief (*Omukama*) Mihigo II (1780-1840). Migrants from Kanadi in Sukuma formed the nucleus of elephant hunting associations, who sent ivory south to the caravan trade by way of the chief. As early as the 1850s, coastal traders dealt directly with Kerewe, whose chief, in turn, obtained ivory from the mainland. In the next decades Kerewe fell increasingly under the influence of the Ganda kingdom across the lake, as its intermediary to the coast. Western Serengeti peoples would have had contact with Kerewe as a source of famine food because of its higher and more reliable rainfall patterns.⁵²

Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1887; reprint ed., Frank Cass and Co., 1968). Thomson states that whatever is known about the land beyond Kilimanjaro is from the Wakefield accounts, either because the risks were too great or the cost too high. He was commissioned specifically to find a way through Maasailand to the Lake by the Royal Geographical Society.

⁵⁰ Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, p. 541; Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza*, p. 177; See also Von Hauptmann Schlobach, "Die Volksstämme der deutschen Ostküste des Victoria-Nyansa," *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten* (Berlin: U. Usher, 1901): 183.

⁵¹ Jacobs, "A Chronology," p. 28.

⁵² Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, pp. 66-71, 80-81, 116; Itandala, "A History of the Babinza," pp. 213-218; E. A. Chacker, "Early Arab and European Contacts with Ukerewe," *Tanzania Notes and Records* 68 (1968): 75-86; C. F. Holmes, "Zanzibar Influence at the Southern End of Lake Victoria: The Lake Route," *African Historical Studies* 4, 3 (1971): 479-503.

The main items sought by caravan traders were ivory and slaves. Western Serengeti people used ivory locally only for bracelets, which were an emblem in the eldership title system. However, evidence exists that elephant hunting societies appeared as a new phenomenon during this period, in spite of a traditional taboo against killing elephants.⁵³ Ikoma elders said that their fathers obtained ivory through friendships with local Asi hunter/gatherers. No local institution of slavery existed in the western Serengeti. Families adopted and incorporated strangers (*abasimano*) who came on their own or were sold for food during times of famine. They treated these strangers as members of the family, whose children would have the same rights as anyone native born. It is only toward the lake that the word for strangers translates as "slaves" or "dogs" (*seese*) and a stranger's children were denied the rights of the native born.⁵⁴ I found no oral evidence that western Serengeti peoples engaged in slave raiding to supply the caravans.

The devastating effects of the caravan trade on local society are well documented elsewhere.⁵⁵ The case of the western Serengeti is important because it demonstrates that even with the most insubstantial contact the caravan trade had long-term effects. One of the first missionaries in the region soon after the turn of the century reported that his student told him that the porters, "whispered around the campfire in the evening" that "there is a famine in their country and they are going to take our cattle and children to salt them down for shipment to Europe."⁵⁶ Given the nature of the evidence, knowing the more ephemeral consequences of these contacts on the ways in which people imagined or re-imagined social relations during this time is impossible.

⁵³ See Chapter 10 on Sarabarando hunting associations; for elephant associations related to Ukerewe see Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, pp. 66-67.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 7 on the incorporation of strangers, *abasimano*.

⁵⁵ For an overview see Iliffe, *A Modern History*, pp. 40-77.

⁵⁶ Toppenberg, *Africa Has My Heart*, p. 45.

Observing the disasters around them and knowing of the new power arising through traders on the coast, did local people begin to imagine themselves as part of larger associations of communities, opposed to a much more distant "other?"

One obvious effect of the caravan trade was the increasing trade of forest products to Sukuma. Sukuma people lived at the terminus of the overland route at Lake Victoria. They were directly involved in trade and worked as porters for the caravans.⁵⁷ The Sukuma used their new-found wealth from the caravans, in part, for expanded ritual and prestige activities. The demand for ivory bracelets, wildebeest tail fly whisks and bracelets, ostrich feathers and eggs, wild animal skins and lions' manes increased rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Western Serengeti peoples supplied these products in return for iron, salt or livestock. Hunting became much more commercialized during this period, far beyond the immediate need for meat.

Because of their connection to the caravans Sukuma people held the advantage in trade relations and western Serengeti people sought them as patrons. This may be the material explanation for western Serengeti oral traditions, dating from this period, which establish ritual and kin relations with the Sukuma. The disorder of this period seems to have provided the opportunity for a Sukuma rainmaker to unite diverse clan territories into the Ikizu chiefdom of western Serengeti. Oral traditions then projected these connections to Sukuma rainmakers back to the time of origins. The oral traditions concerning hunting and Sukuma origins in earlier times may, in fact, reflect more closely this later period of commercialized hunting. Because the caravans themselves were rarely encountered in the western Serengeti, the changes precipitated by contact through trade in Sukuma were not often recognized as such in oral tradition.

⁵⁷ Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 67, when Baumann reached the area of Magu, just south of the Mara Region in Sukuma, he observed that, "the natives are great travelers, almost all of them were young people who had been to the coast."

Maasai Raids

Oral testimonies of the western Serengeti express most directly and keenly the devastating effects of the disasters through the experience of Maasai raids. That Maasai raids took place during this era is certain, but the relationship western Serengeti peoples had with the Maasai is much more complex. Research on the Maasai demonstrates with a fair degree of certainty that the Maasai did not move into the Serengeti region until the first half of the nineteenth century, and probably not before mid-century.⁵⁸ The Maasai entered this region gradually, in search of new grazing areas.⁵⁹ They did not automatically displace others who preceded them, nor were they at first the dominant "Lords of East Africa," which they became by the last half of the century. The Maasai pastoral lifestyle depended upon symbiotic interaction with farmers and hunter/gatherers within a regional system. At first, western Serengeti peoples seem to have accommodated and admired the Maasai, taking on many Maasai cultural innovations as their own.⁶⁰

The Maasai gained dominance by developing a highly specialized form of pastoralism that swept the plains in the nineteenth century, rapidly replacing the older regional system where farmers also hunted and herded and the preexisting Tatoga pastoralists also farmed a little.

⁵⁸ In the age of Merishari (c.1806-1826) they took the Lake Manyara area from the Tatoga and in subsequent ages, perhaps as late as the 1840's the Maasai forced the Tatoga to withdraw from the Ngorongoro Crater and Engaruka area. John G. Galaty, "Maasai Expansion and the New East African Pastoralism," in Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), p. 74. Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," p. 31.

⁵⁹ See Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," p. 40, on the process of migrational drift.

⁶⁰ "The Lords of the East Africa" is the expression used by Richard Waller in his thesis, "The Lords of East Africa: the Maasai in the mid-nineteenth century (c. 1840-c.1885)" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1979), to indicate the dominance and status of the Maasai at this time period. John Lawrence Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," p. 32. Also Spear and Waller, Being Maasai, on economic symbiosis, "Introduction," p. 2-4.

Through control of access to cattle as a store of wealth and limited pastoral resources, they began to impose economic specialization on everyone else in the region, creating the non-cattle owning categories of "farmer" and "hunter" from peoples who had practiced both. The pre-Ishenyi community at Nyeberekera was one victim of this increasing competition for dry-season grazing grounds and water points, located as it was on the edge of the Serengeti plains. The Maasai forced the agro-pastoral community that once straddled the Serengeti plains back to the hills on its margins, both east (Sonjo) and west (Ikoma). A regional economy developed with the Maasai at the center, as the main beneficiaries of the system. As is clear from the experience of the western Serengeti, Maasai power lay in both military and cultural domination. We cannot understand western Serengeti creativity during this period outside its subordinate and peripheral position within this hegemonic system, both in terms of its acquiescence and its resistance.⁶¹

It seems likely that the most intense Maasai raiding in the western Serengeti actually took place after the rinderpest panzootic, as a strategy to recover stock. Before the rinderpest western Serengeti peoples kept very little livestock and only began to build up large cattle herds after the "Hunger of the Feet," which accelerated the trade of forest products to Sukuma for livestock.⁶² During the generation of disasters a wealthy man owned four head of cattle and most were lucky to have one or two, mainly counting their livestock in sheep and goats. The Nata paid bridewealth in wild animals skins until the turn of the century. This later period of intense raiding went on up to the beginning of British rule. In 1911 the White Fathers reported that many refugees that had come to them were still victims of Maasai raids.⁶³ The Maasai may have raided the lakeshore even

⁶¹ Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, "Introduction."

⁶² This is more completely developed in Chapter 10.

⁶³ Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique, "Nyegina (Notre-Dame de Consolation)," *Rapports Annuels* 1911-1912, p. 392; Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique, *Chronique Trimestrielle de la*

more intensively than the western Serengeti. During the World War One Kenyan Maasai took advantage of chaos on the border and made raids into the German colony.⁶⁴ This later period of raiding was used as a template in the historical imagination to understand the dispersal of the previous generation. Oral traditions blame raiding for the most grievous effects of the disasters.⁶⁵

Raids were only the most obvious and resented symbol of Maasai domination that reached into all aspects of life. Raids took place mainly during the dry season. They often came in the predawn hours, surprising the village, stampeding the cattle, burning the houses and sometimes killing men or taking captive the women and children. The Maasai fought with spears and shields, while the western Serengeti peoples mainly used bows and arrows. If the Maasai came by surprise, they had the advantage in close combat. Sutton attributed Maasai military superiority to the use of larger, socketed, spear blades along with novel forms of military organization and tactics (which western Serengeti people later adopted).⁶⁶ The White Fathers reported in 1904, when they took a trip to the interior of the country, that all along the lake people lived in fear of Maasai raids from the plains. They would not only raid cattle but burn houses and fields, leaving devastation behind them.⁶⁷ In 1902 the Germans built Fort Ikoma in the western Serengeti specifically to control Maasai raiding.

Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs) 24me Année, No. 94, Avril 1902, p. 94.

⁶⁴ Toppenberg, *Africa Has My Heart*, p. 63

⁶⁵ This insight thanks to on-going conversations with Richard Waller.

⁶⁶ J. E. G. Sutton, "Becoming Maasailand," in *Being Maasai*, p. 42.

⁶⁷ L. Bourget, Trip Diary, 1904, "Report of a Trip in 1904 from Bukumbi to Mwanza, Kome? Ukerewe, Kibara, Ikoma--Mara Region, together with some stories," N.p. n.d. M-SRC54, Sukuma Archives, Bujora, Mwanza; See also Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique, Chronique Trimestrielle de la Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs) 24me Année, No. 94, Avril 1902, p. 94.

People throughout the Mara Region know all Maasai (and Maasai-like peoples) as "Kwabhe," but more specifically those raiding in Ikoma and Nata were the Serenget of the present Loliondo area while those raiding in Kuria, and perhaps Ngoreme, were the Siria of the present Narok area. Fosbrooke reported that the Serenget Maasai section was strong throughout what is now Serengeti National Park until 1890 when the Loitai Maasai absorbed them. In the intense debates surrounding establishment of the Serengeti National Park boundaries in the 1930s Fosbrooke and others claimed that the Serenget Maasai had for the past century used the western Serengeti as fall-back grazing in times of drought.⁶⁸ The Loitai expansion was also responsible for pushing the Siria back from the Loita Plains to the Mara River and into competition with the Kuria for grazing land.⁶⁹

Because of the highly emotional history of relationships with the Maasai, the historian must treat stories about the interaction of western Serengeti peoples and the Maasai carefully. We can also recover relations of cooperation, blood-brotherhood, marriage and kinship from this period. The interaction of western Serengeti peoples with the Maasai during this era is explored in more detail in Chapter 9. This brief summary alerts the reader to the context surrounding references to Maasai and cattle raiding that appear throughout the dissertation. This is a further part of the puzzle in understanding relations between herders, hunters and farmers before the disasters. Many innovations of the late nineteenth century bear the mark of Maasai influence, if

⁶⁸ Fosbrooke, "Sections of the Masai in Loliondo Area." For the entire debate see National Game Parks files, 215/350/vols. 1-IV, TNA.

⁶⁹ Galaty, "Maasai Expansion," p. 72. The Loitai confederation included the Siria, Laitayok, Salei, Serengeti and Loitai.

not direct borrowing, to the point where many observers of the time concluded that western Serengeti peoples must be "of Maasai blood."⁷⁹

Conclusion

This basic outline of the late nineteenth century events demonstrates the scope and intensity of the disasters. Societal stress does not necessarily result in the transformation of identity. However, in this case, the movement of large numbers of people out of the region to Sukuma or Kerewe and into the region, from Maasai, seriously disrupted the cohesion of territorially based communities. To gain protection from raids and access to a wider range of resources, local communities changed the social basis for organizing themselves. They emphasized the importance of age-sets in creating social unity where, formerly, clans had been made to do that work. Beginning with the next chapter, the traditions containing evidence of social process over the *longue durée* are analyzed. However, we cannot build a picture of this earlier time frame without reference to the ways in which historical consciousness was transformed during the disasters.

The historian must constantly keep in mind the possible effects on oral tradition of these radical changes in social identity. For example, I interpret the oral traditions about early relations between herder, hunters and farmers in light of the later breakdown of a regional economy of interdependence and the enmity toward Maasai herders. The later commercialization of hunting to gain wild animal products to sell in Sukuma must inform one's reading of oral traditions about the early hunting economy. Finally, knowledge of the influential position of the Sukuma in the caravan trade networks must be brought to bear on traditions of origin in Sukuma. Above all, the

⁷⁹ Schnee, Deutsches Kolonial Lexikon, pp. 121, 679-81; Weiss, Die Völkerstämme, pp. 244-245.

new identities that emerged during this period of age-set cycle territorial membership and ethnicity cannot be projected back onto a "traditional" and timeless past.

PART TWO:

LONG-TERM PATTERNS IN THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SPACE

CHAPTER FOUR
ASIMOKA, EMERGENCE:
BUILDING HOMESTEADS ON AN INTER-CULTURAL FRONTIER

This chapter explores the socially occupied landscapes of the distant past through the interpretation of oral traditions of origin or emergence. I investigate the different layers of meaning in the emergence stories to present a culturally nuanced understanding of long-term regional developments. Although elders tell these narratives as the origin stories of present day ethnic groups, the core spatial images are those of the male and female spaces of the homestead and the ecological landscapes of hunters, farmers and herders. They refer to the long-term ongoing generative principles relating to production and reproduction. The emergence stories suggest the frontier processes by which settlers, forging new economic strategies among neighbors of diverse cultural backgrounds, developed a new cultural synthesis as the basis for economic prosperity over the next millennium.

Different versions of the emergence stories enrich historical analysis based on other sources of evidence such as historical linguistics, archaeology or comparative ethnography. An amazing congruence exists between the seemingly "mythical" narratives and historical reconstructions based on other kinds of evidence, about which the narrators of these tales could not have known. Historical linguistics tells us that Bantu-speaking farmers entered and eventually came to dominate a region where herders and hunter/gatherers of other language groups already lived. The Nata emergence story suggests how new social identities might have developed as Bantu-speakers incorporated hunters and hunting knowledge into their farming settlements on the frontier. The Ikizu emergence story illustrates a pattern of the gendered division of labor within

autonomous but interdependent spheres of authority, which settlers on the frontier may have deployed to structure relations within the homestead and to others beyond. The next chapter continues the investigation of emergence stories by looking at the Ikoma and Ngoreme accounts that primarily concern the ecological spaces of interaction between hill farmers, woodland hunters and grassland herders on an inter-cultural frontier.

In my collection of oral traditions, elders most often wanted to begin with the *asimoka* stories—the origin or emergence narratives of first man and first woman. They considered these stories the foundational historical narratives, necessary in any account of the past. Local educated men translated *asimoka* as "origins," and more specifically as ethnic origins. The Musoma District officers used the *asimoka* stories that they collected to define "tribes" by reconstructing their origins and migrations in the "tribal" model.¹ The way these reports used the term then, and the way elders still use it today, seems to imply that each ethnic group can be traced back to one root, with many branchings along the way.

Asimoka, however, has a linguistic derivation whose meaning may provide alternate, and less unitary, models for understanding the past. In Nata, the verb *-sisimoka* means "to spring up," as in waking up from a sleep or small sprouts popping up out of the ground.² In the related language of Kuria the root word is *-semoka*, meaning "to originate from or the rise (of a river)."³ Social theorists have suggested a similar image of a rhizome, instead of a tree, for understanding the historical development of different groups of people. A rhizome describes a kind of subterranean plant stem that grows horizontally, producing shoots above and roots below. Many

¹ See a discussion of the "tribal model" in Chapter 2.

² Augustino Mokwe Kisigiro, "Nata-Swahili Dictionary," unpublished, n.d.

³ Muniko et al., *Kuria-English Dictionary*, p. 32, 115.

plants that appear distinct on the surface develop from the same network of rhizomes, which can cover a large area without a distinct beginning or end. A rhizome is a metaphor of alliance rather than filiation, of coming and going rather than starting and finishing. It is a way of understanding multiplicity without the need for reduction to a single beginning.⁴

Rhizomatous grasses in the Serengeti have networks of connected underground stems that may sprout up in many places at once. Because the rhizomes lie beneath the ground, all the surface growth may be burned off, only to sprout up again in different places. This model recognizes the interconnected network of rhizomes that recombine and sprout up in new ways rather than deriving all things from a single original stock. I will translate *asimoka*, in this sense, as "emergence," the emergence of new identities out of the old tangled underground network of rhizomes, without simple and primordial origins.⁵ Tracing cultural origins back to a single source is not possible, but like the rhizomatous network of Serengeti grasses or the underground connection of water courses, cultural change appears as new growth, or new springs, and presents creative new options.

The Development of a Regional Culture from Diverse Interactions in the Distant Past

Through the evidence of historical linguistics and archaeology, we know that the peoples of the western Serengeti, have developed in a rhizomatous pattern, from multiple and interconnected stems in the distant past. As early as 500 A.D. peoples speaking languages from four major language groups, with diverse economic and cultural practices, each occupying a separate community corresponding to a different ecological niche, inhabited what is now the Mara Region.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Rhizome: Introduction," A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 1-19. Thanks to Patrick Malloy for this reference and insight.

⁵ For the idea of "emergence" instead of "origin" see, Tedlock and Mannheim, The Dialogic Emergence, pp. 8-15.

Western Serengeti culture, as a regional set of common cultural assumptions, emerged out of the interactions of these diverse peoples in the distant past. Archaeologists and historical linguists working with a broad brush, have produced an overview of the Neolithic and Early Iron-age periods the Rift Valley region of East Africa.

The Evidence of Archaeology

Archaeologists investigating the origins of food production in East Africa date the development of the Pastoral Neolithic period to between 1000 B.C. and 700 A.D. During this time local hunter/gatherers in East Africa adopted livestock that had been domesticated in the Sahara. The continuity in lithic and ceramic wares between Neolithic and pre-Neolithic sites supports this supposition. Some archaeologists hypothesize that small groups of herders, escaping drought in the north, brought the livestock. Pastoralism gradually came to occupy a more important place in local economies due to the late Holocene drying trend, the introduction of better adapted cattle breeds and the establishment of annual wet and dry seasons. During the next stage of development discontinuities in the material artifacts do occur, suggesting increased immigration of, or influence from, herders originating in the north. Archaeologists find no evidence for large-scale immigration in the later stages of the Pastoral Neolithic and economic strategies seem to have shifted slightly toward more reliance on hunting and gathering.⁶

Stanley Ambrose further refines this reconstruction of Neolithic history by identifying the coexistence of three distinct sets of material artifacts in close proximity, corresponding to the diverse ecological habitats of the Rift Valley--Eburran Industry representing a hunter/gatherer lifestyle eventually confined to the montane forests, the Elementaitan Industry representing an agro-pastoral lifestyle in the forest/savanna ecotone, Highland Savanna Neolithic Industry

⁶ Bower, "The Pastoral Neolithic of East Africa," pp. 74-76.

representing a pastoral lifestyle in the open lightly wooded savanna grasslands. No material evidence for agriculture at this time yet exists. Ambrose's research shows that about 1,300 B.C. the material remains of Highland Savanna Pastoral Neolithic communities appear abruptly in the archaeological record and continue to coexist with evidence for small groups of Eburran hunter/gatherers (who also took up pottery and small stock-raising). Further evidence shows that distinctive Elmentaitan material remains appear in the region about 500 B.C., presumably brought by peoples from the northwest. Competition among these three groups must have been minimal because each had adapted to a different ecological zone.⁷

Ambrose further proposes a continuity between the Neolithic Eburran hunter/gatherers in the highlands and Rift Valley of East Africa, identified in the archaeological record, and present day hunter/gatherer populations throughout East Africa. The continuity in space and time of the hunter/gatherer way of life is remarkable. Both from the archaeological record and from ethnographic description in the last century Ambrose shows that over this long period hunter/gatherers have shown an unusually high dependence on meat, making up 80% of their diet, in contrast to plant foods. They supplemented this high protein diet with honey and fat. Hunter/gatherer populations of the past seem to have been fairly sedentary, occupying the eco-tone between savanna and forest to exploit both regions. The archaeological remains show that Eburran hunter/gatherers mainly hunted resident ungulates of the woodlands, with traps and snares, rather than the larger species of the open plains, and also kept some small stock.⁸

⁷ Stanley H. Ambrose, "The Introduction of Pastoral Adaptations to the Highlands of East Africa," in *From Hunters to Farmers: The Causes and Consequences of Food Production in Africa*, eds. J. Desmond Clark and Steven A. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 222-33.

⁸ Stanley H. Ambrose, "Hunter-Gatherer Adaptations to Non-Marginal Environments: An Ecological and Archaeological Assessment of the Dorobo Model," *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika* 7.2 (1986): 11-42.

In historic times hunter/gatherers in East Africa nearly always lived in close interdependent relationship with agriculturalists and pastoralists. The evidence from archaeology shows that incoming Savanna Pastoral Neolithic communities, and later Elmenteitan communities, severely restricted the ecological niche occupied by Eburran hunter/gatherers. This may have forced the hunter/gatherers to compensate for their loss of resources by developing relations of interdependence with the incoming populations. In the western Serengeti context they may have also moved farther into the woodlands.⁹ Present-day hunter/gatherers have established interdependent relations with many different groups, speaking Maa, Kalenjin, or Cushitic languages, which may retain traces of a Khoisan language.¹⁰

The Evidence of Historical Linguistics

Linguistically inclined historians reconstruct the history of food systems in the Neolithic and Early Iron-Age periods from different kinds of evidence. They use the concept of the speech community rather than the concept of material cultural traditions to think about the history of these early periods. They postulate that the two earliest peoples in what is now the Mara Region of Tanzania spoke either a Southern Cushitic language and practiced a pastoral economy, or a Rub Eastern Sahelian language and practiced a mixed pastoral and farming economy. Linguistic evidence also exists for the presence of hunter/gatherers who become associated with pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in the greater Rift Valley.¹¹

⁹ Ibid, p. 30; Ambrose, "The Introduction of Pastoral Adaptations," p. 238.

¹⁰ Michael G. Kenny, "Mirror in the Forest: The Dorobo Hunter-Gatherers as an Image of the Other," *Africa* 51, 1 (1981): 479; Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, p. 73; Maguire, a colonial officer in Maasailand during the 1920s, named eight different "Dorobo" groups, each speaking different languages with different levels of integration with other peoples. R. A. J. Maguire, "I-Torobo," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 25 (June 1948): 1-26.

¹¹ Christopher Ehret, *The Classical Age of Eastern and Southern Africa: A History, 1000 B.C. to A.D. 300* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, forthcoming).

Bantu-speakers began moving into this area from their older settlements around the Lake Victoria shoreland by or before 300-400 A.D. As these immigrants became separated from their Great Lakes Bantu ancestral speech communities, they began speaking distinct languages, that historical linguists now call the East Nyanza group. At about the same time, but probably a little later, agro-pastoralists speaking a language known as Mara Southern Nilotic began moving from the north into the interior of what is now the Mara Region.¹²

These newcomers moved into the ecological zones formerly occupied by the previous inhabitants of the region and broke down the agro-ecological boundaries that had confined different speech communities to the ecological niches best suited to their agricultural expertises. East Nyanza Bantu-speakers who had practiced a root-crop and fishing economy with small stock and some reliance on hunting, along the lakeshore, now began to expand their food producing possibilities by adopting grain-crop (eleusine millet and sorghum) farming, and increasing their hunting and herding expertise as they moved into the drier interior. They learned these new skills from their neighbors who had adapted to this environment. Evidence for this is found in the loan words relating to herding, grain farming and hunting adopted during this time by East Nyanza speakers.¹³

Gradually the Southern Cushitic- and Eastern Sahelian-speakers disappeared from the historical record. Based on historical linguistics we cannot tell whether they left, died off or whether they integrated themselves into the growing community of Mara-speakers. In the western Srengeti, Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers, who would have occupied approximately the same

¹² Schoenbrun, "Early History," pp. 156-7, 182-204

¹³ Ibid; David L. Schoenbrun, "We are what we eat: Ancient agriculture between the Great Lakes," *Journal of African History* 34 (1993): 1-31; Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 40-43.

ecological niche as these two former pastoral groups, seem to have succeeded them.¹⁴ [See Figure 4-1: Linguistic Maps of the Lakes Region Over Time.]

Both historical linguists and archaeologists have noted that the geographic distribution, time frame and sequence of events suggested for these different communities of East African peoples in these two sets of evidence roughly correspond. To make inferences from this data one would have to assume that a correlation does exist between a linguistic group and its material culture. On this basis, some have suggested that the past distribution of Southern Cushitic-speakers corresponds with Savanna Pastoral Neolithic Industry sites and that the past distribution of Southern Nilotic-speakers corresponds with Elmenteitan Industry sites. The relative sequence and dating for Southern Cushitic-speakers entering the region before Southern Nilotic-speakers also correspond.¹⁵ Historical linguists and archaeologists thus may be looking at the same historical processes using different kinds of evidence and historical reasoning. After 1000 A.D. historians must rely on the evidence of historical linguistics, since little archaeological work in the Mara Region covers this period.

Bantu languages became dominant throughout what is now the Mara Region by or before 1000 A.D., but not without considerable influence from the earlier period of diverse interactions. Ehret argues that during the second half of the first millennium A.D., when Bantu-speaking agriculturalists settled among the more mobile Mara Southern Nilotic-speaking agro-pastoralists, they developed an interdependent relationship. East Nyanza speakers adopted, as loan words from Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers, the cycling age-set names used today by western Serengeti people, which dates this innovation to the period between 500 and 1000 A.D. Other Southern

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ambrose, "The Introduction of Pastoral Adaptations," pp. 233-234.

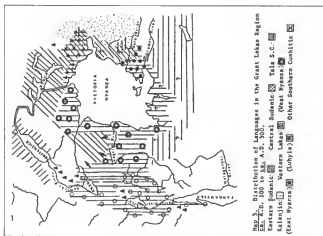
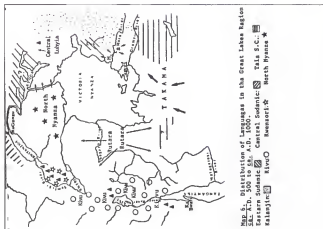


Figure 4-1: Linguistic Maps of the Lakes Region over time. [David Lee Schoenbrun, "Early History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes Region: Linguistic, Ecological, and Archaeological Approaches. ca. 500 B.C. to ca. A.D. 1000," (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1990), pp 187-188 with permission.]

Nilotic loan words in East Nyanza languages dating from this period of early contact include vocabulary connected to livestock (sheepskin, lamb, he-goat), stages of the life cycle and non-kin relations (young man, young woman, friend, oath, age-set), and a new word for the homestead or cattle corral, *aka*.¹⁶ This evidence may suggest that East Nyanza-speakers, moving into the unfamiliar environment of the interior, used common age-sets and the comradeship of peers to gain access to livestock expertise and to develop new kinds of homesteads built around the livestock corral.

Whatever the historical process, today no speakers of the Mara Southern Nilotic language remain in the Mara Region. One possibility is that as East Nyanza Bantu-speakers adapted to new ecological zones they gradually absorbed Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers into their own communities.¹⁷ Another possibility is that the descendants of the Mara Southern Nilotic speakers today are the Southern Nilotic Dadog-speakers, the Tatoga Rotigenga and Isimajek, who now occupy the plains of western Serengeti best suited for pastoralism. I favor the latter explanation, although individual Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers surely crossed linguistic boundaries to become East Nyanza Bantu-speakers. It seems more likely that most of these pastoralists adopted the language and lifestyle of another incoming pastoralist group, rather than that of their agriculturalist Bantu-speaking neighbors.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 130-132, Tables D.1 and D.2.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 40-42. Their presence in the past is deduced by Ehret in his reconstruction of Southern Nilotic loanwords in East Nyanza languages, containing sounds which were not part of Kalenjin or Dadog languages, and which pre-date the split of East Nyanza languages into Suguti and Mara branches.

¹⁸ More linguistic investigation would be necessary to determine whether there are phonological and lexical transfers from Mara Southern Nilotic to Dadog. There are numerous loan words from Mara Southern Nilotic in East Nyanza languages.

It is not clear from historical linguistics when the Dadog-speakers came to the western Serengeti. What we do know from the evidence of loan words in present-day languages of the region is that Dadog-speakers were in northern Tanzania, what is now Maasailand, perhaps as far west as the Mara, from the first millennium A.D. They spread south into what is now the Maasai Steppe and southwest into parts of Kondoa, Mbulu and Singida after 1000 A.D. About the same time, incoming South Kalenjin-speaking peoples assimilated the northern Dadog-speaking settlements.¹⁹ If the lifestyle practiced by Dadog-speakers presented clear advantages for other pastoralists such as the Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers, Dadog-speakers (rather than East Nyanza-speakers) could have completely absorbed Mara Southern Nilotic-speaking communities by around 1000 A.D.

The name from which "Tatoga" (for Dadog-speaking people) is derived seems to date from the first millennium A.D. in northern Tanzania, suggesting long-term continuity in their sense of identity as a people. The characteristic features of Dadog-speaking culture have also remained constant over the millennium—as herders of cattle, sheep and goats, who drink milk, bleed cattle and pay bridewealth in livestock, cultivate some grain and hunt. They did, however, drop the Southern Nilotic cycling age-set system of eight names and adopt a non-cycling linear generation-set system, in distinction to their Bantu-speaking neighbors who kept the old Southern Nilotic cycling names.²⁰

This dramatic change in age-set organization may indicate a period of increased differentiation and separation between agriculturalist and pastoralist communities after 1000 A.D. By this time, East Nyanza Bantu-speaking communities had already gained herding expertise from

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-62.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Loanwords from Dadog appear in Sonjo, Iraqw and Aramanik. The impact of Dadog on the ancestors of the Sonjo was particularly significant.

their Mara Southern Nilotic-speaking neighbors and had developed a lifestyle that exploited each of the other economic subsistence patterns (farming, herding, and hunting). Through this strategy East Nyanza-speakers gained dominance in the region, perhaps requiring Dadog-speaking pastoralists to move farther out on the plains and away from the eco-tones where a combined herding, hunting and farming economy was possible. The identity of Dadog-speakers who absorbed Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers may also have been more exclusively pastoralist, demanding clearer distinctions (within a system of economic interdependence) from their agriculturalist neighbors.

Bantu-speakers and Dadog-speakers also continued to coexist with hunter/gatherers. The hunter/gatherer people who appear in oral traditions of the western Serengeti are called the Asi. I could identify no Asi communities in the region during my fieldwork, although western Serengeti people living today can remember interacting with Asi hunter/gatherers in their youth. I can only speculate that either they moved into Maasailand, where Maasai call them the Ndorobo or Okiek, or Bantu-speaking communities absorbed them, leaving little memory of Asi tradition.²¹ Because I identified no descendants of this tradition, I had no way of finally knowing what language they spoke, whether Southern Nilotic, Cushitic or Khoisan.²² Asi seems to be a categorical rather than

²¹ This speculation is based on the evidence of oral traditions of the late nineteenth century and early colonial reports, see next chapter on the relation of more recent Asi to western Serengeti peoples.

²² Numerous academic arguments exist for the ancestors of most Okiek hunter/gatherer communities of East Africa being Kalenjin; see John Distefano, "Pre-Colonial History of the Kalenjin" (Ph.D. Dissertation, U. C. L. A., 1985); and Corinne A. Kratz, "Are the Okiek really Masai? or Kipsigis? or Kikuyu?," *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* 20, 3 (1980): 360, who draws on the evidence of historical linguistics and oral history to postulate that all of the Okiek related hunter/gatherers once lived together before 1000 A.D., probably in Northwestern Kenya, and speaking a Southern Nilotic language related to present day Kalenjin. Ehret demonstrates that the distinction of hunter/gatherers as a separate conceptual category was a proto-Southern Nilotic innovation, see Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 79-80. Cushitic speaking hunter/gatherers in the greater Rift valley are known by names close to "Asi," which may simply be the word for "bush

an ethnic name, referring to people who live in the bush, or people of the land, taken from the root - *si*, meaning "dirt, soil, land, ground, place."²³ Kratz points out that at the heart of Okiek (Ndorobo, Asi) identity is their ability to cross boundaries; "a sense of being mediator, code-switcher, interstitial." The space of the hunter/gatherer is that of "inhabiting cultural boundary areas as their own."²⁴ They have lived on the boundaries of many different communities (Kalenjin, Maasai and Kikuyu), accepting much of the language and culture of others while maintaining a sense of their own identity.

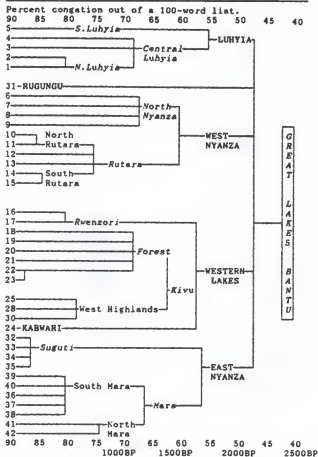
People speaking East Nyanza Bantu languages, and living among people speaking other languages, diversified over time as they became separated from each other. The diagram of the family tree of Great Lakes Bantu languages illustrates the relationships among these languages over time [See Figure 4-2: Great Lakes Bantu Linguistic Tree.]. Those who stayed near the lakeshore came to speak Suguti languages (Jita, Ruri, Regi, Kwaya) and those who went inland came to speak the Mara languages. Through the method of glottochronology described in the Chapter 1 we know that these two communities grew distinct from each other about 1500 years ago. As the Mara-speaking communities spread into new lands, those who crossed the Mara river

dwellers" in general. See Kenny, "Mirror in the Forest," p. 481; Itandala, "A History of the Babinza," pp. 24-27; Pare oral traditions also name the original hunter/gatherer populations as Asa or Asi, Kimambo, A Political History of the Pare, pp. 14, 27; D. F. Bleek, "The Hadzapi or Watindega of Tanganyika Territory," Africa 4, 3 (July 1931): 273-286. Colonial anthropologist Henry Fosbrooke reported that the Lake Eyasi hunter/gatherers called themselves "Hesabet" and were called "Ngabobwo" (rather than Ndorobo) by the Maasai, and Batandigo or Bahe by the Sukuma. Henry A. Fosbrooke, "Sections of the Masai in Loliondo Area" (typescript) 1953, CORY #259, EAF UDSM; Sutton, "Becoming Maasailand," pp. 50-51. Depicting a key element in the hunter/gatherer economy, the word for "beehive," *omutana* (in Nata), is a Southern Cushitic loanword in East Nyanza languages (-*tana*), see Christopher Ehret, Ethiopians and East Africans: The Problem of Contacts (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974), p. 82, Table 5-2, Nyanza Southern Cushitic loanwords in East Victoria and Southeast Victoria Bantu.

²³ Schoenbrun, personal communication.

²⁴ Kratz, "Are the Okiek really Masai?," pp. 359-360.

Tree Diagram 2.2. Group Average - Great Lakes Bantu.



Glottochronology at shared retention rate of 73-74% per thousand years. Note: The numbers at the left margin correspond to numbered languages in the Outline Classification above.

Figure 4-2: Great Lakes Bantu Linguistic Tree. [David Lee Schoenbrun, "Early History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes Region: Linguistic, Ecological, and Archaeological Approaches. ca. 500 B.C. to ca A.D. 1000," (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1990), p 362, with permission.]

formed the language communities of North Mara--Kuria and Gusii. In South Mara they differentiated themselves into three groups, probably becoming distinct about 500-300 years ago--Ngoreme, eastern South Mara (Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi) and western South Mara (Ikizu, Zanaki, Shashi or Sizaki).

Although local convention recognizes each of the western Serengeti languages (South Mara) as a separate language today, they are all closely related and, thus linguistically, represent one group of people with a common heritage in the past. The dialect chaining chart on the next page [See Figure 4-3: Dialect Chaining Chart of the East Nyanza Languages] shows the close relationship of the Mara languages to each other. The numbers on the chart show the percentage of shared vocabulary from a list of 100 core vocabulary words.²⁵ South Mara languages are today mutually intelligible with differences in pronunciation and vocabulary used locally as an indication of home community.²⁶ Mekacha argues that the South Mara languages (Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme) should be considered dialects of one language.²⁷

A number of innovations in vocabulary took place among South Mara or western Serengeti speakers after their languages differentiated from Suguti speakers along the lake shores. Many of these words are also different from the Kuria words for the same objects, some of which retain the Great Lakes Bantu terms. Based on glottochronology these innovations would date to

²⁵ See Chapter I for an explanation of core vocabulary words and their use in historical linguistics.

²⁶ Schoenbrun, "Early History," p. 157.

²⁷ Mekacha, *The Sociolinguistic Impact*, p. 56. South Mara languages in this light would be considered a dialect cluster. Among the South Mara languages, Ikizu and Zanaki tend to be more conservative in maintaining the old Bantu sound patterns, while the eastern South Mara group, toward the Serengeti plains, adopted more of the of non-Bantu words and sound patterns. This may be an indication of the necessity of those further to the east to adopt to a pastoral and hunting way of life due to the demands of the environment.

Dialect Chaining of the East Nyanza Languages

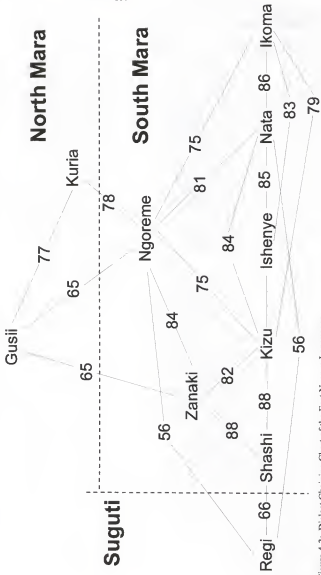


Figure 4-3: Dialect Chaining Chart of the East Nyanza Languages

approximately the last 600 years, since Kuria and the closest South Mara language, Ngoreme, share seventy-eight cognates, out of a list of one hundred glosses. The new words in South Mara are specifically within the realm of livestock vocabulary.²⁸ Some of these words are loan words from Dadog-speakers, while others are of unknown origin.²⁹ Another example of these innovations is the changing designations for cattle colors. By the time that the Suguti, North and South Mara languages had separated around 1500 A.D., each was using a set of differently innovated words for cattle colors. The western Serengeti innovations, referring to the basic colors of black (*anadaburu*), white (*iyeru*) and red (*ambereretu* or *beriri*), are derived from pre- and proto-Southern Nilotic roots, which appear in Dadog. The origin of other cattle colors is unknown.³⁰

The cattle-word innovations in South Mara demonstrate the ongoing frontier dynamics in which western Serengeti peoples continued to interact with Dadog-speaking pastoralists and to develop their own economic adaptations to the environment. Of these South Mara innovations,

²⁸ Examples include: in Nata the word for bull is *aheri* or *satima*, in Ngoreme *eheeri* (derived from the proto-Southern Nilotic root *eeRi* for male cattle, or *hirri* in Dadog), while the East Nyanza term is *-galmi* or *-geeni* (in Simbete, Kuria and Shashi); Ox or steer is *riture*, while the East Nyanza term is *taang'ana*; the word for cow in addition to the East Nyanza term *-ha(a)Biri*, Nata *ahabheri*, the term *anyaburi* is sometimes used, which can refer to mature female goats, sheep or wild ungulates; a young she-goat is *amwati* while the term in East Nyanza is *-subini* or *subeeni*. A he-goat is *andome* while in East Nyanza the term is *-gorohe*, in Ngoreme it is *egorohe*. Schoenbrun, "Early History," Table 4.26; Nata, Ngoreme word lists and unpublished dictionaries; Muniko et al., *Kuria-English Dictionary*; Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, Appendixes D.1-D.4.

²⁹ Other Southern Nilotic loan words date to an earlier period of interaction with Mara Southern Nilotic speakers, for example: *eesono* (barren cow in Nata), *risero* (hide in Nata), *risakwa*, *risako* (sheepskin in Nata and Ngoreme), *ekimano* (kid, lamb in Ngoreme), and *iguriaki* (ram in Kuria), *entikere* (donkey in Ngoreme [from Dadog, from a pre-Southern Nilotic form]), *egorohe* (he-goat in Ngoreme [from Dadog]) Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 130-137; Nata culture vocabulary from Nyamaganda Magoto; Ngoreme-English Dictionary, Iramba Parish, n.d.; English Kikuria Dictionary, Maryknoll Language School, n.d.; Schoenbrun, "Early History," Table 4.26.

³⁰ Schoenbrun, "Early History," p. 497, Table 4.4. Comparison of cattle color words in Kwaya, Kuria and Nata.

anyabori is a word used for "cow," but also for other female animals and especially for a mature female wild ungulate, while the word for "a young she goat," *amwati*, also refers to an immature female wild ungulate. This blurring of semantic domains, between words related to herding to words related to hunting, characterizes western Serengeti people's strategy of integrating and adapting both hunting and herding practices from different ecological zones.

By or before 1500 A.D. the present linguistic/cultural foundations of this region were well established. Each of the Bantu languages that is now distinct had differentiated itself. Bantu-speakers coexisted on the land with Tatoga pastoralists and Asi hunter/gatherers. Although each of the Bantu-speaking ethnic groups today insists on its own unique culture and tradition, these groups share a considerable heritage, which developed out of interactions with peoples from diverse backgrounds in the distant past. Historical linguistics provides evidence for the interactions among farmers, herders and hunters that reaches back more than two millennia. Yet, as the latest innovations in vocabulary attest, this frontier process of interaction lasted right up through the last six hundred years. At that point Bantu-speakers had become dominant, not by economic specialization, but by diversification through adopting the expertise of their neighbors.

The Mechanics of Incorporation in the Distant Past

Given this evidence from the distant past the historian must ask just how the linguistic landscape changed so dramatically over the past millennium—from one in which speakers of many different languages occupied separate ecological zones and practiced different but interdependent subsistence economies to one in which Bantu-speaking farmers came to dominate over the smaller remaining groups of hunter/gatherers and herders by adopting much of the expertise of their neighbors. What kinds of social mechanisms were in place at the time that would have made this possible? We can only speculate on these processes, finding hints among the mechanisms for incorporation that have functioned in historical times. After providing what little evidence exists

through historical linguistics and comparative ethnography, I will demonstrate how oral tradition tells a parallel story that provides insight into these processes.

Evidence remains to show that East Nyanza-speakers inherited a bilateral descent system from their Great Lakes Bantu-speaking ancestors. In the environment of the east lake strong matrilineal tendencies developed among East Nyanza-speakers in the distant past.³¹ Many ethnic groups in the Mara Region today remain matrilineal, while others have adopted patrilineal descent systems during the colonial years or before. Even those who emphasize the patrilineage use the prefix *bene* plus the name of an ancestor four to five generations back to refer to the level of segmentation in the patrilineage known as the *ekehita* or "door." Christine Choi Ahmed argues that this common Bantu lineage indicator is derived from the root word (*ny*)*ina*, meaning "a person's mother," making these lineages unmistakably matrilineal in origin.³² Another interpretation of this root word is simply that it indicates possession that could be gendered either way.³³ In either case, the evidence seems to suggest that East Nyanza-speakers had at their disposal the tools of lineality on either side that they could deploy as it suited their needs.

Women in the western Serengeti today have control over their own fields and grain reserves, even though they live in homesteads controlled by their husbands. If women also controlled many of the agricultural resources when Bantu-speakers entered the unfamiliar environment of the western Serengeti 1500 years ago, one might speculate that it would have been to the advantage of their lineages to take husbands from hunter/gatherer or pastoral communities

³¹ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 177-179.

³² Christine Choi Ahmed, "Before Eve was Eve: 2200 Years of Gendered History in East-Central Africa" (Ph.D. Dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1996), p. 124.

³³ Schoenbrun, personal communication—the underlying root is a simple possessive particle "of," *-ny-* (the feminine form) cannot be automatically equated with *-ne*.

already in the area to expand their food producing range. If these communities emphasized the matrifocal household, these stranger men would have been incorporated into the homes of their wives, while their children remained in the community of their mother.³⁴

On this inter-cultural frontier, land was plentiful and labor the key scarce resource. Successful communities were those able to attract new members to exploit these resources extensively over a large land area rather than intensively on smaller but more productive plots of land. Karla Poewe and others have theorized that matrilineal societies are best adapted for incorporating strangers and for expansion on the frontier. In a matrilineal system production is individual while distribution is communal. A man's sister's children inherit his wealth, rather than the children of his wives, whose production he controls. Those who inherit his wealth most often live in distant settlements. This disjuncture between the locality of production and distribution creates widespread networks of security through the distribution of wealth, rather than accumulates wealth within self-contained family units. The matrilineal system of production and distribution tends to be associated with abundant and unrestricted access to resources and situations of economic expansion. This situation demands strong networks of security because of the risky nature of frontier expansion in a marginal environment. A situation of scarce resources concentrated on productive land that people must exploit intensively favors the patrilineage with its ability to concentrate wealth.³⁵ Schoenbrun, also, argues that nondifferentiated descent ideologies "accompanied dispersed and mixed farming systems whose main concern lay in opening more land

³⁴ Also suggested as the mechanism for incorporation in other areas by Choi, "Before Eve," p. 11; and Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 178.

³⁵ Karla O. Poewe, *Matrilineal Ideology: Male-Female Dynamics in Luapula, Zambia* (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 3, 21, 25-6, 46-7; see also Choi, "Before Eve," p. 143; and Cynthia Brantley, "Through Ngoni Eyes: Margaret Read's Matrilineal Interpretations from Nyasaland," *Critique of Anthropology* 17, 2 (June 1997): 147-169.

rather than in protecting specific bodies of wealth from depletion.³⁶ The ability to reckon descent through either line suggests that a flexible strategy was necessary for negotiating various kinds of relationships on the frontier.

In this scenario Bantu-speaking communities incorporated Southern Nilotic or Southern Cushitic-speaking men who brought the skills and environmental knowledge necessary for survival in the western Serengeti. These newcomers would have allowed Bantu-speaking communities to exploit not only their own ecological niche suitable for farming but also take part in hunting and increased herding activities. The establishment of affinal connections would also have ensured consistent interaction between the two communities. As already mentioned, the evidence that East Nyanza-speakers adopted the cycling age-set names and other related words from Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers in the early phase of settlement in the region, suggests that the equivalence of age-peers across linguistic and economic boundaries may have allowed young men to gain acceptance in the community as "brothers" of their age-mates. This speculation, based on evidence from historical linguistics, is, in fact, echoed in the *asimoka* narratives, which tell the story of how farmers and hunters met.

The Nata Emergence Story: The Union of Hunters and Farmers

This is one narration of the Nata *asimoka* story. [For other versions of the story see Appendix 1. See Figure 4-4: Narration of Nata Emergence Stories.]

Our parents, of Nata are — Nyamunywa, he was a man — and Nyasigonko, was a woman. Nyamunywa was a hunter — Nyasigonko was a farmer, the woman. They met — this man, Nyamunywa, shot an animal, which fell near to the field of the woman, Nyasigonko. The man, Nyamunywa, was thirsty. When he got to where the animal had fallen he saw some green grass, which is a sign of water, so he went there to look for water. When he got near, he saw there was a person coming out from that place. It was a human, like him, and the woman saw him too. He went to her house in the cave. They could only speak in signs because they did not know the same language. The man asked

³⁶ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 178.

for water to drink. She got him some from the spring in a gourd (ekebucho). She then took some millet from her field and brought it to him in an elongated gourd (akena ya oburwe). She put it in his hand and he chewed it. It was mixed with sesame. She asked him, "and what do you eat?" He showed her the animal and skinned it. The man went outside in the bush and made a fire by twirling a stick into a board using an ekengeita and ororende . . . shweeeee. She got wood and they roasted the meat. They ate it. They took the meat home and lived in the cave of the woman. Basi (so finally), it became their home. The man followed the woman. They gave birth to the Nata, Nyamunywa and Nyasigonko.³⁷

At one level the Nata emergence story provides in a concrete, locally grounded form, an account parallel to that based on the evidence of historical linguistics in which the union of peoples from diverse economic and linguistic backgrounds forms a new community. Perhaps a woman called Nyasigonko (from the root word, *-gonka*, "to suck at the breast") or a man called Nyamunywa (from the root word, *omunywa*, "mouth") never existed but, over many generations, countless farming women may have met hunting men, whose lineages decided that their cooperation would be mutually beneficial. The Nata story is the only one of the western Serengeti emergence stories to describe its origins *in situ*, without reference to ancestral migrations from anywhere else. It tells of the springing up, awakening, of a new people right where they are today, in Nata territory.

In this story the hunter comes to live with the farmer, just as he might have if his farming wife was part of a Bantu-speaking society based on matrifocal residence patterns. In most versions of this story that I heard, elders identified the hunter as Asi and the woman as vaguely related to various Bantu-speaking groups such as Gusii or Sonjo. This interpretation of the Nata emergence story follows the model exemplified in Packard's analysis of the Bashu origin myth of Muhiyi in

³⁷ Interview with Jackson Benedicto Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995 (Nata ♂).



Sochoro Khabati telling the Nata Emergence Story at Bwanda, 16 February 1996



Jackson Benedicto Mang'oha Maginga, 14 August 1995, Narrator of Nata Emergence Story in Text

Figure 4-4: Narration of Nata Emergence Stories

eastern Zaire. He argues that an origin myth, "while not necessarily describing a specific series of historical events, symbolizes long-term historical processes."³⁸

What is amazing about these *asimoka* stories is that they are locally-created representations of a past which is so old that it ought to have dropped out of the historical consciousness of the region's peoples. This past comes to the present through the imaginations of people who have lived in these landscapes, whose lives have been shaped by its constraints, and shaped also by the region's cultural resources. Because of this locally grounded quality, the *asimoka* stories account for the early interactions of hunters and farmers in a way that has rich cultural resonances. The stories match the shape of the best historian's hypotheses, when the historians reason from historical linguistics and archaeology. The stories work well as historical representations because they grow out of a historical imagination more richly informed of ecology and social possibility than any outsider's imaginations could ever be.

This story is from Nata. It was the first story that knowledgeable elders told me when I began conducting formal interviews. They told this as a unique Nata story, concerning the essence of what it means to "be Nata." It was thus surprising to move onto formal interviews with Ikizu elders and hear the Ikizu *asimoka* stories of emergence about first woman the farmer, Nyakinywa (from the word *kunywa*, to drink), meeting first man the hunter, Isamongo. The stories were different with different characters but retained the same core images of a female farmer at her cave meeting a male hunter from the wilderness. As I conducted interviews with other ethnic groups, I continued to hear echoes of the same story.

³⁸ Packard, "The Bashu Myth of Muhiyi," p. 174. See also Packard's longer analysis in the book, *Chiefship and Cosmology* and Feerman, "The Myth of Mbegha" in *The Shamba Kingdom*, pp. 40-64.

I thus began to speculate on the historical reasons for the widespread occurrence of this story with many local variations throughout the region. One possibility would be that these are old core images, dating from the time before each of these groups (Nata, Ikizu, Ikoma) differentiated itself linguistically, sometime during the past 500 years. This line of reasoning is based on the distribution of these core images only among western Serengeti people, while the emergence stories of the Kuria to the north or Jita or Kwaya toward the lake contain a different set of core images. The variations elaborated around these core images among western Serengeti peoples seem to refer to specific events that occurred after each group differentiated itself linguistically, in many cases up to the period of the late nineteenth century disasters.

On the other hand, the historian cannot treat the geographical distribution of oral traditions in the same way as the distribution of words or ethnographic material.³⁹ An arbitrary relationship between sound and meaning forms the basis for recognizing changes in one or the other of those features of language as an historical change. Oral traditions, on the other hand, are laden with heavy ideological freight that does not change unconsciously or arbitrarily over time. Another logical explanation for the regional distribution of the emergence stories is that these communities were continuously interacting and so shared stories that might only date to the nineteenth century. We cannot date these stories, in any case, because isolated communities, providing separate chains of evidence, did not exist.

³⁹ Robert Harms, *Games Against Nature: An Eco-cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 6, dates his ethnographic material in this way: "The Nunu area can be subdivided into flooded forest, flooded grassland, riverbank, and dryland. These zones correspond with cultural subdivisions. By comparing the ethnography of the different micro-environments, one can distinguish the cultural traits shared by all of the Nunu from those that are distinct to a single environment. Traits shared by all are assumed to be old unless it can be demonstrated that they are recent innovations. Therefore, they define the more enduring and general features of the Nunu culture. In contrast, if an institution or practice is distinct to a certain micro-environment, we can assume that its existence or persistence has something to do with conditions unique to that area. It therefore represents innovation."

However, the remarkable congruence of these stories with the processes recoverable through the evidence of historical linguistics and archaeology also seems to place them in a time frame much older than the nineteenth century. They echo the ongoing frontier processes in which farmers and hunters merged to form new kinds of communities and developed new kinds of adaptations to a harsh environment. Rather than each ethnic group entering the region separately, with its own history and identity already formed, these emergence stories seem to refer to the sense of group identity that developed locally as new kinds of communities sprouted up from the rhizomatous networks that preceded them.

The core image of a hunter from the wilderness coming to found a new community is ubiquitous across Africa.⁴⁰ This is not surprising since emerging food-producing communities all across Africa faced the process of coming to terms with, or differentiating themselves from, preexisting hunter communities in the distant past. Nevertheless, it is significant that this variation of the hunter myth is the one found consistently throughout the western Serengeti. Bantu-speaking immigrants may have brought the hunter myth to the area but it seems to have taken on a particular local form as they forged new kinds of identities that owed as much to their hunting past as to their farming past. Although Bantu-speakers were well established in the western Serengeti by 1000 A.D., the interaction between hunting and farming communities would have been an ongoing process, not rendered altogether irrelevant to oral memory.

Social Reproduction and Homestead Space

At another level, an interpretation of the core spatial images of the Nata emergence story--that of the woman sitting at her cave and the man coming from the wilderness on a hunt--provides

⁴⁰ For the representation of hunter founders in African art see, Fritz W. Kramer, Red Fez: Art and Spirit Possession in Africa, trans. Malcolm Green, (London, Verso, 1993, first published 1987), p. 16.

insight into gender relations within the homestead as a crucial aspect of the frontier process. In the Nata story the woman welcomes the man into her home, while the man has no home, only a hunting camp in the wilderness. These core spatial images make use of the opposition between home and wilderness, inside and outside, female and male. A new society emerges at the contact point between these dynamically opposed forces. Although the house belongs to the woman in the story, man's presence from the wilderness domesticates the house and makes it a civilized place. First man brings fire to the house. Today the hearthstones are still considered the very symbol of home and family. No home exists without a fire burning in the hearth.⁴¹ First man knew the secret of fire and, in many versions of the emergence story told the woman that he excreted the fire to conceal the secret of its origin. In other versions he taught the woman how to cook. [See Appendix 1] Meat from the wilderness and grain from the homestead are both necessary for building this new community.

These images of an interdependent mutuality between genders, which present women in control of an autonomous sphere of authority and men as dependents in women's houses, conflict with present gender relations in which men are in absolute control of the homestead and all of its productive and reproductive resources. We can date the increasing emphasis on male control of the homestead through the patrilineage to the late precolonial and early colonial periods. In the early period of settlement when livestock were few and people grouped their homesteads in proximity to other lineage members, a woman's home was the primary unit of production and links to her family were a way of establishing regional networks of security. During the disasters of the late

⁴¹ See Brad Weiss, The Making and Unmaking of the Haya Lived World: Consumption, Commoditization and Everyday Practice (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 29-31, 51-52, who describes the Haya ceremony for blessing a new house which involves lighting the fire for the first time by the father or a senior agnate; For the Kuria see Tobisson, Family Dynamics, pp. 128-132.

nineteenth century the dangers of raiding, with men leaving the home to search for food in neighboring areas, for raids or to hunt, restricted women's movements. Without the labor of men and with the specter of famine the house became a restrictive site. During the early colonial period men recovered from famine by selling hunting products to Sukuma in exchange for livestock. As cattle wealth increased the man's spatial domain of the cattle corral became increasingly important. Nata elders can specifically remember when inheritance (mainly livestock) became patrilineal (through a man's sons) rather than matrilineal (through a man's sister's sons). In the new economy of commodities, men controlled the cash and women could not keep the proceeds from selling their grain. Men accumulated cattle wealth by inheritance through their sons rather than their nephews. The colonial record preserves the ongoing gender struggle. In 1928 the Musoma District Officer reported that the Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata "women have the men completely under their thumbs" and "divorce is more frequent than with most native tribes."⁴²

One would expect that if the emergence stories dated from the late precolonial and early colonial period they would assert the increasing dominance of men over dependent women. A rarely told Ngorome emergence story collected by Odhiambo Anaclei explicitly explains this change in gender relations. The story says that men and women once lived in separate camps. The women possessed the horn as their symbol of authority while the men had the drum. A child was born after sexual relations between youth who were herding. At the meeting to solve the problem of authority over the child the men offered the women a fat barren she-goat for slaughter. The men picked up the horn of authority and blocked all its apertures with wax while the women were chasing the goat. Without their authority, represented in the horn, the women went to live with the

⁴² Acting D.O. Musoma to P.C. Mwanza, 10 October 1928, Monthly Report for September 1928, 10 March 1928, Monthly Report for February 1928, and 13 September 1927, Monthly Report for August 1927, 1926-29 Provincial Administration Monthly Reports, Musoma District, 215/P.C./117, TNA.

men.⁴³ This was the beginning of bridewealth. Women traded their authority for meat. This story symbolizes a change in gender relations from that in which men and women controlled separate spheres of authority to that in which women were subordinate to men's authority.

Yet the more prevalent Nata emergence story, and others like it in the other ethnic groups of the region, represents a set of gender relations clearly at odds with present patterns that seems to refer to relations of an earlier period. If, as I have argued, the emergence stories encode the frontier process in which settlers within diverse environments forged new kinds of communities, then I must take seriously (and listen closely to) its way of representing earlier forms of gender relations and their place in the frontier process. One way to place these core images historically is to investigate the gendered homestead spaces to which they refer.

The gendered spaces of the homestead also represent the same gender relations of the autonomous, yet interdependent, authority of men and women, as reflected in the core images of the emergence stories. Within the "traditional" homestead as elders remember and, in part, practice it today, male space is outside, in the courtyard, while female space is inside, in the house. In East Nyanza languages "house" (*anyumba*) refers not only to the physical house but to a woman, her offspring, and the property and dependents attached to her.⁴⁴ Men have no houses of their own and sleep in the houses of their wives. Men's conversation takes place in the courtyard that surrounds the central cattle corral, as the symbol of male property.

⁴³ Anacleto, "Pastoralism and Development," pp. 189-193. I did not collect any stories even remotely like this one in Ngoreme or elsewhere.

⁴⁴ Robert A. LeVine, "The Gusii Family," in *The Family Estate in Africa: Studies in the Role of Property in Family Structure and Lineage Continuity*, eds. Robert F. Gray and P. H. Gulliver (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 70; Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 174; Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 128-137.

Homestead Space Over the Long-term

Although no archaeological evidence exists for homestead layout within the western Serengeti itself, one can infer larger regional patterns from the work undertaken in neighboring areas. In western Kenya, John Sutton surveyed 133 archaeological sites on hillsides, known in the literature as "Sirikwa holes," because local Kalenjin people identified them as the cattle-enclosures made by former inhabitants whom they called the "Sirikwa." The "holes" consist of saucer like depressions, 7-25 meters wide, at a depth of up to 4 meters, surrounded by earthen or stonework walls. Two low banks flanked a single entrance on the downhill side, with a mound below it. Sutton identified circular houses around the perimeter of the hollow, and these were entered through the hollow. The hollow itself was a livestock corral, surrounded by a fence with a narrow guarded entrance. Cleaning out mud and dung daily seems to have formed the mounds outside the entrance, and perhaps the depression itself. One house that Sutton excavated in Chemage, Kenya, was divided into two sections, one for a bedroom and the other for young livestock. Agriculturalists who supplemented their diet with livestock seem to have inhabited the "Sirikwa holes." Sutton dated these remains to a period between 1600 and 1800 A.D.⁴⁵

Sutton noted that the most striking present day analogies for the "Sirikwa holes" are the homestead complexes of the Kuria and Gusii in western Kenya, which consist of a central cattle corral surrounded by houses, set into a thorn fence. We could say the same for homestead patterns in the western Serengeti, which also match the interior design of the house described by Sutton. However, the Kuria houses include two doors and the Kuria cattle corral is not sunken. Sutton, therefore concluded that Kuria and Gusii homesteads cannot "be regarded as latter-day "Sirikwa

⁴⁵ Sutton, The Archaeology of the Western Highlands, pp. 50-58.

holes."⁴⁶ He believed them to be the work of the ancestors of present-day Kalenjin peoples in the area, who built these homesteads to defend against wild animals and limited raids. People stopped building in this manner with the advent of large-scale Maasai raiding, which rendered the homesteads vulnerable to attack.⁴⁷

Whether the ancestors of present-day Kalenjin or Kuria populations occupied these "Sirikwa holes," they do demonstrate the existence of a spatial homestead organization that is similar to that found throughout the western Serengeti today. Scholarly debate involves the ethnic identity of those who built the "Sirikwa holes" (Kuria, Kalenjin or Maasai),⁴⁸ which seems anachronistic, given the complex and heterogeneous history of this region. From the distribution of Southern Nilotic-speaking peoples reconstructed through the methods of historical linguistics we know that Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers occupied the whole region from what is now western Kenya through the Mara Region of what is now Tanzania before 1000 A.D.⁴⁹ The same Southern Nilotic cycling age-set names used in the western Serengeti are found among the Kalenjin who live in the "Sirikwa hole" area today. In a later re-excavation at Hyrax Hill in Kenya, Sutton looked more closely at the house sites to determine the mode of production. He concluded that the Sirikwa chronology should be pushed back to the beginning of this millennium because of considerable cultural continuity with the Elmenteitan Industry, which has also been correlated with Southern Nilotic-speakers.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 62.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 60-63

⁴⁸ For a discussion of this debate see Distefano, "Precolonial History," p. 127.

⁴⁹ See the analysis of Kalenjin and Luyia languages in terms of the underlying Southern Nilotic component, Distefano, "Precolonial History," p. 141.

⁵⁰ Sutton, *The Archaeology of the Western Highlands*, p. 22.

A comparison of homestead and interior house diagrams from the Nata, Ikoma and Ngoreme within the western Serengeti, with other Mara speakers, the Kuria and Gusii, demonstrates cultural continuity with these archaeological remains. The chart on the following page illustrates this pattern in contrast to the homestead in neighboring Sukuma, which they also build around the central cattle corral. [See Figure 4-5 and 4-6: Homestead Layout and Interior House Designs.]. The Nata, Kuria and Ikoma homestead pattern consists of houses built right into the corral fence. In all cases they divide the house into at least two rooms, with the outer room being used for small stock. Building around a central cattle corral is also a common pattern recognized among southern Bantu-speakers.⁵¹

Historical linguistics also provides some evidence about early homestead patterns. Great Lakes Bantu-speakers (C. 500 B.C.) apparently began building very different kinds of homesteads than the ones built by their linguistic predecessors in the forests of the west, which were square, with paneled and gabled roofs. Distinctive features among Great Lakes Bantu-speakers were round houses with thatched roofs surrounded by tall fences with a main gateway.⁵²

The innovation of building around a central cattle corral seems to date to the time when East Nyanza-speakers adopted a new term for a unilineal, dispersed, exogamous group, the *eka*, between 500 and 1000 A.D. This word is derived from the older, Great Lakes Bantu word for head of cattle (*nka*, itself a Sudanic loan word meaning "homestead."). Western Serengeti people use this term not for the lineage but for the homestead itself built around the cattle corral, *aka*.

The designation of the house as female space, leaving the man without a house, may also date to this period when East Nyanza-speakers began moving into the interior. The "house"

⁵¹ Adam Kuper, "Symbolic Dimensions of the Southern Bantu Homestead," *Africa* 50, 1 (1980): 8-22.

⁵² Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 159-160.

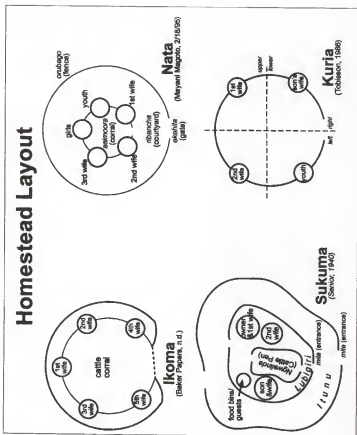


Figure 4-5: Homestead Layout

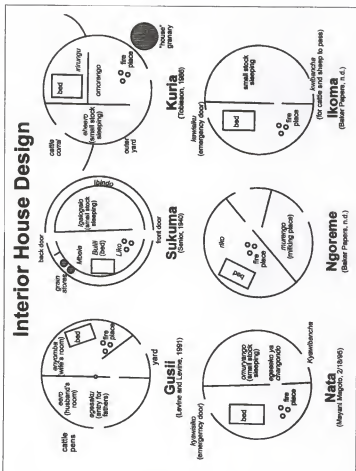


Figure 4-6: Interior House Designs

(*anyumba*), as a term that designates a woman and her dependents, is common among all East Nyanza languages.⁵³ Ethnographers of the Kuria and the Kwaya report that men do not have a house and that the courtyard is man's space. Unmarried men sleep together in a house without a hearth.⁵⁴ This dating, however, remains speculative, since I have no way of knowing, without more linguistic evidence, whether the term "house" was gendered in the same way that it is in more recent times. Overwhelming ethnographic evidence of gendered homestead space, finally, cannot prove how western Serengeti people gendered space in the distant past. It does, however, suggest a culturally nuanced way of interpreting the core images of emergence stories that refer to gendered homestead space.

The Ethnography of Homestead Space

Most of the words used to describe the homestead are common among speakers of all East Nyanza languages. The words for cattle pen and yard, recorded here in Nata, seem to be western Serengeti innovations. The homestead pattern remembered by western Serengeti elders today and still observable in some homesteads is one in which each wife in a plural marriage has her own house (*anyumba*) and grain storage bin (*egitara*). The man has his own grain storage bin, which is kept for emergencies and his own needs for feasting and exchange. The homestead itself (*aka*) consists of a yard (*ribancha*) enclosed by a brush fence (*orubago*).⁵⁵ In the center of the yard is

⁵³ Ibid, p. 174.

⁵⁴ Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 128-132, says that Kuria men have no house and that the youth's hut has no sections or hearth as a woman's would. Huber, *Marriage and Family*, pp. 62-68, reports that there was no hut for the man and that the yard fire was the man's space in the homestead. A ritual was necessary for the construction of the homestead gate-way.

⁵⁵ *Orubago* is derived from the Great Lakes Bantu root -*gó(ó)* "enclosure" which marked "the regional appearances of the homestead layout so common throughout Bantu-speaking eastern and southern Africa." Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, Cultural Vocabulary #26.

the livestock corral (*asimoora*)⁵⁶ and around the perimeter of the yard, the houses of wives and sons. The first wife's house is located nearest the gate on the right going in (or in the center back), the second wife to the left of the gate and so on. The house for young unmarried boys (*amachi*) is found opposite the gate, or guarding the gate. Only one gate or entrance (*ekehita*) breaches the homestead fence and it is closed with a log (*egeshoko*). If a son marries and has his own circumcised children in the homestead they cut another gate for him.⁵⁷

The gate, the courtyard and the cattle corral are male space and symbolize male (external) authority while the house symbolizes female (internal) authority. Narratives about the past described girls' circumcision inside the homestead at the site of the grain storage bins, to symbolize their future work as married women who would provide food to their families. Boys' circumcision takes place outside the homestead under a tree to symbolize their work in conquering the bush as hunters.⁵⁸ Tobisson argues that for the Kuria the log of wood to shut the livestock corral was the most important symbolic marker of male resource control used in rituals of all kinds.⁵⁹ Kinship terms also refer to these gendered spaces of the homestead. Nata call a person's maternal line the *anyumba* (house) and Ikizu call it the *rigiha* (hearthstones), while Nata and Ikoma call the paternal line the *ekehita* (homestead gateway) and Ikizu call it the *ekeshoka* (gatepost).

The house itself is divided into two areas, the *amuryango*, or the outer room for sheep, goats and young calves to sleep in, or for a sitting room and the inner room or sleeping room where

⁵⁶ *Asimoora* is a Southern Nilotic loanword, Christopher Ehret, personal communication.

⁵⁷ Nata homesteads from an interview with Mayani Magoto, Bugerera, 18 February 1995 (Nata ♂). Ikoma and Ngoreme homesteads in Edward Conway Baker, *Tanganyika Papers*. See Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 129-133 for the Kuria homestead.

⁵⁸ Interview with Bhoke Rotegenga (Nata ♀) and Mgoye Rotegenga Megasa (Nata ♂), Motokeri, 13 March 1995.

⁵⁹ Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 147-148.

a cooking fire is kept. Kuria call the outer room for livestock the *eheero*, while they call the domestic section of the house with the cooking fire a variation of the word used in Nata for the outer room, the *omorengo*.⁶⁰ In Gusii the outer room, the *eero*, is specifically designated as the "husband's room" by LeVine and LeVine.⁶¹ It seems significant that among the western Serengeti peoples the *eheero* does not exist and they instead interpret the woman's domestic section of the *omorengo* as the small stock room, making the whole house female space. The inner room is closed to casual visitors, with its outside door (*kyawisiko*) used only for emergency escape or to remove a corpse. Guests always enter the house through the front door (*kwawibancha*), which leads from the courtyard into the *omuryango* where the small stock are kept.

Because livestock are the most important form of convertible wealth, the corral in the center of the homestead as male space is an important symbol of male authority over livestock production and reproduction in the homestead. People equate cattle with reproduction because of their use as bridewealth and as markers of other kinds of social exchange. The cattle corral is the link between the individual homestead and the larger descent group.⁶² Similarly, Rigby shows for the agriculturally-based Gogo that "effective kinship and affinal relations are primarily viewed in terms of the carrying out of certain jurally defined rights and obligations concerning the most valued form of property, viz., livestock."⁶³ The corral is located in the center of the homestead in

⁶⁰ Miroslava Prazak, "Cultural Expressions of Socioeconomic Differentiation among the Kuria of Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1992), p. 123. Muniko et al., *Kuria-English Dictionary*, this dictionary also defines another word, *igitume* as "a man's private house in a homestead, hut."

⁶¹ LeVine and LeVine, "House Design," p. 159.

⁶² Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 150-151.

⁶³ Peter Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship among the Gogo: A Semipastoral Society of Central Tanzania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 1-2.

contrast to the position of wives' houses on the periphery. Some important men choose burial in their livestock corral rather than in front of the house.

Although a woman is incorporated into a man's homestead and lineage through bridewealth in the present patrilineally dominated system, a woman can still exert power through control over the house as her locus of authority. Women as farmers of millet and producers of children strongly influence a man's prosperity and prestige in the community. Children identify themselves primarily by the "house" of their mother, using the inside possessive prefix *mwa-* (*mwaKimori*, "of or inside Kimori's house"). People often carry these "house" designations to the second or third generation. Whatever the formal lineage organization, households have a strong matrifocal orientation. A woman has primary responsibility for feeding herself and her family and has fairly autonomous control over her own resources to do so.⁶⁴

The independence of a woman's house alludes to another institution of long duration in East Africa, known in the anthropological literature as the "house-property complex" or the division of family wealth and inheritance according to the "house" of each wife in a polygynous family. Each "house," consisting of a woman and her children, controls certain livestock used for milking and meat, and paying the bridewealth for its sons to marry. Men allot these livestock to each wife at marriage. A woman's "house" gains more cattle by trade, gift or, especially, as daughters of the "house" marry and "the house" receives the bridewealth. In the house-property system of the western Serengeti men, as heads of homesteads, retained more flexibility to move property between "houses" than did their Kuria and Gusii neighbors to the north. Hakansson hypothesizes that this more centralized system is found in "high risk environments," like the western Serengeti, where periodic disaster demands more interdependence among the houses of one

⁶⁴ Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, p. 147, argues for the pivotal position of the maternal house among the Kuria.

homestead.⁶⁵ In either case the system of independent "houses," controlling their own property, gave women an extremely strong position in the negotiation of family affairs. In spite of these autonomous spheres of control, men and women must ultimately work in unison for the family to function.⁶⁶

Both men and women use the powerful metaphor of the "house" today, just as we have reason to believe they would have used it in the past, in the struggles between men and women on a daily basis. The ultimate sanction that a woman could exert over a man was to deny him access to her house or leave her house to find sanctuary in another man's homestead.⁶⁷ One elderly Nata woman complained that even if a woman had her own house and grain stores her husband, as head of the homestead, would give orders for work each day and make decisions about resource use without his wives' opinion. She related the story of her father's first wife who butchered a goat to eat (trespassing on the male space) during the hunger while he was away getting grain in Zanaki. Someone who saw signs of the goat in her inner room attic (trespassing on female space) discovered her act and so she left for her natal kin Zanaki. When her husband came to get her the youth of the homestead defended her right to sanctuary with their spears but were finally persuaded to let her husband take her home. When they got home, he cut off her ears and never entered her house again. Nevertheless, as the last word in the story, when he died, his body had to be taken out of the back door, from the inner room of her house, as his first wife, for burial.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ T. Hakansson, "Family Structure, Bridewealth, and Environment in Eastern Africa: A Comparative Study of the House-Property Systems," *Ethnology* 28 (1989): 119.

⁶⁶ Discussed by Regina Smith Oboler, "The House Property Complex and African Social Organisation," *Africa* 64, 3 (1994): 344, 351.

⁶⁷ Interview with Tetero Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁶⁸ Interview with Bhosa Rugatiri, Mbiso, 17 June 1995 (Nata ♀).

Oral Traditions and Gendered Space

The emergence story also represents the gendered spatial organization of the homestead by first man leaving his nomadic camp and coming to live in the enclosed space of the cave, which remained the woman's house. A Nata elder told me that the man, Nyamunywa, was an *amorware*, a term for a man who goes to live in an independent woman's (*amosimbe*) homestead and is married by her (passive), often called a "male wife."⁶⁹ He could never be the head of the homestead and was beholden to her goodwill as she could ask him to leave at anytime. In the Ikizu story Nyakinywa refuses to marry Isamongo but he stays in her house.⁷⁰

Evidence for homestead space in the distant past from archaeology and linguistics, evidence for homestead space in the recent past from ethnography, and the representation of homestead space in oral traditions of emergence all present parallel accounts of gender relations in which men and women control autonomous yet interdependent spheres of authority in the homestead. In the preceding section I presented the arguments for assigning these emergence stories to the time frame of the *longue durée*, reflecting the strategies of settlers on the frontier who created new kinds of communities from a diverse social environment. In this section I have shown that the core images of these traditions represent a spatial homestead organization that was in place by or before 1000 A.D. and continuing, at least in memory, to the present. Although I cannot conclusively date the gendering of this homestead space without more linguistic evidence, the overwhelming ethnographic evidence suggests that it is also a pattern of long duration. All these forms of evidence present a picture of gender relations that is clearly at odds with the increasing

⁶⁹ Interview with Sochora Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata ♂). See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the *amosimbe* position.

⁷⁰ Note that in the story told by Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995 (Nata ♂) in Appendix 1, he asserts, in contradiction to all other accounts, that first woman went to live in first man's hunting shelter.

emphasis on the subordination of women to male control of homestead resources that can be dated to the late-nineteenth century. Although the argument is not conclusive, the evidence points to a pattern of gender relations in the distant past that is different from that which exists today.

If the gender relations symbolized in the emergence stories form part of the frontier process, what crucial strategies might they represent? The spatial metaphor of the male hunter moving into the female farmer's home might literally symbolize the historical process by which stranger husbands moved into the matrifocal houses of their wives and were incorporated into the expanding community. Of course not all farming wives married hunter husbands but the emergence traditions might encode this process because it was of crucial importance on the frontier. Matrilineages could have enhanced their widespread networks of security by incorporating hunter men, and their networks of security, into farming communities. Incorporation of hunting men into a matrifocal house ensured that the children of that union stayed in the farming community. This strategy would help to explain the success of Bantu-speakers to expand and eventually dominate in a region once shared by peoples of many different linguistic groups. Another possibility is that the assignment of autonomous spheres of authority to men and women within the household was simply a more efficient way of mastering the range of skills necessary to diversify the domestic economy on the frontier.

However gender relations contributed to the frontier process, these strategies were not necessarily consensual or automatically assumed. Poewe argues that in a matrilineal descent system a form of "sexual parallelism" exists in which men and women control entirely separate and distinct resources. However, in a bilateral (nondifferentiated) descent system, gender relations of "reciprocal-dependence" exist in which the separate male and female spheres of resource control are mutually dependent on each other for ongoing social reproduction. This produces a precarious situation in which men and women constantly negotiate and contest the political and economic

affairs of each gender.⁷¹ Another variation of the emergence story illustrates the contested nature of male and female domains of authority employed in social reproduction.

The Ikizu Emergence Story: The Division of Authority

The emergence stories use fire and water to symbolize the different kinds of authority controlled by men and women and the interdependence of these spheres. Man's secret was fire, while woman lived near a spring and supplied water. Many rituals and narratives also use the symbols of water and fire as transformative substances of power.⁷² A look at another regional variation of the emergence story provides a clearer understanding of the spheres of authority represented by these gendered domains. In the Ikizu version first woman's secret was water, or rain, while man's was fire. The woman won in a contest between water and fire and took authority as rainmaker "chief" over Ikizu. [See Appendix 2 for other versions of the story.]

Nyokinywo went by herself (from Kanodi in Sukuma) to the cave of Goka. When she entered the cave of Goka and stepped on the rock it cried like a drum. That is how she knew that she had come to the end of her journey. She laid down her bundles in her new house prophesied by her father. The next day she went outside to look at her surroundings when she saw some smoke. She found out that the smoke was coming from the hill of Sombayo. She went to find it, over the River Kibongi, and to the cave of Sombayo. There she met a man named Isamongo who lived in the cave and was of the clan of Muriho. Isamongo asked his guest where she had come from. She said she came from her house to see where the smoke was coming from. He asked to see her house, so they went to Gaka, to Nyakinywa's place, where he asked her to be his wife. She refused but they lived there together as lovers. Those two people each had their own area of expertise. Isamongo had the secret of making fire and Nyokinywo had the secret of water, that is she could bring rain. Each asked the other to show them their expertise, but they could not agree. Things went on like this until one day Isamongo went out to hunt. Nyokinywa brought a big roin which completely soaked Isamongo out in the bush. Back at home she had put out the fire. When he returned, cold and wet, he found the fire out in the cave at Goka. So Isamongo had to show Nyokinywo how to make fire. He took

⁷¹ Poewe, *Matrilineal Ideology*, pp. 21-26.

⁷² For a discussion of the symbols of fire and water see Anita Jacobson-Widding, "Encounter in the Water Mirror," in *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, ed. Anita Jacobson-Widding (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1990), pp. 177-216.

out a board and a stick that he twirled until he made fire. So you see, he had already shown her the secret of fire. He then asked Nyakinywa to show him the secret of rain. She did not refuse but asked him to first bring her sister Wang'ombe from Hunyari. Then he should go to the bush and kill a bushbuck, skin it and bring the skin to her. Isamongo did all that she asked. The next day she asked him to make the pegs to stretch out the hide. When this was done the three of them left with the skin and the pegs and went to the pool at Nyambogo. When they arrived, Isamongo was asked to peg out the skin on top of the pool. He tried and failed. Nyakinywa tried it and succeeded. Isamongo asked her to do it again but she refused. Wang'ombe asked to try and she also succeeded in pegging out the skin on top of the pool, like her sister Nyakinywa. So Isamongo was told that he had failed the test and would not be shown the secret of rain. They returned to their house at Gaka.⁷³

Although both the Nata and Ikizu emergence stories are basic to the corpus of men's historical knowledge, embedded in them is the contested nature of men's and women's autonomous but reciprocal spheres of authority. In this narrative the interaction between first man and first woman explains the establishment of ritual authority in Ikizu over rainmaking and prophecy. Ikizu recognize Nyakinywa's line as the chiefly line of rainmakers while Isamongo's is the line of prophets. The female power of water and fertility triumphed in this story but only with concession and compromise. To become the *mtemi* or "chief" of Ikizu she had to agree to certain provisions laid down by Isamongo—that Ikizu would retain its basic social institutions of circumcised age-sets, generation-sets and eldership ranks. An alternate version of the Ikizu emergence story is told in the next chapter. In this story Muriho, the hunter, conquers the malignant spirits of the land and establishes Ikizu by marrying a local woman and settling at Chamuriho Mountain. Those who put the two emergence stories together say that Muriho was the ancestor of Isamongo and represented the original Ikizu people.

In the story of Nyakinywa and Isamongo the interactions of first man and first woman, based on the founding myth, became the vehicle for telling a new story about changing political authority, while the spatial arrangement of the homestead became the site of these gendered

⁷³ P.M. Mturi and S. Sasora, "Historia ya Ikizu na Sizaki," unpublished mss, 1995.

negotiations. Far from representing women in a subordinate position, in this version woman's authority wins the contest, while recognizing the need for mutuality.

This version of the emergence story reminds us that the space of women's authority is not only their marital house but also their natal house, as discussed in Chapter 2. Western Serengeti emergence stories emphasize the role of women as wives. Yet in the Ikizu version Nyakinywa's sister, Wang'ombe, joins the struggle of first man and first woman. In other versions Nyakinywa leaves Kanadi with two sisters. This version introduces Nyakinywa as the daughter of a chief. The characters of founding myths in many places throughout Africa represent the genealogical prototypes of parts of the kinship system.⁷⁴ The sisters in the Ikizu story would seem to indicate the strength of the matrilineage, while the Ikoma and Ngoreme stories that are considered in the next chapter emphasize the brothers of a patrilineage.

The Historical Basis of the Ikizu Emergence Story

Although rainmakers from the Kwaya clan may have been practicing in Ikizu for a long time, it was only in the late nineteenth century, in response to the disasters, that Ikizu was consolidated as a political entity under the centralized leadership of one rainmaker. In the *mtemi* (chief) list of Nyakinywa's descendants, discussed in the Chapter 6, the first *mtemi* in the list that can be historically dated ruled in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A similar pattern dates the Sizaki chiefship to this period from Sukuma sources.⁷⁵ The Ikizu developed this new group identity not through assimilation into Sukuma (Kanadi) society but rather through popular acceptance of limited ritual authority for the descendants of Nyakinywa as rainmakers. Individual

⁷⁴ See Karen Sacks, Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979).

⁷⁵ Gregory Bugomora, Lumali, 5 August 1949. Lumali was a White Fathers' Sukuma language newsletter of the church.

Sukuma immigrants seem to have played an important role in the political realignment of the time but their numbers were not significant enough to bring lasting cultural or linguistic changes.

Although colonial officer and anthropologist, E. C. Baker, used this story as evidence to prove the Sukuma origins of Ikizu, no other evidence of mass migration from or assimilation into Sukuma exists.

Because Ikizu retained its western Serengeti culture and language, narrators might have adapted the earlier emergence story, similar to that of the Nata, to take into consideration the new authority from Sukuma. The Ikizu story about political authority unfolds in the gendered homestead spaces because these are the core spatial images of the older founding myth on which it was based. By coopting the older story as their story, the Kwaya clan of Nyakinywa gained local legitimacy. Many scholars have documented a similar process by which outsiders gained access to inside authority by appropriating cultural symbols in the west Lakes region of Buhaya and Bunyoro.⁷⁶ In the Ikizu example, the outsiders gained authority by inserting themselves into the founding myth as the woman who owns the house but does not marry the man. In this society, women's power over water, rain and fertility (and thus reproduction) is something that can be used as a tool to gain political power. The first four rainmakers of Ikizu in Nyakinywa's line were women, after which men usurped the title. This subordination of women's authority to men's suggests general trends in the late nineteenth century, which I explore in later chapters.

⁷⁶ A good example of this is in the historical analysis of Bunyoro see, Iris Berger, Religion and Resistance: East African Kingdoms in the Precolonial Period (Tervuren, Belgium: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Annales Series, 1981); Iris Berger and Carole Buchanan, "The Cwezi Cult and the History of Western Uganda," in East African Cultural History, ed. Joseph T. Gallagher, (Syracuse, New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1976); Peter Schmidt, Historical Archaeology: A Structural Approach in an African Culture (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978); Tantal, "The Early History of Kitara"; Newbury, King and Clans; Randall Packard, "Debating in a Common Idiom: Variant Traditions of Genesis among the BaShu of Eastern Zaire," in The African Frontier, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1987), pp.148-161.

The Gendered Division of Labor

This reading of the emergence stories in terms of gendered and autonomous spheres of labor and authority provides a further possible parallel to the processes of community formation on the frontier that incorporated the knowledge and economic strategies of both farmers and hunters. In their representation of the gendered division of labor, both the Nata and the Ikizu emergence stories demonstrate that men's and women's autonomous spheres of authority depend on mutuality. First woman grows millet. She is a farmer. First man provides meat. He is a hunter. In the daily routine of work, women of one homestead do most of the farm work; they control their own fields and jointly farm their husband's field. Although colonial rumors existed of women hunters, elders characterized hunting as exclusively men's work.⁷⁷ While women sometimes took their turn at tending livestock, men also controlled this domain.⁷⁸

In spite of these clear gendered divisions of labor, all those I talked with agreed that, in practice, both men and women farm. Ikizu elders declared that both men and women share all aspects of farming equally and that farming was never considered as women's work alone.⁷⁹ Ikoma elders in the east placed more emphasis on hunting as men's work and farming as women's work, although men farmed in the wet season and hunted in the dry season. A young man who wanted to marry, first had to harvest from his own fields and fill his grain storage bin.⁸⁰ An Ishenyi elder said that a man checking out the character of a boy who wanted to marry his daughter would look

⁷⁷ From the Game Warden, Kilossa, to the Honorable Secretary in Chief, Dar es Salaam, 26 February, 1924, p. 62, 215/P.C./ 14/1, vol. 1, TNA, "the craze has gone so far that there are even women who spend their entire time hunting, two of these dusky Dianas being particularly famous."

⁷⁸ See Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, p. 51, on gendered division of labor among the Kuria.

⁷⁹ Interview with Kiyarata Mzumari, Mariwanda, 8 July 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

⁸⁰ Interview with Pastor Wilson Shanyangi Machota, Morotonga, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

first at what kind of farmer he was and, secondly, how well he looked after his own parents.⁴¹

Daily practice in which men and women cooperate and participate in the same tasks mediates the separate economic realms of men and women asserted in the founding myth.

The life-cycle and the seasonal cycle determine in key ways the division of economic tasks. Young men and women farm together without differentiation, except during the dry season when young men frequently engage in hunting or chase cattle raiders for long periods at a time. A mature man is less likely to spend time farming as he grows older and elderly women retire from farming if economically feasible. Gendered domains are also dependent on age and elderly women more easily enter male spaces. Young men and young women maintain an equality in work relations that is subordinate to elders of either gender.⁴² Nevertheless, while both men and women farm, women are more likely than men to farm on a daily basis from their youth to old age.

If first woman and first man are in some way symbolic of the larger processes in which farmers and hunters collectively formed new societies from the contributions of each, then the assertion of their mutuality rather than one's dominance over the other is significant. Women manage and control the agricultural production of their own fields, fields that provide most of the family's food. People placed even more importance and value on agricultural production in the past. Men acquired the large livestock herds that dominate the western Serengeti today during the early colonial period, as I discuss in Chapter 10. Many elders said that even in the memory of their grandparents, livestock were few, counted mainly in goats and sheep. They exchanged bridewealth in wild animal skins, hoes, and salt rather than in cattle, as is the practice today. In matrilineal

⁴¹ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

⁴² For an analysis of age and gender in labor patterns and community organization see Elias C. Mandala, *Work and Control in a Peasant Economy: A History of the Lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859-1960* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

communities, bride-service was the norm, until recently. The prestige value of meat also seems to have increased since the late nineteenth century with the introduction of new eldership titles gained by feasting.

In the past the community seems to have recognized a gendered division of equally valued labor, with women controlling agricultural production and men pastoral and hunting resources. Yet in relation to the communities that surround them Bantu-speaking peoples ascribe to themselves the corporate identity of "farmers," *Rema*. They distinguish themselves from the *Nyika* (people of the wilderness) or the *Bisa* (enemies), whom they identify as those people who do not farm—the Asi hunter/gatherers, Tatoga and Maasai herders. In the emergence stories the woman's home of cultivated millet fields is the space of civilization. Economic subsistence patterns are an important way in which people differentiate themselves from others.

Oral narratives metaphorically extend the gendered tasks of the homestead (farming, hunting and herding) to conceptualize relationships beyond the community with other farmers, hunters and herders. This identification of the entire community with the female domain of farming runs parallel to the evidence of historical linguistics, comparative ethnography and oral traditions that seem to indicate a process by which matrilocally organized farming communities retained their own identity while assimilating preexisting hunting communities. In the same way as men and women each had their own tasks and realms of authority within the homestead, so farmers, hunters and herders each occupied their own place within a regional economic system of interdependence.

Conclusion

Thus, on one level, the core spatial images of the emergence stories refer to gendered homestead space and tell us something about the interactions of men and women in the past that made production and reproduction on the frontier possible. In this regard the symbols of female control over the house and water and male control over the courtyard and fire represent separate

spheres of gendered authority, each powerful in its own way. The evidence of historical linguistics and comparative ethnography shows that these are long-standing generative principles in the region. Gendered household space represents the generative principles through which people organized household production and social reproduction on the frontier.

Bantu-speakers adapted to the new environment they experienced in the western Serengeti by learning from and incorporating peoples that they found already in the area. The new kinds of homesteads built by these settlers established the productive and reproductive basis for their eventual dominance of the region. In an environment of abundant and extensive resources non-differentiated lineages provided wide social networks and the means for incorporating strangers.

This chapter provides a view of the emergence stories from the internal perspective of homestead space, gendered relations and the organization of production within the community. In the next chapter I examine other versions of the emergence story in terms of the external relations of Bantu-speaking hill farmers with Asi hunters and Tatoga herders. The core images of these stories move from internal homestead space to external ecological space. Oral traditions of emergence contain both sets of core images, but some seem to emphasize one aspect over the other. The *asimoka* stories continue to be so effective because we can interpret them in various ways without exhausting their rich cultural meaning.

CHAPTER FIVE
ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES OF INTERACTION:
THE EMERGENCE TRADITIONS OF A HILL FARMER SOCIETY

The western Serengeti emergence traditions also evoke the interdependent ecological spaces of woodlands, hills and grasslands of this region. Within these ecological spaces early settlers fashioned economic subsistence patterns that took advantage of each niche from the position of the hills, in close proximity to the woodlands and grasslands. The congruence of regional ecologies with the spaces of farmers and hunters in the Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme emergence stories provides insight into the possible subsistence patterns of different communities on the hills, in the woodlands and on the grasslands and ways in which farmers used the hill position to gain rights to the land and develop a new combination of economic strategies. Tatoga stories adopted by the Ikoma and Ikizu shed light on the changing relationship between farmers and herders in the past. Yet these ecological/economic patterns represented in oral tradition do not represent an environmental determinism.¹

Over time people have used and imagined the same ecological spaces in different ways. Before Bantu-speakers or Southern Nilotic-speakers ever entered the region, Eastern Sahelian-speaking agro-pastoralists and Southern Cushitic-speaking pastoralists, along with Khoisan-speaking hunter/gatherers each occupied a different ecological niche within an interdependent economic system. Bantu-speakers broke down these economic barriers that confined each group to a distinct ecology by practicing farming, hunting and herding. They settled in the hills, best

¹ See Harms, *Games Against Nature*, for an analysis of the interaction of people with their environment, especially "Conclusion: Nature and Culture," pp. 243-256.

suited for grain farming and, at first, learned from and developed interdependent economies with woodland hunters and grasslands herders. Yet as time went on they increasingly became dominant in the region by encroaching on the ecological spaces of both hunters and herders, pushing them back into more marginal areas. The last remnants of this interdependent economic system collapsed as a result of the late nineteenth century diasters when Maasai raiders forced farmers out of the eastern hills, Asi hunters moved east to become Maasai clients, and Tatoga herders relocated south as Maasai raiders came to dominate the Serengeti plains. As Maasai strength declined after the rinderpest panzootic the hill farmers became commercial hunters and wealthy livestock owners, dominating all three ecological zones in the western Serengeti.

In spite of these vast changes in the regional economy the core spatial images of the emergence traditions still seem to refer to the earlier patterns of interaction between hill farmers, woodland hunters and grassland herders. In its exploration of the ecological spaces of the emergence traditions, this chapter shows how western Serengeti people shaped and were shaped by the landscapes in which they lived. Historical linguistics, archaeology, and ecological studies provide parallel evidence for understanding the historical development of relationships between peoples practicing different economic subsistence patterns in the region. People created the social identities of farmer, hunter and herder in the distant past to organize a regional economy. Although early Bantu-speakers also hunted and herded they saw themselves as farmers within this regional system based on difference.

The Ecological Landscapes of Interaction on the Frontier

Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme stories add another dimension to the analysis of the emergence of new communities on the frontier in the distant past. The core images still concern the interaction of farmers, hunters and herders but they seem to refer to the external relationships between communities of different economic subsistence patterns, rather than the internal division of

homestead labor. The spatial images are more broadly the ecological spaces of the known landscape rather than gendered homestead space. This aspect of the core spatial images of the emergence stories is also present, though not as apparent, in the Nata and Ikizu stories considered in the last chapter.

The *asimoka* traditions represent the interactions of farmers, hunters and herders in a regional economic system of interdependence that is amazingly similar to that reconstructed through historical linguistics and ecological evidence. Oral traditions suggest possible explanations, expressed through local historical consciousness, of how and why this regional system of interdependence worked in the past and how Bantu-speaking farmers eventually became the dominant players as they reconfigured the entire system. A reading of the core spatial images of these traditions, however, must proceed alongside other kinds of sources that provide evidence for the ways in which these processes may have operated in the past. All these forms of evidence seem to indicate that Bantu-speaking farmers founded successful communities on the frontier and out-competed those who taught them how to do it by situating themselves at a favorable position to take advantage of other kinds of subsistence patterns and interaction with peoples in other ecological niches.

Ngoreme and Ikoma Emergence Stories

The Ngoreme and Ikoma versions of the *asimoka* story are overtly concerned with their ancestral migration from Sonjo to settle in their present homes. One version of the Ikoma story goes like this: [See Appendix 3 for other versions of the Ikoma origin story.]

A Msonjo came from Sonjo to hunt. He got lost and went farther to the west and rested under an omokoma tree. His name became Mwikoma. He came with his bow and arrows and when he got lost he slept under the huge tree that was in the bush. The limbs spread out like a house, providing shelter inside. This was at the place called Chengero. He killed an onimol, skinned it, made a fire and ate it under the tree. This then became his house and his camp. He would go out to hunt and return here at night. After a while he became aware that other people lived in the area. He went to their camps to talk with

them but they could not understand each other because they spoke different languages. He invited a woman to his camp. She only ate grains or porridge and he gave her meat to eat. She was amazed and thought how she had only had porridge by itself and how good this was. Thus, they began to get to know each other. He said, "I am Mwikoma." They began to live together and then got married, settling among those people who were already there.

He went on and married a second wife, they had children. Then he married a third wife. Soon his children had grown up and were adults themselves. Each went off in a different direction but Mzee Mwikoma stayed back in Chengero with his first wife Nyabaikoma. His second wife's name was Nyabaishenyi and they lived around Pangwesi Mountain. The third wife's name was Nyabaishenyi and they lived around Paori. They separated from each other and multiplied. Thus, today the Ikoma, Ngoreme and Ishenyi are one group, one thing, they are from one family. The Nata on the other hand come from the Ikizu and the Ikizu come from Sukuma.²

The core images remain consistent with those explored in the last chapter, hunter meets farmer and goes to live with her. Here, first woman comes from a preexisting community that incorporates first man. His wives, as founders of "houses," become the ancestresses of the three related ethnic groups, Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme. These images are again remarkably congruent with the linguistic evidence for matrilineal or bilateral descent-based communities incorporating hunters as husbands. The "houses" of these women are the points from which oral tradition reckons differentiation into ethnic groups. The Ishenyi emergence story is an abbreviated one that describes the first couple of Iyancha and Mugunyi living in the hills of Guka.

One version of the Ngoreme story uses the basic emergence images to explain the relationship and differences between Ikoma and Ngoreme: they were brothers who migrated from Sonjo together. When they got to the mountain Bangwesi (or Mangwesi) the Ikoma brother favored hunting and went off to hunt. The Ngoreme brother finally refused to carry the meat of his brother and moved away to find better farming land in Ikorongo.³ In this version two brothers take on the role of farmer and hunter rather than the original couple in the Nata, Ikizu and Ikoma

² Interview with Machota Nyantitu, Morotonga, 28 May 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

³ Interview with Bhoke Wambura, Maburi, 7 October 1995 (Ngoreme ♀).

emergence stories. The separation of brothers according to economic specialization is a familiar narrative theme around the lakes, used to explain the common ancestry of peoples who are now divided in space and time.⁴ The appearance of brothers (rather than first man and first woman) as the characters in the Ngoreme emergence story may be interpreted as genealogical prototypes of the kinship system and thus indicate a stronger patrilineal emphasis in the east. Some have argued that the Ngoreme and their neighbors across the Mara River, the Kuria, became more strongly patrilineal because of their greater emphasis on the inheritance of cattle wealth.⁵ This emphasis is probably the result of late nineteenth century changes as western Serengeti peoples in the east gained cattle wealth through trade and moved down onto the plains for the first time.

The Importance of Place

What makes the emphasis in these stories different from those discussed in the last chapter is that they mention specific places known on the landscape today that are central to the meaning of the story. The Ikoma, Ngoreme, and Ishenyi all begin their emergence stories with hunters leaving Sonjo. Narrators note particular places along the way to their present home, in the Ikoma story these are the home areas of each of Mwikoma's sons. The Nata emergence story takes place in Bwanda and the Ikizu story near Chamuriho Mountain. The mention of the Ikorongo hills in the Ngoreme emergence story resonates today as homeland, though Kuria immigrants from North Mara, who also have a tradition of Ikorongo as homeland, now occupy this area.

Because these places play such a critical role in the imagery of the stories, I decided that they were worth investigating in their own right. Among each of these ethnic groups individual elders who took an interest in my work insisted that I go and visit these important sites if I wanted

⁴ For Suba see Michael Kenny, "A Stranger from the Lake: A Theme in the History of the Lake Victoria Shorelands," *Azania* 17 (1982): 15.

⁵ For an argument about Kuria and pastoralism see Kjerland, "Cattle Breed."

to understand their history. When I proposed to do some videotaping of my research, the Ikizu elders decided that we must go and tape the stories at Isamongo's camp, Nyakinywa's cave, and the pond where they stretched the skin. On two different occasions and in two different places, I went with elders looking for the Nata origin site of Bwanda. One man told me that someone had painted the name "Bwanda" on a rock to mark the spot for future generations.⁶ The physical places themselves held meaning for these elders. Yet how do these sites speak to a historian, what do they reveal about the past and the people who lived there?

Hill Farmers

All these sites from the emergences stories of Nata, Ishenyi, Ikoma and Ngoreme were located on hills or rises to the east of where they now live and on the western edge of the Serengeti plains and woodlands. [See Figure 5-1: Ecological map of the Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem—woodlands, hills, grasslands, with emergence sites.] Mangwesi,⁷ one of the highest mountains in the area, is a major point of reference in the Ikoma, Ngoreme and Ishenyi stories. Although narrators locate the Ikizu emergence story around another mountain, Chamuriho, to the west, an alternate Ikizu origin story describes the wanderings of the hunter, Muriho, who takes refuge with an elder at Mangwesi before reaching Ikizu. Sonjo itself is found in the hills on the eastern side of the Serengeti plains. The Guka hills of Ishenyi emergence are closer to Sonjo than to present day

⁶ Interviews with Sochoro Kabati and Makuru Nyang'aka, trip to "Bwanda," 16 February 1996; the site near Tabora B. We looked for the site near Matare, Mugumu, where Analeti also confirms as the site of Bwanda, with Mariko Romara Kisigiro and the Chairman of Burunga village, they had been given instructions by Hassan Irende, the elder who write "Bwanda" on the rock, who was then bedridden. This story was confirmed by Charles Nyamaganda, Burunga, 3 June 1995.

⁷ Sometimes rendered Bangwesi or Pangwesi.

The Serengeti - Mara Ecosystem

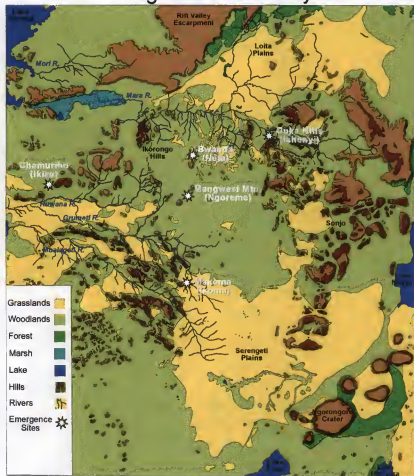


Figure 5-1: Ecological Map of the Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem

Ishenyi. Linguistic evidence shows that these settlers were following a very old pattern of their Great Lakes Bantu predecessors who commonly inhabited the hill ridges.⁸

Because of local soil and climatic patterns, hills constitute the ecological niche that farmers would have, of necessity, inhabited. The fact that all these places in the emergence stories representing early farming communities are located on hills is fascinating considering the ecological evidence about subsistence patterns. The congruence of these two different bodies of evidence seems to indicate that these early communities were agriculturally based. Some of these hills, like Robanda, are the only elevation rise for miles and miles on a vast grassland, while most belong to a chain of hills bordering on the plains or woodlands. Western Serengeti farmers still live on the hills and rises to exploit the best soils. Farming practices today provide a means for hypothesizing longer term interactions of farmers with their environment.

The emergence stories describe Nyasionko, the first woman of Nata, as a farmer of eleusine millet, *oburwe*. Today a thin liquid millet porridge (*ekerongori*) and a thicker porridge eaten with the fingers (*obokima*) are the staple food of the area. Millet is also used in making beer, eaten raw on trips, and is necessary for most rituals of blessing. Millet *obokima* (porridge) is "food"—without it one has not eaten. The word "to eat" (*turagera*) means specifically to eat *obokima* (porridge), with another word (*tura*) for eating other things. Even today elders regard cassava or maize *obokima* as second-rate food. African or finger millet (*Eleusine coracana* or *E. africana*), a crop domesticated in greater eastern Africa, was adopted by Great Lakes Bantu-speakers from Central Sudanic-speaking peoples in the distant past.⁹ Grain crops were necessary for adapting to life in the drier grasslands of the western Serengeti. Kjerland identified sixteen

⁸ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 160-162. See also Wagner, "Whose History," pp. 26-39.

⁹ Schoenbrun, "We Are What We Eat," pp. 10-12.

varieties of finger millet used among the Kuria, differentiated according to soil tolerances, color and end use.¹⁰ This diversity and adaptability of native varieties indicates a long history of cultivation in the area.

Finger millet requires a fertile and free draining sandy loam soil, since it cannot tolerate water logging.¹¹ In the western Serengeti these soils are found only on hills and rises. The plains, interspersed between the hills, of the western Serengeti consist of the "mbuga" type soil that is a dark, heavy, clay-like "cotton soil," becoming waterlogged and swampy in the wet season. Western Serengeti people have only fully exploited the "mbuga" soils with the arrival of ox-plows during the colonial period. Many elders described a wooden digging stick (*akoromo* in Ikoma) as the original farm implement, which farmers gradually replaced with wooden and metal hoes.¹² Although western Serengeti people have traded metal hoes from Geita for centuries before the colonial period, these hoes seem to have been a prestige item rather than a common tool. Cultivating "mbuga" soils with the digging stick or wooden hoe would be nearly impossible and is difficult even with the metal hand hoe manufactured today.

Local classification of soil types includes *ekebuse* (sandy upland soils) and *eseghero* (clay bottom land soils). The best soil is a mixture of both, found on the low elevation rises. In the past farmers had to work up the clay *eseghero* soil in the dry season to get it ready before the rains. This practice, called *kuharaga*, has fallen out of use since the arrival of the ox-plow. If the year is good, *eseghero* soils are incredibly productive. Nevertheless, they either get too hard in a dry year or too swampy in a wet year to produce a reliable crop. Thus, farmers seek out the *ekebuse* sandy

¹⁰ Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," p. 37.

¹¹ J.W. Purseglove, *Tropical Crops: Monocotyledons 1* (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 146-149.

¹² Interview with Pastor Wilson Shanyangi Machota, Morotonga, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma *o*).

loam soils for their consistency. If a family controls enough labor, they will exploit both kinds of soil in one year.¹³

These soils exist in various mixtures and within close proximity, usually depending on the elevation of the slope, so that farmers become adept at staggering the placement of their fields to find the right combinations. It is reasonable to assume that people would have followed a similar strategy for exploiting these same hill ecologies in the past. Today one family rarely locates all their fields in one contiguous space. In the annual preparations for farming, a woman commonly asks those who have obligations to her in the economy of reciprocity to plant part of their field for her. Depending on the level of obligation, she may come for the weeding or simply return when the field is ready for harvest. Often a man sends his second wife or older sons to distant fields for the growing season. Land is in plentiful supply but the right soil combinations and the labor strategies to farm them are critical issues. People spread out the risks by maximizing the diversity of the environment.¹⁴

Western Serengeti people, now as in the past, build their settlements on the hillsides to escape the swampy lowlands in the rainy season. The low areas are considered bad for the health of people and livestock in the rains.¹⁵ Elders testify that in the past only the "kitchen gardens" were found near the homestead, with the area close by being reserved for herding. Fields were located away from the settlement area and temporary houses built there for the growing season.

¹³ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Nyawagamba Magoto, Mahiti Gamba, Bugerera, (Nata ♂).

¹⁴ Observations through two farming seasons in Nata and travel throughout the region.

¹⁵ Interview with Mahiti Gamba, Bugerera, 4 February 1996 (Nata ♂). Presumably lowland areas are connected with malaria or "fevers."

Farmers had to protect their fields from wild animals so they farmed in contiguous blocks, surrounding the whole area with a thorn fence.

Hills as Zones of Interaction

In the emergence stories western Serengeti people also located their hill settlements at the interstices of the ecological zones of the area, allowing farmers to exploit herding and hunting ecological zones contiguous to each other. This position provided frequent opportunity for interaction with hunter/gatherers who lived in the adjoining woodlands and herders who lived on the plains. It is this pattern of interaction, afforded by the position of the hills, that gave western Serengeti farmers the means for prosperity in a marginal land. These landscapes of hunters, herders and farmers, living in close proximity form the ecological basis for the meeting of hunter and farmer, represented in the spatial images of the emergences stories of first man and first woman.

Ecological Zones

Ecologists refer to the whole area, from Ikizu in the west to Sonjo in the east, as the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem, covering some 25,000 square kilometers. This area can be broken into three major ecological zones of hills, woodlands and grasslands that have provided the diverse environment for inter-cultural exchange. Wildlife populations have also thrived in this varied ecosystem, producing the largest herds of grazing mammals in the world with thirty species of ungulates (some 2.4 million total) and thirteen species of large carnivores.¹⁶ [See Figure 5-1: Ecological map of the Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem, p. 199.]

¹⁶ Sinclair and Norton-Griffiths, eds. *Serengeti: Dynamics of an Ecosystem*. Sinclair, "The Serengeti Environment," p. 41. See Chapter 1, "Dynamics of the Serengeti Ecosystem: Process and Pattern," and Chapter 2, "The Serengeti Environment," both by Sinclair for an overall view. The Serengeti-Mara ecosystem is defined as that area influenced by the migratory wildebeest population, p. 31.

The extensive grassland plains are found in the southern part of the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem, with projections reaching up into what is now Loliondo, to the west of Sonjo, and out to Lake Victoria in what is now the western Corridor of the National Park. The Serengeti plain is a vast short-grass savanna, with trees along the rivers and among the rocky out-croppings known as kopjes. An impenetrable hardpan has been formed under much of the volcanic soils of the plains making it possible for only shallow-rooted grasses to survive. In spite of this, the Serengeti is one of the most productive grasslands in the world, in terms of biomass.¹⁷ During the colonial years Maasai herders moved into the western Serengeti, at least as far as Moru Kopjes in the western hills, during unseasonably dry periods. To avoid disease they grazed the plains during the dry season when the large wildlife herds were not there.¹⁸ The Tatoga now graze the plains of the western Corridor but they once dominated the Serengeti plains, at least seasonally, as far as the Ngorongoro Crater.

To the northwest of the plains the volcanic soils become finer grained, the rainfall increases and taller grasses of different species along with bush begin to thrive, merging into woodland. The alkaline ash soils demarcate the limits of the plain. The soils of the woodlands, to the north and west of the great plains, are formed from granite or quartzite parent rock, creating an acacia thorn-tree scrub and woodland.¹⁹ The small whistling thorn trees (*Acacia drepanolobium*) dominate in the woodlands with poorly drained soils.²⁰

¹⁷ Sinclair, "The Serengeti Environment," pp. 41-42.

¹⁸ H. St. J. Grant, District Officer, "Report on Human Habitation of the Serengeti National Park," May 1954 and from the District Office, Masai, Monduli, 28 May 1954 to the P.C. Northern Province, Arusha, National Game Parks, 215/350/vol. III, TNA.

¹⁹ Sinclair, "The Serengeti Environment," pp. 38-39.

²⁰ Ibid.

Oral narratives identify these woodlands as the space of the Asi hunter/gatherers.

Ambrose demonstrates that the areas best suited for gathering edible plants is on the more acidic soils of the woodland bush, not suited for either grazing of livestock, the larger ungulates or farming. The low soil fertility and low rainfall of this bush area encourages larger tubers and woody plants from which edible plant foods are found. The migrating herds of larger animals from the plains move through here in the dry season in search of the permanent water pools along the tributaries of the Grumeti and Mara Rivers. Archeological evidence suggests that hunter/gatherers in East Africa have always depended on the resident populations of smaller game that live in the woodlands, while pastoralists made use of the larger ungulate herds from the plains for meat.²¹

The hunter/gatherers also preferred the eco-tones between woodlands and grasslands and probably inhabited the hill areas before the Bantu-speaking farmers arrived. They hunted the resident populations of smaller game in the woodlands and grazed small herds of livestock, probably sheep and goats, on the grasslands. However, as farmers came to dominate the hill ecologies, they increasingly relegated the hunters to the woodland ecologies alone. The woodlands, with their supply of edible plants, resident game population and seasonal arrival of larger game, sustained a hunter lifestyle. Yet their confinement to the marginal woodlands areas meant that they came to depend on hill farmers and grassland herders for livestock and grain in return for woodlands products.²²

²¹ Ambrose, "Hunter-Gatherer Adaptations," pp. 11-42; Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 104-106. Curtis Marean, "Hunter to herder: Large Mammal Remains from the Hunter-Gatherer Occupation at Enkapune Ya Muto Rock-Shelter, Central Rift Kenya," *The African Archaeological Review*, 10 (1992): 65-127.

²² Ambrose, "Hunter-Gatherer Adaptations," pp. 11-42; Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 104-106.

The woodlands and plains finally break up among the ranges of hills in the northwest, creating a unique mosaic of many distinct ecotones in close proximity. Rivers form valleys between the hills, creating fertile but swampy low-lying areas of woodland. Directly to the south of the western hills the grassland plains again dominate, as far west as the lake. Here the Tatoga herders pasture their vast herds as close neighbors to the Bantu-speaking farmers who live in the hills of Ishenyi or Ikizu. This combination of hills, woodlands and plains, in close proximity, is the landscape that lies at the heart of the spatial images of the emergence stories, creating the ecological basis for the meeting of hunter and farmer, first man and first woman.

Sustained farming is not possible either on the short-grass plains or in the acacia woodlands. The grasslands have never supported permanent farming communities because of the hardpan soils and lack of permanent water sources. An early colonial report states that, "on the nine days' track Ikoma to Ngorongoro through the Zerengeti [sic] there are only two perennial watering-places."²³ Although the average rainfall would allow for farming in the woodlands, the poorly drained soils prohibit it. A colonial resource survey of the region describes these areas as the "famine" land of heavy black clay soils, covered by acacia thorn bush.²⁴

Those areas that are now woodland or grasslands may not necessarily have appeared this way two hundred years ago. The savanna ecosystem oscillates between phases where more grasslands or more woodlands exist depending on such large-scale perturbations in the system as widespread disease, drought, hunting or fire. For example, after the 1890 rinderpest panzootic in which 95% of the wildebeest and buffalo died, the grasses grew taller, providing more dry fuel for

²³ Geographical Section of the Naval Intelligence Division, Naval Staff, Admiralty, *A Handbook of German East Africa* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920; reprint ed. New York: Negro University Press, 1969), p. 159.

²⁴ V. C. R. Ford, *The Trade of Lake Victoria* (Kampala: The East African Institute of Social Research, 1955), p. 16.

hotter and larger fires, which destroyed trees and led to the spread of grasslands. The increase in the wildebeest population and more controlled burning since then has resulted in a trend toward bush encroachment. Ecologists now conclude that these extreme disturbances of the Serengeti ecosystem are, in fact, responsible for maintaining the diversity, productivity and resilience of the system.²⁵ Those who try to preserve the Serengeti in its "natural" state by not allowing these large-scale disturbances may destroy the feature that created its diversity, productivity and resilience in the first place.

Human Interaction with the Environment

Patterns of human habitation have done much to create and maintain this unique ecosystem over the past millennium, particularly in the use of fire (described in oral narratives as the secret of first man). The woodlands of the northwest zone of what is now the Serengeti National Park (closest to the area historically inhabited by western Serengeti peoples) contain species of trees that serve as markers for what ecologists call a "fire-maintained successional stage."²⁶ The dominant grasses of the western Serengeti, *Themeda triandra* and associated grasses, are also fire tolerant, indicating the evolution of these ecologies in conjunction with annual burning.

This ecological evidence supports oral narratives that describe subsistence strategies in relation to burning. After farmers harvest the crops in July and August the dry grass is set on fire, burning extensive areas before it stops. Ecological evidence suggests that this is a very old way of maintaining the optimal balance between grassland and woodland. Burning eliminates all of the

²⁵ Norton-Griffiths, "Influence of Grazing, Browsing, and Fire," pp. 332-333, 341-348; See also Jane Guyer and Paul Richards, "The Invention of Biodiversity: Social Perspectives on the Management of Biological Diversity in Africa," pp. 1-13; and Peter D. Little, "Pastoralism, Biodiversity and the Shaping of Savanna Landscapes in East Africa," pp. 37-51; both in *Africa* 66, 1 (1996).

²⁶ Sinclair, "The Serengeti Environment," p. 39.

tall dead grass that has almost no nutritional value for either wild animals or cattle and encourages the growth of the more nutritious grasses such as red oat grass, *Themeda triandra*, at the expense of the coarser grasses.²⁷ *Themeda triandra*, called *ambirisi* (from the verb "to herd" *korisi*), is acknowledged in local languages as one of the best pasture grasses, also valuable for thatch.²⁸ The month of *ekinyariri* ("green lands") refers to the greenflush of grass, especially appealing to cattle and wild animals, that emerges right after a burn. [See Figure 5-2: Human Interaction with the Environment.]

The landscape created by these burns has an orchard-like appearance with scattered acacia trees over a low grass pasture. The tree and grass species of the western Serengeti are particularly adapted to fire and regular burns do not destroy them.²⁹ One of the most important effects of burning is to control dense areas of bush which might harbor the tsetse fly. Western Serengeti people value and encourage open plains, as the sign of a healthy environment, by burning. From ancient times people not only adapted their practices to the existing environment but took an active role in creating an environment that was conducive to their economic prosperity.

Evidence shows that both the practice of burning and agro-pastoral patterns in the western Serengeti were also responsible for the control of endemic trypanosomiasis. Bantu-speakers who farmed the hills kept mainly goats and sheep until the colonial period. Goats and sheep develop more resistance than cattle to trypanosomiasis because they browse into the bush, which brings them into limited but regular contact with tsetse fly habitats. Because people kept their limited

²⁷ Norton-Griffiths, "Influence of Grazing, Browsing, and Fire on Vegetation Dynamics," p. 332.

²⁸ Grasses identified in Nata by Nyawagamba Magoto and keyed to scientific name in D.M. Napper, *Grasses of Tanganyika* (Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Wildlife, Tanzania, Bulletin, No.18, 1965), p. 132.

²⁹ Sinclair, "The Serengeti Environment," pp. 37-40.



Making Arrow Poison (*obosongo*),
Bugerera, 5 January 1996



Green Flush After a Burn in the Serengeti

Figure 5-2: Human Interaction with the Environment

livestock herds close to concentrated settlements, they avoided intensive contact with the tsetse fly. They farmed, in turn, on the boundaries of the bush, while visiting woodland areas, where tsetse thrived, for hunting, wood gathering or travel. A German report from early in this century states that, "the fields in some cases are several hours' journey from the houses, mostly lying in the low grounds amongst the rivers and brooks."³⁰ The tsetse fly officers in the 1930s were concerned with the practice of farming away from the homesteads, into the bush.³¹ Yet this periodic contact of humans with the tsetse vector served to maintain sufficient trypanosomiasis resistance levels. Together these practices allowed the farmers gradually to push back the cleared areas and maintain a controlled zone of regular contact with the tsetse fly.³²

Evidence for the successful control of contact with tsetse habitats comes from the colonial record. A Veterinary Officer reported in 1928 that, "the fly belt is vaguely demarcated by the natives who seem to know where they can safely graze but keep dangerous close . . . goats seem to thrive there."³³ In the first reports of sleeping sickness in the Ikoma area the Medical Officer was surprised to find that livestock were healthy, although he found cases of trypanosomiasis among them and vast tracts of tsetse infested bush surrounded the settlements. The same report also found, in the human case, that the incidence of sleeping sickness was only one percent, with no

³⁰ Geographical Section, A Handbook of German East Africa, pp. 97, in the section describing the "Washashi and Wangorimi."

³¹ H. G. Caldwell, "Report on Sleeping Sickness in the Musoma District, July and August 1932, Sleeping Sickness: Musoma District, 215/463, TNA

³² Giblin, The Politics of Environmental Control.

³³ District Veterinary Officer, Musoma, to the D. O. Musoma, 19 January 1928, Annual Report 1927, p. 4, 1927-28 Provincial Administration, Annual Reports 1927, Mwanza Province, 246/P.C./1/30, TNA.

tendency to epidemic spread.³⁴ Western Serengeti peoples had apparently learned how to coexist with the tsetse fly.³⁵

The Wildebeest Migration

Wildlife ecologies also affected historical developments in the western Serengeti. In the Ikoma and Ngoreme emergence stories the hunter comes to the western Serengeti from Sonjo by hunting wildebeest. The route of the annual migration begins in the southeast, in December, when the short-grass plain is teeming with vast herds of wildebeest (about 1.3 million at last count), mixed with zebra and gazelle. The herds come to the plains in the rainy season to give birth to their calves on pastures rich in minerals, finding water in pockets left by rain. The long view available on the short grass plains also provides better protection from predators when the calves are vulnerable.³⁶ As the plains dry up from May to June, the herds move north and west into the woodlands looking for permanent water sources and fresh grass.³⁷ The acacia woodland in the western Serengeti is the termination point of the migration, just where the Sonjo hunters ended their journey.

³⁴ J. F. Corson, M. O., Ikoma, 15 April 1927, "Third Note on Sleeping Sickness," Extracts of Report by District Veterinary Officer, 1926-29, Provincial Administration Monthly Reports, Musoma District, 215/P.C./1/7, TNA.

³⁵ On trypanosomiasis see Ford, The Role of the Trypanosomiasis; Richard Waller, "Tsetse Fly in Western Narok, Kenya," Journal of African History 31 (1990): 81-101; and James Gibling, "Trypanosomiasis Control in African History: An Evaded Issue?," Journal of African History 31 (1990): 59-80; for a similar case in Sukuma and interaction with tick ecologies see Martin H. Birley, "Resource Control," Africa 52, 2 (1982): 1-29.

³⁶ These dynamics described in Sinclair and Norton-Griffiths but also for a popular audience in James Scott, The Great Migration (London: Elm Tree Books: 1988).

³⁷ Dennis Herlocker, Woody Vegetation of the Serengeti National Park (The Caesar Kleberg Research Program in Wildlife Ecology and Texas A&M University, 1973), p. 9; Sinclair, "The Serengeti Environment," p. 33

The emergence sites are located in this termination zone of the wildebeest migration and at a perfect place for hill farmers to take advantage of the sudden seasonal arrival of meat. Even up through the colonial period, western Serengeti peoples most commonly hunted during the dry season as individuals or in small groups using bows and arrows tipped with poison, traps or snares. However, when the wildebeest herds arrived, they engaged in communal hunting using fall-pits, *ebereri*, dug between one hill and another or between another natural means of constricting movement through a narrow gap. Hunters would dig many pits in a row and carefully conceal them with grass and sticks.³⁸ Everyone, men, women and children, turned out to stampede the wildebeest herds into the pits. Some said that the hunters might kill 100, 100 or 500 wildebeest in a day. In 1899, the German traveler Kollman counted as many as 200 hunting pits in a half-hour walk through the Ruwana plain.³⁹ The massive slaughter of wildebeest reported in the late nineteenth century and early colonial period was a result of the commercialization of hunting during that era. However, the use of hunting pits for obtaining large quantities of meat to dry seasonally seems to be a much older practice.

In the western hills, farming communities could take advantage not only of the varied ecotones in the region, each with its own economic potential, but could also exploit the annual migrations of wildlife. They could not live permanently on the plains or in the bush but could use these areas by situating themselves in close proximity. Given these parameters, one could predict the emergence sites on an ecological map of the region. These ecologies also help to explain the connection to other hill farmers in the region, the Sonjo.

³⁸ Interviews with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂); Nyambebo Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

³⁹ Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza*, p. 199.

Relations with Other Hill Farmers: The Sonjo Connection

One of the most perplexing problems in the interpretation of oral traditions of emergence is making sense of the purported connection of western Serengeti hill farmers to the Bantu-speaking Sonjo hill farmers in what is now the Loliondo district of Maasailand.⁴⁰ Western Serengeti peoples today bear little resemblance to the Sonjo, either linguistically, culturally or in terms of social organization. Yet Ikoma and Ngoreme *asimoka* stories, told above, assert that their ancestors came to the western Serengeti from Sonjo as hunters. It is not clear whether these ancestors were supposed to have been Sonjo farmers on a seasonal hunt or hunter/gatherers living in close relationship to Sonjo farmers. Because these traditions often attribute the migration of Sonjo hunters to the impact of Maasai raids, it is also unclear whether they refer to the period of nineteenth century disasters or to much earlier patterns of interaction.

When I went to Sonjo to find out if similar traditions of interaction existed there, some amazing congruencies emerged in spite of the separation of these communities since the early colonial period. Sonjo traditions also tell of first man as a hunter who brought fire. They call the hunter clan in Sonjo the Sagati, also found among the western Serengeti Ishenyi and Ikoma people.⁴¹ In Sonjo, members of the Sagati clan are responsible for blessing the bows and arrows before a hunt and when they are made. This clan also kept the secret for making arrow poison (an early trade item) and wild herbs for medicines. Sonjo elders said that these hunters maintained

⁴⁰ One possibility that was not investigated in this project is the connection between Mara languages and Uplands Bantu languages. Fairly solid bodies of culture vocabulary link the two. This interaction in the distant past may be represented by the Sonjo cliché. See Schoenbrun, "Early History"; and Ehret, Southern Nilotic History.

⁴¹ Among the Ishenyi the Sagati or Sageti clan was reported by numerous informants, among them, interviews with Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); Mikael Magessa Sarota, Issenye, 25 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). The Sagari clan among the Ikoma was a hunting clan which has since disappeared as an independent clan. Interview with Mabenga Nyahega and Machabu Nyahega, Mbiso, 1 September 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

relations of trade between Ikoma and Sonjo, meeting in the wilderness where Sagati gathered honey and hunted. The Sonjo village of Rhughata claims origins from a Sagati hunter and his wife who left "Ikoma" because of Maasai raids.⁴² Traditions say that they came from Jaleti and Ngrumega (perhaps a transliteration of the Rivers Mbalageti and Grumeti in the western Serengeti).⁴³ Samonge village elders claim origins from a hunter father who brought fire and a farmer mother who controlled water.⁴⁴ These traditions from both sides of the Serengeti bear too much similarity in specific clan and place names as well as the core images of emergence stories to be coincidental.

Although a large portion of the migration tradition from Sonjo seems to refer to the late nineteenth century period of disasters, much evidence suggests that farming settlements in Sonjo and the western Serengeti were in contact from the distant past, largely through the interaction of hunters from both places who traveled across the woodlands and plains in search of game. The hills of Sonjo are only 80 kilometers from Ikoma straight across the Serengeti where the hills again break up the woodlands and plains. Because of the ecological patterns described above concerning the wildebeest migrations, hunters from Sonjo who followed the herds seasonally would have had occasion to ask for hospitality in Ikoma, while Ikoma hunters would have found themselves near Sonjo at the end of the dry season. Ikoma migrant laborers walking to Magadi Soda in Kenya during the colonial years in search of work slept the third night in Sonjo and were welcomed as brothers by local people who remembered these common traditions.

Because the hill ecologies of Sonjo and the western Serengeti are similar, we might hypothesize that migrants looking for new areas in which to settle would have sought out

⁴² Interviews with Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995; Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1996 (Sonjo σ).

⁴³ Interview with Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo σ).

⁴⁴ Interview with Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995 (Sonjo σ).

environments most closely resembling their home areas.⁴⁵ Once Sonjo hunters established contact in the western Serengeti, small groups of people may have gone there to build their homes or to marry. Some Sonjo elders say that the great prophet Khambageu came from a large mountain near Ikoma in the west, where until recently Sonjo people returned annually to propitiate his spirit.⁴⁶ If both Ikoma and Sonjo formed their identity as hill farmers within an inter-cultural environment of plains herders and woodland hunter/gatherers in the distant past, then they may have felt an affinity that they explained by common origins. They were "brothers" within the regional understandings of economically-based identities.

Western Serengeti and Sonjo elders stated to me that the most conclusive proof of their common parentage as children of "one womb" was that both have the *ntemi* scar on the right breast. For the Sonjo this is a sign of belonging and identity.⁴⁷ The Ishenyi, Ngoreme and Ikoma also use this mark but understand it as a health precaution for children. When I visited Sonjo, an Ikoma and a Nata man accompanied me. Our Sonjo hosts greeted the Ikoma man who had the

⁴⁵ Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson and Jan Vansina, African History (New York: Longman, 1978), p. 125, Feierman describes the pattern in the migrations of Bantu-speaking peoples who, when forced to move, chose those places where they could apply their environmental knowledge. David W. Cohen describes the same pattern in, "The face of contact: a model of a cultural and linguistic frontier in early eastern Uganda," in Nilotic Studies, Part two, Proceedings of the international symposium on languages and history of the Nilotic peoples, Cologne, January 4-6, 1982, eds. Rainer Vossen and Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983), pp. 339-356.

⁴⁶ Interview with Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo ♂); stated "Khambageu was a prophet and a god, he came from over toward Ikoma. His wife was Nankoni. They used to visit back and forth with Ikoma especially in the tenth through the twelfth month. They went to worship there and the ones that followed him went there to worship too." See also Robert F. Gray, The Sonjo of Tanganyika: An Anthropological Study of an Irrigation Based Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 11-12, who relates the tradition of Khambageu coming from the Sonjo village of Tinaga, and then cursing the village, leading to its destruction.

⁴⁷ See Gray, The Sonjo of Tanganyika, p. 15, on the *ntemi* scar.

ntemi scar as a long lost brother and friend, giving him gifts and special treatment as an honored guest. They treated the Nata man, who had no *ntemi* scar, indifferently. In the past individual immigrants from Sonjo may have brought the practice of *ntemi* scarification but its meaning changed outside the context of Sonjo identity. It may have remained in practice for identifying "brothers" in the wilderness.

While the evidence seems to support the hypothesis of a zone of interaction in the distant past between Sonjo and the western Serengeti, much remains to be explained. For example, although Ikoma, Ngoreme and Ishenyi traditions claim origins in Sonjo, little linguistic or ethnographic evidence exists for this. If Ikoma ancestors came from Sonjo, they retained almost nothing of Sonjo culture or language. Language shifts take at least three generations and the incorporation of loanwords several generations. No linguistic trace of a large migration from Sonjo remains, either in the distant or recent past.⁴⁸ If small groups of immigrants did come from Sonjo, they were completely incorporated into western Serengeti society and culture. The only linguistic evidence for interaction in the distant past is shared loan words from a preexisting Southern Nilotic-speaking community with which both had contact.

Evidence exists that today's Sonjo are related to the farmers who worked the ancient irrigation agricultural settlements in the Rift Valley, known in the archaeological literature as Engaruka, dating to at least 300 years ago. The Sonjo still practice a complicated system of irrigated agriculture that forms the basis of their socio-political system.⁴⁹ The most influential Sonjo leaders are those who control the allotment of water for their sections. Ngoreme praise

⁴⁸ Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁹ Gray, *The Sonjo of Tanganyika*, pp. 53-56.

names for Sonjo ancestors describe them as "those who irrigate."⁵⁰ Yet little evidence exists that people in the Mara Region ever practiced this kind of agriculture or settled in the patterns evident in these archeological sites.⁵¹

Memory of the connection to Sonjo draws more directly on the common experience of Maasai pressure during the period of disasters in the late nineteenth century that resulted in small groups of refugees moving in both directions. Sonjo sources date the dispersal to Ikoma to two generations ago.⁵² This is discussed more thoroughly in later chapters, along with the ideological reasons why the Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme would have preferred origins in Sonjo to local origins. Similar to the Ikoma case already discussed, the Ikoma and Ngoreme seem to have used the older founding myth to legitimate later changes in identity that resulted from the nineteenth century disasters.

Whatever the particular connection of western Serengeti peoples to Sonjo in the early period, the Serengeti plain was clearly a zone of interaction rather than a barrier.⁵³ Ecological patterns provided the environment in which these two sets of peoples would have met each other during their everyday subsistence activities. According to narratives on both sides, hunters, traders, settlers and pilgrims frequently crossed the Serengeti plain. The location of emergence

⁵⁰ Interview with Silas King'are Magori, Kemgesi, 21 September 1995 (Ngoreme *o*).

⁵¹ For a Sonjo ethnography see Gray, *The Sonjo of Tanganyika*. For archaeological investigation of Engaruka see Leakey, "Preliminary Report;" Sutton, "Engaruka etc.," pp. 7-10; John Sutton, *A Thousand Years of East Africa* (Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 1990), pp. 33-40.

⁵² Gray, *The Sonjo of Tanganyika*, pp. 14-15.

⁵³ This thesis was first expounded by A. O. Anacleto, "Serengeti: It's People and their Environment," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 81/82 (1977): 23-34; and by the same author, "Pastoralism and Development."

sites shows that western Serengeti people once lived much farther east, while Sonjo tradition described settlements located much farther west.

This evidence would suggest a set of settlements in close proximity, identifying themselves as hill farmers, who later differentiated into Sonjo and Mara peoples as they moved apart in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ Whether the common culture they shared was closer to present-day Sonjo or Mara, or entirely different, is now difficult to tell. The long-term pattern of interaction and the deep connections built between communities over the centuries forms the context in which new identities developed in the nineteenth century. During the Maasai raids refugees from Sonjo may have come to Ikoma because they had relatives, friends or trading partners there. These ecologies were known landscapes that people on both sides of the plains frequently crossed.

Relations with Hunter-Gatherers: Learning How to Live on the Land

Hill settlements, located to take advantage of other ecologies and of the annual wildebeest migration, provided a space in which farmers consistently interacted with hunter/gatherer peoples in the woodlands. The genius of western Serengeti Bantu-speaking peoples' adaptation to this environment lay in their maintaining a strong identity as farmers, separate from but interdependent with hunter/gatherer and herder neighbors, while doing some seasonal hunting and herding themselves. The hunting skills of Bantu-speakers would have expanded as they learned from hunter/gatherers whom they incorporated into their communities. An investigation of the relationship between farmers and hunters suggests further ways in which the Asi hunters were "fathers" to the farmers in relation to the land.

⁵⁴ The Maasai Loitai of the Loliondo highlands, whose territory extended north into Kenya and east to Lake Natron, reported to colonial anthropologist Henry Fosbrooke that the original inhabitants of this area were the "Ilmarau," the Maasai name for the Ikoma or Bantu-speaking peoples of the western Serengeti in general. Henry A. Fosbrooke, "Sections of the Masai in Loliondo Area," 1953, (typescript) CORY #259, EAF, UDSM.

First Man as Asi Hunter

If the emergence stories are in some way symbolic of long-term social processes then another level of interpretation is possible by comparing these traditions with what we know about the historical relationships between hill farmers and hunters. Nyamunywa, remembered as the first father of the Nata people, was an Asi hunter. The Asi, as a hunter/gatherer community in the western Serengeti who were there before the Bantu-speakers arrived, have a long history of interaction with farmers and herders.

One might argue that the Asi hunter in the emergence story is only a symbol of the wilderness in a purely mythical founding story of how civilization came to be. The structuralist symbols of wilderness/home, male/female, cooked/raw are all apparent in the story.⁵⁵ The Asi are liminal boundary shifters, an elusive symbol of the wilderness, whom farmers sometimes call "wild animals." Some versions of the Ikizu and Ngoreme emergence traditions describe how their ancestors won the land by driving out the original short people with big heads, the Hengere.⁵⁶ It is these people, rather than the Asi, who represent the forces of nature conquered by civilization in the emergence traditions. Because the Asi hunter represents a historical community of known people with whom farmers had an ongoing relationship, this myth also has a historical reality behind it. An investigation of the relationship of hill farmers to Asi hunters may provide some insight into the meaning of the emergence stories.

Other kinds of evidence show that Asi hunter/gatherers played a central role in the early establishment of Bantu-speaking settlers in the western Serengeti. Oral traditions that represent the

⁵⁵ Edmund Leach, ed., *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967).

⁵⁶ For an analysis of the common myth of first peoples and "short people" see, Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Kenny, "Mirror in the Forest," 482-484.

hunter as first father also reflect the importance of the Asi. Western Serengeti peoples give precedence as "first-comers" to Asi descendants in farming communities, identified by clan designation. For example, the Nata clan, Gaikwe, and the Ikizu clan, Hembra (from to light a fire) is associated with and uses Asi praise names. The Asi founded one Kuria section called Nyabasi in North Mara where Asi ancestors came to farming communities to trade arrow poison for cattle.⁵⁷ Some have speculated that the name "Asi" is derived from the Bantu root for "earth" or "soil," in Nata *ase* or *ahase*.⁵⁸

In the early years when Bantu-speaking farmers first entered the region they depended upon the Asi hunters to teach them the skills necessary to survive in an unfamiliar environment. It also seems likely from ecological and archaeological evidence that the Asi hunters would have been living in the hill ecotones where they could exploit both the grasslands and the woodlands. Yet because this was also the ecological niche best suited for farming they came into competition with incoming Bantu-speaking settlers. The emergence stories, at one level, describe the accommodations and conflicts between these two groups on the frontier. As the hill farmers gained familiarity with the environment, they increasingly pushed those Asi who refused to marry into hill farmer communities into the more marginal areas of the woodlands as they took over the hill ecologies. The hill farmers still had a close and interdependent relation with the Asi but came to dominate them rather than depend on them as their population expanded and many Asi assimilated as farmers and herders. Those Asi who lived in the marginal woodland areas bordering

⁵⁷ Interview with Sira Masiyora, Nyerero, 17 November 1995 (Kuria ♂).

⁵⁸ Kenny, "Mirror in the Forest," p. 482. Unfortunately, I was unable to find any descendants of the Asi who could recount their oral traditions. The Asi have either totally assimilated into farming communities or have gone to live in Loliondo under Maasai patronage. Thus, until more research is done the view of Asi history presented here is entirely from the perspective of the farmers. But because western Serengeti farmers consider the Asi one of the original parents and first-comers to the land, farmers respect their knowledge and history.

the hills gradually began to rely on the farmers for grain and livestock in exchange for products of the wilderness. The symbiotic relationship between them developed from one of farmers' reliance on hunters to the farmers' dominance and control of the best land in the hill environments.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Asi increasingly became the clients of the Maasai who came to dominate the greater Rift Valley. However, this was a slow process and in the early part of this century the Germans still distinguished between Ndorobo in the Serengeti area who spoke a Maasai language and the "pure Wandorobbo in the Zerengeti [sic] steppe on the Syonera [sic] living as nomads" who spoke a different language, for which the "Washashi in Ikoma" acted as interpreters. This testimony indicates a close relationship between hunters and hill farmers, only recently altered by the presence of the Maasai. The same report said that "during the great migration of the Masai, the Wandorobbo were either driven out or forced to submit."⁵⁹

Oral narratives of the western Serengeti acknowledge their debt to the Asi in the lore of the woodlands and hunting. Nata people learned the secret of arrow poison (*obosongo*) from the Asi. The Nata kept the secret to themselves, using it as a trade good, until recent times when clan brothers gave the recipe to the Ikoma.⁶⁰ Hunters make the poison by boiling the woody portions of the *obosongo* tree (*Acocanthera fiersiorum*) and making a dark concentrate by evaporation. The active ingredient in the poison was the glycoside, ouabain, which western Serengeti peoples say "freezes" the blood of the animal. This arrow poison was extremely valuable, one small container selling for the equivalent of a goat. Many people considered the arrow poison from western Serengeti one of the best and during the colonial years, at least, they traded it as far as Shinyanga,

⁵⁹ Geographical Section, *A Handbook of German East Africa*, pp. 98-99.

⁶⁰ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

Mbulu and across the Kenya border.⁶¹ There is a hill near Nyichoka that elders still remember as the place, protected by medicines, where they stored the *obosongo* when they brought it home, while the men purified themselves with sacrifices so they would not become sick.⁶² [See Figure 5-2: Human Interaction with the Environment, for a photo of preparing arrow poison, p. 209.]

Inconclusive evidence also exists that western Serengeti peoples borrowed their common style of bows and arrows from the Asi. Western Serengeti peoples use a long bow, more commonly found among hunter/gatherers in this part of East Africa. Fosbrooke's 1956 investigation of Hadzapi material culture on Lake Eyasi demonstrates the contrast between the long bows (180 cm.) and arrows of these hunter-gatherers in contrast to those of the neighboring Bantu-speaking peoples that were little more than half as long.⁶³ When the German traveler Kollmann studied the material culture of the people of Lake Victoria in 1899 he noted that the "Ushashi," or western Serengeti, bows and arrows were also "strikingly large and beautifully worked," in contrast to the other bows he had seen on his journeys. [See Figure 5-3: Hunting Vocabulary and Tools.] The long bow pictured by Kollmann is 170 cms. in length, putting it within the range of bow lengths described by Fosbrooke for Eyasi hunter/gatherers.⁶⁴ The shapes of arrow heads described by Kollmann are also similar to that of the Eyasi hunter/gatherers, both making common use of poisoned wooden arrow-barbs.

⁶¹ W. D. Raymond, "Tanganyika Arrow Poisons," Tanganyika Notes and Records 23 (June 1947): 49-65.

⁶² Interview with Makuru Nyang'aka, Nyichoka, 7 March 1996 (Nata ♂).

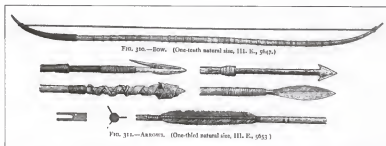
⁶³ H. A. Fosbrooke, "A Stone Age Tribe in Tanganyika," South African Archaeological Bulletin 9, 41 (March 1956): 5.

⁶⁴ Kollmann, The Victoria Nyanza, pp. 194-5. When I visited Sonjo accompanied by a man from Ikoma and another from Nata they laughed at the small size of the Sonjo bows and offered to teach them how to make "real" bows.

animal	Ekinata name	adult male	adult female	male young	female young
hartebeest	abanosi	atiribati	anyabori	ang'ong'ona	ang'ong'ona
impala	asuma	abarogwini	anyabori	egisaka	amwati
gazelle -- thompsons	ambarahé	aborogwini	anyabori	egisaka	amwati
topi	asubugu	atiribati	anyabori	atororo	atororo
wildebeest	asamakiri ekiweri ndgosana	abaha	anyabori	atwabana	atwabana

Names for wild animals in Ekinata

Cultural Vocabularies on wild animals and hunting provided by Nyamaganda Magoto and Tetero Tumbo, Mbisio, 23 November 1995.



Paul Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza: the Land, the Races, and Their Customs, with Specimens of Some Dialects*. H. A. Nesbitt, trans. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1899), p. 195

Figure 5-3: Hunting Vocabulary and Tools

Hunting played a crucial role in the economy of hill farmers and, until the last century, provided the major source of meat. Ritual feasting for taking eldership titles still requires a prescribed number of pieces of dried wild animal meat. Before the Germans came, western Serengeti people paid bridewealth in wild animal skins. They also made clothing of these skins.⁶⁵ Photos from 1904 and the testimony of elders show that an elder draped the larger skin of a topi across his shoulders (*arachana*) while a woman wore the skin of a gazelle as an apron around her waist (*asaraka*).⁶⁶ [See Figure 5-4: Kuria Woman, 1904.]

The languages of the western Serengeti themselves attest to the importance of hunting. For example, each of the wild animals is given a separate name according to sex and age, as demonstrated for a few selected animals in the chart on the next page [See Figure 5-3: Hunting Vocabulary and Tools, p. 223]. This complex naming of wild animals shows that people highly valued hunting knowledge. An awareness of the hunting season permeates the agricultural calendar. The topis, one of the resident ungulate populations in the area, give birth to their calves in September and October. This is the sign that the rains are coming and that the fields should be ready for farming.⁶⁷ In Ishenyi, *Obutir* (September) is the month when the topi give birth and the time for preparing the fields, in October the first millet is planted. When the wildebeest return to the short grass plains in November, it is time to plant sorghum.⁶⁸

Elders retain memories from the beginning of this century that testify to the symbiotic relationship between hunters and farmers that existed before the hunters became Maasai clients.

⁶⁵ Interview with Jackson Mang'oha, Mbiso, 13 May 1995 (Nata σ).

⁶⁶ Interview with Mahiti Gamba, Mayani Magoto, Bugerera, 3 March 1996 (Nata σ). Nyamaganda Magoto, collection of Culture Vocabulary.

⁶⁷ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata σ).

⁶⁸ Interview with Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995 (Ishenyi σ).



Figure 5-4: Kuria Women, 1904 [Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin: Carl Marschner, 1910), p. 289]

After the farmers gained dominance over the hill ecologies and relegated the hunters to the marginal woodland areas the hunters developed friendships with farmer families to trade for grain and livestock. A German report states that the "Serengeti Ndorobo" also kept sheep and goats.⁶⁹ Elders today remember this relationship with Asi hunters from their childhood. Ikoma elders tell stories of particular Asi families who would regularly come to their homes. Patron-client relationships, particularly between Ikoma and Asi families, apparently lasted over generations. Asi brought wild animal products like ivory, wildebeest tails, lion manes and honey to their patrons' homes to trade for livestock, grain, iron or salt. Some Ikoma lineages identified Asi ancestors. Asi friends, clients or kin spoke Mara languages but few Mara speakers learned the Asi language.⁷⁰ In a colonial case of the theft of nineteen head of cattle in Ikoma by hunter/gatherer "Dorobo" from Loliondo, the suspects were identified by name, along with the "two Ikoma who are friendly with these Wandorobo." The District Officer further added that the Native Authorities of Ikoma Federation would not "take any action to recover the stolen stock or to arrest the culprits as they are afraid of the Wandorobo."⁷¹ Or perhaps they had ongoing obligations with those families.

Stories also exist of conflicts between western Serengeti farmers and Asi hunters, such as the war of Kangashori during the early colonial years (c. 1920s). A Nata hunting party found an animal killed with an Asi arrow, but they took it anyway and began to divide out the meat. When the Asi arrived a fight erupted and the Nata, being outnumbered, ran away. The Nata left behind an old man named Kangashori whom the Asi killed. They next day a Nata party took revenge,

⁶⁹ Geographical Section, *A Handbook of German East Africa*, p. 99

⁷⁰ Kratz, "Are Okiek really," p. 359, argues that the fact that the Okiek speak the language of their host does indicate the superiority of the host but rather the Okiek ability in crossing cultural boundaries.

⁷¹ McMahon, D.O., to A.D.O Loliondo, 7 February 1932, and D.C. to P.C. Lake Province Mwanza, 16 Marcha, 1932, Stock Thefts: Musoma District 1932, 215/351, TNA.

attacked an Asi camp and killed twelve people. The Asi appealed to the Nata chief, Rotigenga, who called the elders to perform an oathing ceremony that joined them as brothers. After that, they could neither steal from nor kill each other.⁷² Even in this story of conflict the boundaries were mediated and enemies became brothers.

Over the centuries the peoples of western Serengeti have learned from the Asi, intermarried, traded, and fought with them but, in spite of this frequent interaction, both farmers and hunters have managed to maintain seemingly rigid boundaries. However, the distinction between western Serengeti farmers as seasonal hunters and Asi hunter/gatherers may not be as firm as it appears. Scholars working among the Maasai argue that although social boundaries in the Rift Valley corresponded to economic subsistence patterns of herders, hunters and farmers, individuals frequently crossed those boundaries. When Maasai lost cattle they "became" hunting Dorobo and when Sonjo farmers gained enough cattle they "became" Maasai.⁷³ In the western Serengeti examples exist of individuals crossing these boundaries as marriage partners, adopted sons or out of economic necessity. The boundaries may also have been mediated by shared clan names that are discussed in Chapter 6 or shared age-sets that are discussed in Chapter 9. As the hill farmers pushed the Asi hunters into more marginal wilderness areas the hunters increasingly had to rely on the farmers for some basic elements in their subsistence economy.

⁷² Interviews with Mayani Magoto; Yobana Kitena Nyitanga, Makondusi, 1 May 1995 (Nata ♂). Arrows are marked with individual and clan markings so that the ownership of a killed animal can be determined in the bush. The ceremony is called *kura aring'a* and is described in Chapter 10.

⁷³ See Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*; and Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding, and Prophets."; Kratz, "Are the Okiek really Masai?"

Asi Territory and the Emergence Sites

Looking at the geographical relationship of the places reported in oral traditions to be where Asi hunters and western Serengeti farmers lived affords further insight into the nature of the historical relationship between the two. The emergence sites named in the oral traditions of hill farmers are all located in areas now identified as Asi territory. The site of Bwanda (near to where Mugumu town now stands) was in an area known traditionally as *Materego yabaAsi* (the wilderness of the Asi).⁷⁴ Oral testimony also identifies the area north of Nyichoka in Nata territory, contiguous with the Ngoreme emergence site of Ikorongo, as Asi country. The Ishenyi emergence site of Guka is well into the woodland territory but also located on the hills. The earliest German maps (1910) show these same areas as "Ndorobo" territory, described as "undulating country of open thorn bush and grass," or "open bush and thick scrub."⁷⁵ The colonial Game Warden found most hunting activity around the Moru Kopjes, and the Mbalageti and Seronera Rivers, where Ikoma traditions say they first settled. That all the emergence sites are located within what is known as Asi territory and within the woodland ecologies of hunter/gatherers, tells us that early agricultural settlers came into direct competition with hunters for the same land.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Interview with Sira Masiyora, Nyerero, 17 November 1995 (Kuria ♂).

⁷⁵ Karte von Deutsch-Ostafrika, A.4 Ikoma (Berlin: D. Reimer [E. Vohsen]: 1910), German Maps, GM 30/3, TNA.

⁷⁶ One interpretation of this evidence could be that western Serengeti farming communities developed out of a preexisting hunter/gatherer society and that the emergence sites were their remembered hunting camps. Yet this kind of major shift in identity from a hunter/gatherer society to one based on farming would presumably constitute a rupture in historical consciousness similar to that described in the last chapter as happening during the period of disasters. Then places significant to an earlier way of life would be forgotten when divorced from their social context. The old sites of hunter/gatherer communities would not have figured in the historical imagination of these new communities. The evidence of historical linguistics and archaeology already presented points to two separate communities of hunters and farmers with different histories who

That farmers inhabited these hill sites within Asi territory meant that they had to have accommodated the Asi "first-comers" to take control of the land. Each practiced a different economic strategy within overlapping ecological zones. Bantu-speaking farmers were strangers and newcomers in an unfamiliar land. Their oral traditions relate symbolically how they may have come to terms with those who were there before them and who knew how to live on the land. They did this by incorporating the hunter into their own communities and by situating themselves in a location that could take advantage of new economic possibilities. By encroaching on the ecological niche that the Asi occupied, the hill farmers put increasing pressure on them either to leave or to assimilate.

Elders remember the Asi hunters as first-comers who performed rituals to maintain the prosperity of the land. This relationship to the land, as farmers now ritually maintain it, is discussed in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8. In this ritual tradition western Serengeti people propitiate the ancestors of particular lineages as "guardians of the land." Many of those ancestors are from the Asi hunter clans of Gaikwe and Hembra. If western Serengeti people have maintained a ritual relationship to the land over the long-term, as seems likely, then in order for hill farmers to settle and prosper they would have to have been accepted as "children" in the lineage of the Asi ancestors who were connected to the land. They may have undergone "ritual adoption" into Asi lineages to gain access to the land. This hypothesis for the relationship of hunters and farmers in the distant past is congruous with the position of Asi hunter as "father" in oral traditions and oral narratives about an "oath" between Asi hunters and hill farmers.⁷⁷ A parallel process existed in the Kenyan highlands where Kikuyu tradition recounts ritual adoptions of Kikuyu into Ndorobo kin

met on the frontier.

⁷⁷ Mahiti Kiwiro, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂).

groups to clear the land for farming. I am not sure why Kikuyu traditions would be more specific about this process.⁷⁸ Most western Serengeti elders deny a relation of kinship with the Asi. However it happened, Bantu-speaking farming communities were able to gain ritual access to the land and successfully diversify their own economic practices, leading to their dominance in the region. As a result the farmers increasingly marginalized the Asi hunters, who had taught, married and adopted them. As they gained ritual control over the land hill farmers usurped the place of the Asi as first-comers and guardians of the land.

Relations with Plains Herders: The Silent Texts

If the emergence stories are simply about the identity of hill farmers in relationship to people who practiced different economic strategies, then the silences in the emergence traditions speak as loudly as the texts. None of the emergence stories mentions the relationship to herders on the plains.⁷⁹ This seems to refute the claim made earlier that the core spatial images of the emergence traditions also refer to the ecological spaces of woodlands, hills and plains where the long-term patterns of interaction between hunter, farmer and herder were enacted. If herders were an important part of this interdependent system of economic subsistence then farmers would surely remember the presence of herders in oral tradition. One must consult other traditions and other evidence to understand this key omission.

⁷⁸ Greet Kershaw, *Mau Mau from Below* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), pp. 20-21. Kershaw dates the Kikuyu settlement of Kiambu to the era preceeding the Kiraka famine of 1835.

⁷⁹ Traditions of the Lakes peoples do specifically recount stories of interaction with the Tatoga. See Huber, *Marriage and Family*, pp. 38-40 for the Kwaya; and Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, pp. 47-48, for Kerewe. Among the Sizaki, interview with Thomas Kubini and Jacob Mugaka, Bunda, 10 March 1995 (Sizaki ♂). For the Sukuma, Itandala, "A History of the Babinza," pp. 174-193.

Abundant evidence, already presented, exists that agriculturalists did in fact interact with pastoralists in the distant past. The evidence of historical linguistics shows that these two communities have been in close contact ever since Bantu-speakers arrived in the region. Many Southern Nilotic loanwords in Mara languages concerning livestock indicate a high level of interaction and learning from Mara Southern Nilotic- and Dadog-speaking pastoralists in the distant past.⁸⁰ The word for sheepskin, among others, was originally Southern Cushitic, attesting to an even earlier set of interactions and learning.⁸¹

Nor can one interpret the silence in oral tradition concerning pastoralists as the lack of a herding component in the farming economy. From the evidence of historical linguistics we know that the first Bantu-speakers who entered the region had small stock. Although the importance of livestock increased in the post-crisis era, herding was thoroughly integrated into the total economic strategy of western Serengeti farmers from the distant past. It was another way of minimizing risk by maximizing use of each of the available environmental niches. Livestock were valuable for exchange and necessary for most rituals. Goats and sheep were kept in greater abundance because people could more easily give them up for a feast or in exchange for grain in times of need. Since people grazed their livestock near the homestead they could employ young boys and girls as herders while concentrating the labor of adult men and women in hunting and farming. Cattle trusteeship (*kusagari chatugo*) was one option used further to spread out the risk of losing an entire herd to disease or raid at one time. Western Serengeti people brand livestock with the sign of

⁸⁰ See Chapter 4 for linguistic evidence.

⁸¹ Ehret, *Ethiopians*, p. 83.

the patrilineage (*ekchita*) and of the owner. Looking at the brands in his corral one can tell the owner's social relations.⁸²

Because oral traditions are transmitted and maintained by specific social networks it may be that no one group among the farmers had reason to preserve information about encounters with herders. On the other hand we have seen that specific farmer clans did have reason to remember the nature of their interaction with hunters to preserve their rights to the land. Tatoga were not considered "guardians of the land" in the same way as Asi hunters. Differing concepts of territory and relationship to the land between hill farmers and Tatoga herders are discussed in Chapter 8. Here it is only important to note that western Serengeti people do not associate Tatoga ancestors with ritual control over specific places on the land as they do Asi ancestors, represented by clan affiliation. Western Serengeti farmers did not build on the plains or encroach much on the grasslands ecology of the herders until the last century, while the farmers came into direct competition with the hunters for hill ecologies. Farmers acknowledge Tatoga authority as first-comers only in relation to mobile ritual items. Herders may not appear in the emergence stories because they did not bequeath the ritual possession of the hills for farming. The differences in these relationships may have left herders out of the emergence stories but does not diminish their importance in western Serengeti history.

However, despite the importance of these considerations, I will argue that the overwhelming reason that emergence traditions do not include stories about relations with herders concerns the historical development of relations between herders and farmers over the last millennium. The historical linguistic record shows that the most intense period of linguistic innovations in herding vocabulary dates to interactions with Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers before

⁸² Observations of branding, Nyawagamba Magoto, Bugerera, 14 April 1995 (Nata ♂).

1000 A.D. This was the period in which East Nyanza-speaking peoples adopted cycling age-set names, along with other words concerning life-cycle stages and non-kin relations, including a new name for the homestead itself, built around the livestock corral. During the next millennium they adopted a few loan words concerning livestock from Dadog-speakers in the region, but innovated many more internally. Dadog-speakers also dropped the Southern Nilotic age-set names at this time, perhaps indicating that these two communities were not seeking the same kinds of connections that facilitated the adaptation of Bantu-speakers to the drier environment of the interior. The encroachment of Bantu-speakers into the herding economies dominated by Dadog-speaking herders may have led to the increasing separation between these two communities. Bantu-speakers with expertise in livestock management simply may not have needed herders as they had when they first entered the region.

The history of farmer-herder relations thus begins with a period of intense relations with herders in the distant past, broken by a period of less intense relations, and finally in the late nineteenth century by a period of enmity and raiding by yet another group of herders. The nineteenth century history of Maasai raiding and their hegemonic position throughout the greater Rift Valley was outlined in the Chapter 3. Hill farmers came into conflict, rather than symbiotic interaction, with herders during the early part of this century because they were now in direct competition for pastoral resources with the increase in cattle wealth as a result of trade. It is possible that during this period in which herders became enemies instead of useful allies stories about earlier relations with herders were obliterated. Yet it also seems that the relationship with Tatoga herders became closer just as the disasters began when farmers sought the ritual expertise of herders to solve these new problems.

Tatoga Herders

One may gain insight into the past relationship between herders and farmers in the western Serengeti, at least during the period in which western Serengeti peoples have been in contact with Tatoga herders, by investigating the nature of their interactions today and oral evidence about these interactions in the past. The Tatoga now live on the plains south of Ikoma, Nata, Ishenyi and Ikizu and call themselves the Rotigenga section of the "Aratoga," known by Bantu-speaking farmers as Tatoga or Tatiro. They live in close but separate relation to the Dadog-speaking hunter/gatherer Isimajek.⁸³

Bantu-speaking farmers and Dadog-speaking pastoralists each occupy particular ecological niches in close proximity to each other. When asked about their relationship to the Ikizu farmers, Tatoga elders said, "we are the people of the plains, they are the people of the hills--when we go over there to the hills we say, we are going to Ikizu; when they come over here to the plains they say, we are going to Tatiro."⁸⁴ These differences are reflected in the ways in which they "map" and name the same landscapes. The Tatoga have names for the gaps between hills and the plains while the western Serengeti farmers name the rises and hills.

The different economic subsistence patterns practiced by each group, in the past, did not put them into competition for the same resources, although the Bantu-speaking farmers also herded some and the Dadog-speaking herders also farmed. Rather, their occupation of different ecologies opened options for trade that were mutually beneficial. The Tatoga traded their livestock for grain and established relations of cattle trusteeship in both directions to protect the herds from disease.

⁸³ G. McL. Wilson, "The Tatoga of Tanganyika (Part I)," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 33 (1952): 40-41, describes the Tatoga Iseimajek and Rutageink who live in the Ruwana valley of Mara, numbering 1,300 people in 1948.

⁸⁴ Interview with Merekwa Masunga and Giruchani Masanja, Mariwanda, 6 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂).

The two communities cooperated in the chase whenever one was raided. Through farmers with their large herds of livestock now encroach on the plains ecology of the Tatoga herders, some remnant of the past relationship of interdependence remains in practice and in oral tradition.

Each group, farmers and herders, claims that it was the first to enter this region; each describes the other as a newcomer. Both, in fact, are right. In the period of early settlement the Tatoga were the first occupants of the plains. Then they left during the nineteenth century famines when the Maasai defeated them to follow their prophet south as far as the region of what is now Tabora. During this time of radical reconfiguration of social identity the farmers took over the status of first occupants. The Tatoga were not present during the most important period of recent identity formation.

Although we might hope that Tatoga oral traditions would shed light on their relationship to western Serengeti farmers in the past, these narratives, too, are strangely silent on this account. I heard narratives among the Tatoga concerning the division of the different Tatoga groups from each other, the division of the Maasai from the Tatoga and the division of Isimajek hunter-gatherers from the Tatoga proper. One tradition about the division of Tatoga from the farmers appears as an addition to an otherwise independent story in the cycle of narratives about the major Tatoga prophets. In this story the farmers are the ones who were willing to kill their mothers to secure rain from the Tatoga prophet. It is a statement about the moral superiority of herders over farmers rather than a core image. These stories are reproduced in Appendix 4.

Tatoga emergence stories are characteristic of a wholly different narrative tradition, with longer and more detailed stories, usually involving the lives of past prophets, both real and mythical. These are the stories of heroic deeds and miraculous happenings that ordered the world as we know it. In fact, Tatoga oral traditions bear a strange resemblance to the Sonjo stories of their prophet Khambageu, whom they said performed many miraculous deeds. This is not

surprising given the long-term interactions of the Sonjo with Dadog-speakers uncovered through the evidence of historical linguistics.⁸⁵ What seems more surprising is that western Serengeti farmers demonstrate so little of this influence. In contrast to the western Serengeti stories of first man and first woman as unifying stories of hunter and farmer, the Tatoga stories are of division and exclusivity.

The Tatoga retain a distinct identity as herders (as opposed to farmers and hunter/gatherers), but at the same time are integrated and deeply implicated in the most intimate aspects of the lives of western Serengeti farmers. The Tatoga learn the Bantu languages of their neighbors but almost no farmers speak Dadog. Tatoga distinctiveness has been responsible, in part, for their ability to play a highly influential role among their neighbors as gifted prophets. All ethnic groups in the area still call on Tatoga prophets for rainmaking, healing and protection medicines. In some Bantu-speaking ethnic groups descendants of a particular Tatoga prophetic line hold leadership positions of great power. Some of the most commonly told stories of the nineteenth century raids and famine revolve around the prophecy of a Tatoga healer who gave advice they did not heed, causing disaster.⁸⁶

The Ikoma have a tradition in which a Tatoga prophet from Ngorongoro gave them their most sacred object of collective identity, the Machaba, a set of elephant tusks. Because of this, the descendants of that prophet must participate in the rituals in which the Machaba play a part and the Tatoga are designated as "father" of the Ikoma people.⁸⁷ The first choice of Ikoma people for a colonial chief was a Tatoga prophet. In one version of the Ikoma emergence story [reproduced in

⁸⁵ Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 55-62

⁸⁶ See Chapter 10, the war of Ndabaka.

⁸⁷ See section on the Machaba in Chapters 7 and 8.

Appendix 3] Mwikoma left Sonjo because the Tatog prophet told him to seek a new land. It makes some sense that the Ikoma would have the strongest relationship with the Tatoga because they are the only one of the western Serengeti peoples to live in closer proximity to the grasslands than to the woodlands. Both Ishenyi and Ikoma traditions say that they killed their own prophets and were thus cursed to rely on Tatoga prophets.⁸⁸

The ritual precedence that hill farmers give to Tatoga in prophecy indicates a historical relationship quite different from that between Bantu-speakers and Asi hunters. Because herders had access to the most conspicuous form of wealth in livestock, they occupied a strong position in trade or marriage negotiations and by that gained prestige. Livestock was one of the few convertible forms of wealth in a society in which land was abundant and freely accessible. If prophetic efficacy was judged by its material benefits, hill farmers may have sought out Tatoga prophecy to gain access to the wealth that it represented. Colonial investigations of local politics concluded that the Tatoga once held a dominant position from Lake Victoria, up to the Mara River and across the Serengeti plains to Ngorongoro Crater.⁸⁹ In the mid-nineteenth century the Maasai defeated the Tatoga in a decisive battle for the Crater. Sometime after this, cattle diseases devastated their herds and many followed the prophet south. Ikoma elders said that after the livestock deaths of the early colonial period the Tatoga were reduced to work for them as cattle herders to regain their livestock.⁹⁰

The stories concerning Tatoga as influential prophets and "fathers" seem to date to mid-nineteenth century, just before or into the period of disasters. It may be that when the first signs of

⁸⁸ Machota Sabuni, Issenye, in a letter, 23 March 1997, recorded by Nyawagamba Magotto.

⁸⁹ R. S. W. Malcolm, "System of Government," p. 4, 1937, MDB.

⁹⁰ Interview with Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

the disasters to come began to be felt, (through localized famine, the introduction of new diseases, the appearance of the first caravans in the area, and the encroachment of Maasai into hill farmer territory) hill farmers turned to the Tatoga for help. The Tatoga would have been natural allies in times of crisis because they lived in a different ecological niche and so famine and disease affected them differently. Yet just as with the hill farmers' relationship to the hunters, while learning from and getting aid from the Tatoga herders, the farmers appropriated their expertise and gained dominance in the region. The prosperity and success of Bantu-speakers resulted from their ability to break down the ecological/economic boundaries defining the identities that had allowed the regional system to function.

The Prophetic Stories of Masuche and Zegeru

Through an interpretation of stories appropriated from Tatoga tradition but told by hill farmers as their own, one gains insight into the historical process by which hill farmers came to dominate, linguistically, culturally and demographically, over herders and hunters in the region. For example, in Ikoma elders took me to see a rock with natural depressions, resembling a *baa* board game of parallel sets of holes in which seeds are placed as counters for the play. They told me that this was Masuche's *baa*, which he used to trick God, the sun. [See Figure 5-5: Two Versions of the Story of Masuche's *Baa*.] The Ikoma story told at the site went like this:

They call this Masuche's Baa (agoroshi e Masuche). Masuche played baa with God, the Sun (Irioba) here. Masuche's cattle went out and grazed themselves and came back at night because God was close to Masuche. One day they quarreled and the Sun went home in anger. Only some cattle had come home to the corral by then, when it got dark, because the Sun left. So the ones who were left out became the wild animals -- Masuche named them zebra, gazelle, topi, impala, and all the others. That is how the wild animals came to be. They are Masuche's cattle.⁹¹

⁹¹ Interview with Moremi Mwikicho, Sagochi Nyekipegete, Kenyatta Mosoka, Robanda, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂). See the story of the Bao game in Buganda tradition, Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, pp. 101.

Masuje is one of the most important Tatoga prophets and Tatoga elders told me one part of his story in this way [The full story is reproduced in Appendix 4]:

Giriweshi was born of a woman and was the son of God. His son was Masuje who tricked God, the Sun, in a game of bao because he knew how to make the stones revolve endlessly without coming to an empty hole. Because the game never ended the Sun never set and Masuje's cattle could graze far from home. The Sun became angry and retreated into the sky, taking Giriweshi with him.⁹²

Ikoma appropriation of Tatoga stories illustrates the historical process by which Bantu-speaking farmers forged new identities by adopting elements from the diverse people who surrounded them. The Ikoma could only know these stories of Tatoga prophets if they had been in close interaction with their Tatoga neighbors, participating in events at which they naturally told these tales. This indicates a relationship of some degree of mutuality. Yet the Ikoma men who told me this story did not suggest that they knew that Masuje was a Tatoga prophet. Ikoma elders had completely assimilated Masuje into a "traditional" Ikoma narrative.

Just as early settlers recognized and learned from the greater expertise of preexisting pastoralists to cope with an unfamiliar environment, Ikoma acceptance of these foundational stories of how the world was created recognizes the efficacy of their knowledge about the world. Many examples exist in East Africa of people appropriating the origins of those with more power to increase their own standing. This may be why the Kuria claim to have come from Egypt or the Jita from Buganda and Buhaya. Here, Ikoma do not claim Tatoga origins and parentage but appropriate the source of Tatoga knowledge, and so their power, in prophecy. This story connects between Tatoga prophecy to wealth in livestock. In the Ikoma version of the story Masuje, a Tatoga prophet, controls all of the original livestock and therefore also the wild animals.

⁹² Interview with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂).



Moremi Mwikicho, Sagochi Nyekipegete, Wilson Machota, Kenya
Mosoka, Robanda, 12 July 1995, at Masuche's *Bao* in Ikoma.



Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Narrators of
the Tatoga Masuche Story, Issenye, 27 July, 1985

Figure 5-5: Two Versions of the Story of Masuche's *Bao*

Another example of Tatoga narrative style in hill farmer tradition is an Ikizu story of one of their prophets, Zegera, whose miraculous birth and actions resemble nothing more than the Tatoga prophetic accounts. The story begins with an alternate Ikizu emergence story to the one of first man and first woman told in the last chapter. In this version Muriho, a hunter, establishes the country by using his prophetic powers. It is significant that the elder tells this story (which is one of the very few stories of miraculous prophets that I collected among the hill farmers) in relation to the story of driving out the Tatoga from Ikizu. For all of the myriad times I asked people about the relationship between Tatoga and Bantu-speaking communities this is the only time that I got a full narrative. It was also the only response that suggested a relationship of conflict rather than of coexistence and peace. The full story is reproduced here because it is a unique combination of the older emergence stories with Tatoga prophetic tales.

Samweli: Muriho came from the west, the lake, Nyanzo, through the north to Kisii, but he did not go through Gorogosi. He was a healer and had medicine. When he left Kisii, Muriho went first out to Ngoreme, to the mountain of Mongwesi. Mongwesi was a hunter and invited Muriho to be his guest. Mongwesi was a Ngoreme. Mongwesi told Muriho, "you are my friend, why not stay here in my country and build with me?" Muriho said, "I am going over there to the mountain, the big one that I dreamed about, Chomuriho."

So Muriho left and came to his land and was welcomed by a man named Nyomwaroti. He learned that the Hengere were bothering those people. After living with Nyamwaroti for a while Muriho asked him, "who is the big man of this country?" Nyamwaroti answered, "I am, but I am defeated by the terrible people here called the Hengere." Muriho said, "if I drive them out what will you give me?" Nyamwaroti answered, "if you drive these people out of my country I will give you my daughter to marry." Muriho tried first to send wild buffalo to bother them day and night in their homes, but they did not leave. He sent snakes to bite them and score them, but they did not leave. Then he used ants who would bite them at night, but they did not feel it. He said, "what shall I do with these people, the moon is nearly gone." Then he used bees on them and the very day that they stung them the Hengere moved away. The bees drove them off.

There is a point I forgot, Muriho had spoken to Nyomwaroti, saying, "I am a prophet and we cannot live in one homestead." So he went and established his home on the mountain at Ilongo Muriho. Nyomwaroti lived in Saromo. [...] The Hengere are the people of the Congo, the pygmies. When the Hengere were chased out Muriho encircled the mountain and the land with protection medicine to make it safe so they would not return.

The first wife of Muriha was the daughter of Nymwarati — Wanzita. She gave birth to Mughaba. We say, "we are the Ikizu, the people of Wanzita and —,"

Audience: *Mughaba.*

Samweli: *Muriha had this many wives — [holds up fingers]*

Audience: *Eight.*

Samweli: *Muriha had eight wives from different places, but the first wife, the big house, was from Ikizu, Nyamwarati's daughter, from Salama, Kambagere, Zahya, the big house. Wanzita gave birth to Mughaba and Mugabha gave birth to Kishaka. The sister of Kishaka was Wasatu and they built a house together . . . Then Kishako gave birth to Mabere. Mabere was a prophet. Mabere gave birth to her son, Zegera. Zegera was born speaking and holding his medicines . . . but wait I must go back.*

Before Muriha came the Taturu were here, and together with the Rang'i they were also driven out by the Hengere. They left, but when the Taturu heard that the Hengere were gone they came to ask Muriha if they could build here again. So Muriha agreed and asked what they would give him. They said they would give him a wife and this is the house of the Batatira. They came back from Mbulu where they had game. The first person to come was Gambasarakwa, who built at Sarakwa Hill, this is a Tatiro place. The next person was Gambamiri, who gave his daughter to Muriha and built at Kirinera . . . He gave his daughter to Muriha because in the past when you wanted to build somewhere it was important to give something in return. After he gave his daughter, he was allowed to build here. Muriha was the son-in-law of Nyamwarati who passed on his authority over the land to Muriha, he said, go ahead and live here and herd. He gave him all of the hills to keep the enemy out. Do you understand?

Jan: *Yes.*

Samweli: *Write it then. Muriha became a soldier of the old man to guard the hills so that no enemy would come. So that is how the Taturu came.*

Jan: *Where did they settle, in the hills there or where?*

Samweli: *Muriha's Tatura father-in-law built in the hills a little there in Kirinera. The others were on the plains at Sarakwa, down there. They were so few anyway. Then Muriha disappeared. After the Taturu came in, they spent some years and he disappeared and returned to Ngareme, Maji Mata, to his friend Mangwesi. [. . .] Now after they said that Muriha was dead, but there was no grave, the Taturu began to agitate. They wanted authority over the land for themselves and they had their own medicines. They harassed the Ikizu constantly for many years, maybe ten. Then this one was born, Zegera, the one who was born speaking.*

When Zegera was born, he said to his mother, "give me the milk of a white cow or a black cow." The elders were afraid, "how is it that an infant speaks?" So they sounded the alarm call and brought everyone together. When everyone came together, they asked, "what is the alarm all about?" The child spoke again, "ask my mother and father, I asked for milk but instead they gave the alarm, what is this all about?" The people were amazed. So they left and went to the big Diviner who said, "this child was born speaking and had everything, even his own medicines in his hand in a bag, together with millet and sarghum seeds." "He is coming to save the Ikizu from the oppression of the Taturu." The Diviner said, "take this child to the crossroads and lay him there with a black cow hide over him, let him sleep on the crossroads." "If he is hurt by any animal by morning know that you have not yet found your savior." Yet if you find that he is unhurt in the morning know that you have already been saved." So they laid him there

and slept uneasily in their homes all night, listening. At dawn they realized they had passed the night without hearing the laugh of the hyena and they knew that he was all right. They went and found him well, they had laid the hide on top of him but he was sitting on it watching them come. They took him to do sacrifices on his behalf. Then the Diviner said, "build a house for him right where he slept." Zegera made medicines again after he was one year old --- a child that was born speaking --- he was made like Jesus --- he came miraculously. So he made medicines that they put in the water where the Toturu cattle drank. The cattle in the whole area began to die. A great many died and when they died the Taturu moved, they went back to Mbulu, others to Sukumo, others to Majlta, they dispersed . . . After this the land was of the Ikizu.⁹³

This story acknowledges the Tatoga as having been in the land first, but ineffective against the agents of destruction and thus not in control ritually as guardians of the land. Again the hunter, Muriho in this case, marries a local woman to gain access to the land. This version acknowledges his wife, Wanzita and her child, as the founders of the "houses" of Ikizu. The genealogical line of prophets runs through these women and their sisters. His journey to the mountain of Mangwesi in Ngoreme and his final settlement at the mountain of Chamuriho resonate with the emergence stories that have already been told.

The story of Zegera depicts a contest for authority over the land between the Tatoga and the Ikizu. Although the Tatoga had been in the land first, they were not able to defend it against the Hengere and only returned after the Ikizu hero, Muriho (a hunter), had done the job. They established reciprocal in-law relations to live together on the land. Nevertheless, after Muriho was gone, the Tatoga tried to regain their former authority through prophecy. The Ikizu produced a more powerful prophet and drove them off by killing their cattle with medicines. The Ikizu challenged the hegemony of the herders by using prophecy, the source of Tatoga power, against them. They defeated the Tatoga by killing their cattle, the material basis of their power. By controlling a prophetic narrative of their own the Ikizu at once accept Tatoga power and attempt to

⁹³ Interview with Samweli M. Kirimanzera, Kurusanda, 3 August 1995 (Ikizu ♂). Samweli is a healer by profession and tells this story to defend the authority of the prophetic line of Muriho in Ikizu as having priority over that of Nyakinywa from Kanadi.

overturn it and assert their own dominance. This story provides further evidence that although the Tatoga were among the first-comers, they were not the ritual guardians of the land. Samweli's narrative claims that the Tatoga could not protect people against the Hengere.

Western Serengeti farmers are clear in their narratives that they control the land and maintain the relationship with it necessary for prosperity. They contend that the Tatoga are interlopers and newcomers on the land. However, their silence concerning the relationship between herders and farmers in the emergence traditions may indicate that the Ikizu gained a certain kind of power by the incorporation of Tatoga prophecy as their own. The Ikizu took the mobile power of the prophet, connected with the wealth and prosperity of livestock, and attached it to a fixed site on the land. Western Serengeti people still accept the ritual precedence of the Tatoga without acknowledgment of their role in the emergence of farming communities on the frontier. People value the Tatoga for their ritual power, in spite of their diminished material and demographic strength.

The few stories that remain, such as the one told by Samweli, suggest that farmers gained ascendancy over pastoralists who first inhabited the plains, by their ability to incorporate rather than to exclude. Farmers gained herding expertise from their herding neighbors, but they also learned the more esoteric knowledge of prophecy that gave them additional tools for maintaining successful settlements on the frontier and meeting the challenges of the disasters. The Tatoga and their Bantu speaking neighbors shared the land and maintained relations of reciprocity because they occupied different ecological niches: the plains and the hills. Yet just as with the Asi, conflict and competition were also important elements in the emerging historical relationship. Because the farming communities were so adept at incorporating new knowledge and practice they began to take over areas once dominated by the Asi and the Tatoga.

Conclusion

The interpretation of the *asimoka* traditions through the core spatial images provides a glimpse into important aspects of the distant past through the internal lens of local historical imagination. It allows us to come to tentative understandings of how Bantu-speaking immigrants on the frontiers of an inter-cultural environment forged unique new communities in an unfamiliar landscape. They did this by drawing on their own traditions as well as incorporating the experience of their neighbors. The image of the female farmer bringing the male hunter into her home and together giving birth to a nation is one that aptly symbolizes this development. Through the incorporation of farmers into hunter lineages they gained ritual control over the land.

Farmers located their settlements on the hills and at the interstices of the different ecological zones to realize a wider economic range and to facilitate interaction with neighbors from whom they could learn. Different kinds of social interactions with hunters and herders produced very different concepts of social identity and the oral traditions that represent them. In each case the success of Bantu-speaking communities was a result of their ability to incorporate rather than to exclude, to widen their options, rather than to specialize. Their rhizomatous growth has drawn on many connected underground stems, thriving in an interstitial space.

These long-term processes of inter-cultural interaction on the frontier must be kept in mind as we turn to the investigation of a different kind of social identity—that of clans. The ecological/economic identities of farmer, hunter and herder formed a regional system of difference that allowed for interdependent relations. Yet as we have already seen, people needed to find ways of crossing these boundaries to gain access to the expertise, knowledge and resources of others that were crucial to their prosperity. They mediated these boundaries primarily through clans, based on the very old idiom of kinship.

CHAPTER SIX
REGIONAL PATHS OF ASSOCIATION:
THE CLAN TRADITIONS OF A MOBILE SOCIETY

Clan histories, in contrast to the stories of ethnogenesis discussed in the previous chapter, are a separate but related kind of emergence story. They constitute another genre of oral tradition. Elders presented these stories as some of the oldest traditions, reaching back "before the grandfather of our grandfathers." Like ethnic emergence stories, they contain layers of meaning related to different time frames--the elaborations of more recent experience and also core spatial images that represent some regional generative principles at work in the more distant past. This chapter explores clan traditions as they shed light on community organization and dispersed regional alliances before the era of disasters. It demonstrates how the meaning of clans changed as their historical context in relation to larger scale social identities changed.

In this chapter I argue that clans are not fixed and timeless social structures but rather inherently flexible units for creating cohesive local communities and for providing regional "pathways" whereby people gain access to the resources and knowledge of others. The structural interpretation of clans by both anthropologists and historians, as units in a segmentary lineage system, and by oral traditions told today, as subunits of ethnic groups, distorts an older meaning of clan still recoverable in the core images of oral traditions. Rigid interpretations of ethnically bounded clans do not work in the western Serengeti because the same clan names are found among many ethnic groups throughout the wider region, rather than uniquely in one ethnic group. This configuration results from a history in which dispersed clans and clan narratives preceded ethnic groups and ethnic narratives in the region. Clans were the social unit which existed over the

longue durée; within them people transmitted emergence stories, and these later became ethnic stories. Although clan narratives have most often been interpreted as "migration stories," I analyze them as the formalized recognition of "resource and knowledge pathways."

I argue that clan stories represent long-term generative principles through the core spatial images of the homestead and of dispersed regional pathways. The homestead image allowed people in the past to unite diverse peoples into cohesive residential territories. In the context of the late nineteenth century disasters when western Serengeti people began forming ethnic territorial boundaries they used the genealogical aspect of the homestead image to imagine clans, like lineages, as subsets of ethnic groups. In the period before the disasters clans seem to have functioned primarily to mediate diverse kinds of regional social boundaries marked by economy, bodily marking, geography or expertise. These large-scale social identities (like herder/hunter/farmers) controlled access to resources and knowledge, creating a regional system of exchange and interdependence. Clans crossed these boundaries, giving their members access to resources and knowledge that others controlled. These clan networks were formed both by the settlement mobility of lineages and by the metaphorical association through common praise names and avoidances of people controlling particular suites of knowledge and resources. Today, prophets use clan networks as the basis of their power; one of the few remaining examples of clans as dispersed pathways.

Anthropologists struggle with the problem of defining "clan" because what they describe as "clan" in one society may not have the same function or organization as "clan" in another. While people use various words for "clan" across the Mara Region, they refer in every case to a social identity made up of people who trace their descent to a common ancestor, recognize commonly held territory, and have occasion to take communal action. Dispersed throughout the region one finds clan groups with the same names, sharing a sense of common origins and avoidances. What

distinguishes clan from lineage in the Mara Region is that people of the same clan cannot ascertain their exact relationships to one another, as can the members of one lineage, nor are precise genealogical relationships deemed important. Each clan also claims a set of oral traditions that explains its origins and dispersal throughout the region.

I interpret clan narratives as representing part of the *longue durée* history of this region in terms of generative principles, rather than specific events. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated from linguistic sources that the lineage principle is very old in the region, brought by Lakes Bantu-speakers as they forged new kinds of settlements on the frontier. Yet because lineage provided a flexible and adaptable strategy we do not know exactly how people would have used it in the distant past. For the same reasons, it is also difficult to tell which specific clan histories are older than others. Many scholars have argued that the clans claiming "first-come" status were the first to enter the region. Nevertheless, these clans may have usurped those rights from others before them and the clan units themselves likely changed over time.

Clan histories do, however, seem to be old: the emergence stories presented in Chapter 4 and 5 were probably clan stories before they became ethnic stories. I have argued that the core spatial images of ethnic emergence stories represent the principles of production and reproduction used by settlers on the frontier in the distant past. Yet if people carried these stories in oral memory as the stories of clans, then clans might have been the units that organized local communities within the larger regional context of a hill farmer's identity. The clan stories which scholars have often interpreted as the "migration" histories of ethnic groups seem to reflect an earlier context where clans provided the means for crossing the boundaries of regional identities such as farmer, herder and hunter, among others. "Migration" stories make connections among diverse peoples across the region; they describe the pathways that gave people access to knowledge and resources beyond their communities.

In this chapter I analyze two different kinds of clan narratives which reflect the two contexts in which clan identity functioned. The first are clan "migration" histories; the second are histories of clans as "children" of the ethnic group's founding parents. The core spatial images of the first type are movement through diverse regional pathways. Those of the second type are images of family relations within a homestead. Each type emphasizes an aspect of clan identity that served the purposes of people operating in different historical contexts.

Yet both kinds of core images represent aspects of the generative principle of clanship that has operated over the *longue durée*. Although homestead images were effectively used to join clans into ethnic groups in the reconfigured narratives of the late nineteenth century, they also capture an aspect of clanship that is much older. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated that the core spatial images of the ethnic emergence stories represented gendered homestead space. These same homestead images may also have functioned in the period before the disasters to create the organizing principle around which settlers built local clan-based communities—like the relations of a homestead but on a larger scale. This is shown by an analysis of the words for lineages and clans, used from the time East Nyanza Bantu-speakers first entered the region. All these words represent homestead space (house, gate, hearthstones).

Clans as Children of the Homestead

The first type of clan histories presented in this chapter are those that have been incorporated into ethnic stories. They are analyzed not only as they represent clan identity in relation to ethnic identity in the post-disaster period but also as they represent clan identity as a means for organizing local communities before the disasters. Elders often integrate the origin of clans into their narrations of the ethnic emergence stories. This version of the Nata *asimoka* story ends with the creation of the four Nata clans or *hamate* by the children of Nyamunywa and Nyasionko:

The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Then she gave birth to a daughter, and in total four boys and four girls. When they were grown, they were married to each other. This is the reason that Nata inherit through the woman's side. The children made the clans of Nata. The place where they lived is called Bwanda. When they got to be too many, they divided into the saiga [age-set cycles].¹

An Ikoma elder, Mahewa, along with my colleague Wilson, listed all of the clan names and their founders as subunits of the greater Ikoma people [See Figure 6-1: Narrators of Clan Histories].

Jan: *What is your clan?* [I used the Nata term for clan, "hamate."]

Mahewa: *What does she want to know?*

Wilson: *She wants to know your land (ekyaro).*

Mahewa: *Oh, so that is it! Ok.*

Wilson: *Your gateway lineage (ekchita).*

Mahewa: *Abarache of the lineage of Obohimaro. [. . .]*

Young man: *Let me explain this to you. All of us who live here as a tribe are the Ikoma. The Ikoma are divided again among the gates (ebchita) which are the Hikumari, Rachi and others. The gate of this man is the Rachi. The Rachi are also divided among smaller groups. [. . .]*

Jan: *Among all the Ikoma how many clans are there?*

Wilson: *There are eight clans. Who is the eldest of them?*

Mahewa: *Mrachi, then Hikumari, then Getiga, then Himurumbe, then Gaikwe, then Mwanacha, then Serubati, then Sagarari, that is all.*

Wilson: *But explain to her so she understands, the name of Mrachi was what?*

Mahewa: *Mgosi.*

Wilson: *This man was named Mgosi.*

Mahewa: *Hikumari's name was Kumari.*

Jan: *Was this the name of the one who founded the clan?*

Mahewa: *Yes*

Wilson: *And for the Getiga was Mago. Murumbe for Himurumbe.*

Mahewa: *Gaikwe, I do not know his name, he was an Asi. Mwanacha was Marakanyi. Serubati was Nyawatika. Sagarari was Mumare.*

Jan: *Are these their names or the places where they came from?*

Wilson: *They are the names of the eldest. The ones who began each clan.*

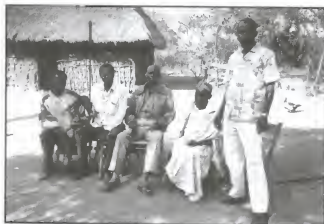
Mahewa: *They are the children of Mwikoma, the founder of all Ikoma.²*

¹ Interview with Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

² Interview with Mahewa Timanyi and Nyambureti Morumbe, Robanda, 27 May 1995 (Ikoma ♂).



Nyambureti Morumbe and Mahewa Timanyi with Mahewa's wife between, Robanda, 27 May 1995.



Samweli M. Kirimanzera, holding staff and black tail, with friends and research colleague Kinanda Sigara (standing), Kurusanda, 3 August 1995.

Figure 6-1: Narrators of Clan Histories

These narratives fully incorporate clans into the ethnic account, with the clan founders represented as children of the original parents. These accounts order the relationships among people of different clans within one ethnic group. The Ikoma clans acknowledge their unity as children of the same parents, and also recognize their individuality and differences in seniority. Many historians and anthropologists have explained this family idiom as a mechanism for ordering internal political relationships.³ The status of "first child" often gives that clan ritual precedence within the ethnic group. David Newbury's account of the royal First Fruits ceremony on Ijwi Island in Lake Kivu, shows the ritual role of each clan in relation to its social position within the kingdom.⁴

Western Serengeti peoples, too, identify clans with certain ritual and functional roles within the ethnic group. Nata give a representative of the clan of the first son, Gaikwe, a token inheritance at every funeral before dividing the rest of the inheritance. In the Nata story told by Sochoro Kabati in Appendix 1, first woman Nyasigonko was from the Getiga clan of Sonjo and first man from the Gaikwe clan, an Asi hunter from the wilderness. Gaikwe, as the hunter, has "first-comer" status--since in oral memory it was the Asi who taught farmers how to hunt and make fire, and gave them rights to the land. The two Ikoma clans that keep the elephant tusks, the Machaba, have this authority as first sons and first-comers. In Ikizu the rainmaker "chiefs" come from the clan of first woman, Nyakinywa, while the prophets come from the clan of Isamongo, first man. The Ngorome and Ikizu ethnic groups that are, by their own account, amalgamations of many different peoples, nevertheless tell a story of an original nucleus of clans descended from the first parents which then drew in other peoples from elsewhere over time.

³ For an example of this argued on the basis of regional sources see Kenny, "Stranger from the Lake," p. 9.

⁴ Newbury, *Kings and Clans*, pp. 200-226.

From Clan to Ethnic Histories

While clan stories are now presented as subtypes of ethnic stories, it seems more likely that the narrators of the ethnic emergence stories presented in the last chapter created them by joining together the narratives of the clans that made up newly forming ethnic groups. Although I have hypothesized that hill farmers in the early period of frontier settlement shared a founding myth containing the core spatial images of the homestead and the ecological landscapes of economic subsistence patterns, these stories had to be transmitted and maintained by a coherent corporately based social group, which I suspect was the residential clan community.

Quite a bit of evidence supports the claim that some form of residential organization based on the idiom of clan/lineage existed among Bantu-speakers of the Lakes Region, at least from the time that they entered the western Serengeti.⁵ At the same time, I found no evidence for organization into ethnic groups, as we now know them, until the late nineteenth century. Abuso demonstrates for the Kuria that, "before the twentieth century they did not know themselves as Abakuria but by either their various clans or by the "provinces" from which they came." Kuria identity emerged as an amalgamation of clan "provinces" during the colonial era, with the name "Kuria" being first applied to the whole group by early chiefs for political reasons.⁶ Clans, rather than ethnic groups, were the unit that organized communal resistance to colonial measures.⁷ All available evidence suggests that before the era of disasters the residential clan was the largest scale level on which communities organized themselves and took corporate action. Other kinds of large

⁵ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 168-181.

⁶ Abuso, *A Traditional History*, p. 7. The same conclusion is reached by Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 94, 115-116.

⁷ For the Kuria see Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, p. 95, she also concludes that the Kuria "only began to look upon themselves as a distinct group by the beginning of the 20th century." p. 94. See also Prazak, "Cultural Expressions," p. 45.

scale social identity did exist, such as those divisions based on ecology and economy discussed in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, people did not organize their local communities on the basis of subsistence identities. Although the bonds between hill farmers represented a kind of "ethnicity," they were much too loose to secure the claims of reciprocal obligation. When the pressures of the nineteenth century disasters demanded larger scale identity formation within bounded units, western Serengeti peoples formed ethnic groups in each area as amalgamations of residentially based clans. (This process is explained in more detail in Chapter 9.)

Since we know that territorial clans existed before the nineteenth century disasters and that ethnic groups developed as a result of those same disasters, then it seems reasonable to presume that clan histories, in some form, preceded ethnic histories. Clan histories and clan identity also changed as a result of the nineteenth century disasters but the stories retained the core images associated with earlier social forms even as they became the stories of new groups.

The contradictions inherent in the stories themselves testify to these changes in the social basis of the narratives. Clan "migration" stories still exist separate from and cross the boundaries of ethnic narratives. Clan "migration" stories and ethnic narratives which incorporate clans are in many ways incompatible with each other. For example, if the clan founder Gaikwe was the son of first man Nyamunywa how can one tell a Gaikwe history without reference to the larger ethnic group of which he is a part? How can Nata identify first man, Nyamunywa, as a Gaikwe clan member if Nyamunywa's sons founded the clans? Many elders were clearly uncomfortable with talking about these two kinds of histories in sequence. In fact, the account of Samweli, reproduced below, was one of the few that admitted to a relationship between clans of the same name in different ethnic groups. Most elders said that the Gaikwe of Nata and the Gaikwe of Ikoma had no connection except in the coincidence of names. In the clan history told below the Ikizu narrator

Samweli avoided the issue of whether he could claim clanship with the Gaikwe of Ikoma by describing the overall unity between the Ikizu and the Nata.

The process of ethnic formation is recent enough that inconsistencies remain in clan stories that narrators have not yet fully assimilated into an ethnic account. Elders still readily identify the characters in the ethnic emergence stories with their clan. The stories some elders tell as clan history in one ethnic group, elders from another ethnic group may tell as ethnic history. For example, a Gaikwe clan elder in Nata told me the story of hunters following the wildebeest migration from Sonjo, and Ikoma elders told me the same story as one about ethnic emergence. Particular clan histories often include what is now known as the ethnic emergence story as part of the clan narrative. When I asked about Nata origins, one knowledgeable elder told how members of a particular clan from Gusii came hunting at the mountain Magaka in Nata. Nata people incorporated these hunters as friends, and later as family, into an existing lineage. When asked how it was that the people who lived there accepted these hunters, this elder began a narration of the Nata origin story of first man and first woman.⁸ Clan and ethnic stories overlap so much that the narrators themselves have trouble distinguishing them.

The story of Ngoreme ethnic origins, told by a Timbaru clan elder, is a good example of this merging of clan stories into ethnic stories. This elder seems to be elaborating an ethnic origin history around an Iregi clan praise shout that goes like this: "the Ngoreme of Isabayaya, of Wandira, of Mangwesi--Regata--Manyere, waters which trickle down from above, the Ngoreme of Nyahaba."⁹ The Iregi clan, among others who claim origins in Sonjo, say that Isabayaya was their

⁸ Interview with Maguye Maginga, Nyeketono, 21 June 1995 (Nata σ).

⁹ "Abangoreme ba Sabayaya re Wandira re Mangwesi--Regata--Manyere--Manchira Baigora (Batahera Manche na Migeri);" interview with Apolinari Maro Makore, Mesage, 29 September 1995, in a handwritten manuscript of Ngoreme history. Praise shouts or a praise names are commonly used across Africa to commemorate a famous person, group or event. They are

clan founder.¹⁰ The Iregi are also those whose story of dispersal from Nyeberekera during the disasters was told in Chapter 3. Their name, derived from "Regata," links them to Sonjo. Their clan origins have become the origins of all Ngoreme. This is the ethnic story built by Mzee Silas:

Silas: *We Ngoreme, as I learned from the elders who told me, they said that we come from the southeast. Maybe the areas to the north or east. [. . .] To say for sure, the places themselves are not named. To the north over there, the area of Sonjo, where we border south in the hills, that is where we began. From there they come to the area of Mangwesi Mountain. Before they got to Mangwesi Mountain they were harassed by others, at the place of Manyere. The elders said that Mangwesi was not where Manyere was from, Manyere come to Mangwesi. So Manyere must be the name of a person, not a place. But the place was named after him. [. . .] The Toturu call us Manyere. [. . .] I think that this person Manyere was the same as this person Manyere. [. . .] After coming here Manyere and his people were dispersed, maybe because of war. His son was Wondira . . . He was a farmer, his other brothers were hunters. But he liked to farm and liked to find good fertile soil to farm. This was Wondiro. [. . .] After Wondiro was Isabayaya. He was the son of Wondiro. At this time they had come from the southeast, they had come as for as Serengeti in the hills. They came to Mangwesi Mountain and then to Ikorongo. But before they got to Ikorongo, there at Mangwesi Mountain, the Ikoma separated off and went to Ikoma. The Ikoma liked to hunt. So they went off on their hunt . . . I do not know, this is what the elders thought. They went to Nyeberekera.*

But the others went off looking for soft earth to farm. The soil here was good because the elephants had dug up the soil over there and it dried up, so they had to move. At that time they formed with sticks. There were not even hoes then. That is what they told me. So they come looking for a place to farm and to build their houses safe from enemies. The hills would protect them. They did not have anyone to bother them. That is how they came to Ikorongo. At Mangwesi Mountain Isabayaya was born to Wondiro there. Then after Isabayaya moved to Ikorongo, he gave birth to Mongoreme. So that is why this is called Ngoreme. Even today we say, "we Ngoreme are the people of Isabayaya and Wandira.

Jan: *Do you have kinship with the Sonjo?*

Silas: *We have the praise name of the Sonjo, that they have the irrigation channels. We pray Bigoro Manche ra Mogera, "the water that trickles down from on high." This means*

performed in public gatherings like dances or feasts. See Barber, *I Could Speak*, for an analysis of Yoruba praise names.

¹⁰ P. Haimati and P. Houle, "Mila na Matendo ya Wangoreme," (unpublished mimeo) Iramba Mission, 1969. Philipo Haimati is from the Taboori clan, which along with the Maare are said to be the first to arrive from Sonjo.

*that we came from Sonjo. When we pray, we ask for a blessing from where we came. When we do eldership titles, we pray this. We pray this to the ancestors from Sonjo.*¹¹

The process of the incorporation of clan histories into ethnic accounts is ongoing and documented in the written sources. Today, elders rarely tell clan histories any more as an independent narrative form. When Musoma District Officer E. C. Baker questioned elders in the 1920s and early 1930s about clan names, avoidances, and place-names, he got quite thorough lists throughout the region.¹² In my research, few elders could recite clan history with any detail. Clans had political saliency in the early colonial period when the residential clans of Zanaki and Kuria got their own chiefs. Yet with the reorganizations of the 1950s, clan territorial chiefs became local headmen and all the people elected a Paramount Tribal Chief. In both cases, however, the administration understood clans as subsections of "tribes," referred to by Baker as "sub-tribes," and not as dispersed networks of affiliation. Thus people ceased to tell publicly, and gradually forgot, clan histories that made regional connections.¹³

The Core Spatial Images of Clan Traditions

The more inclusive core spatial image of the homestead is overshadowed in clan traditions integrated into ethnic narratives by the image of a bounded community, defined by the genealogical relationships of children to their parents. Although genealogical relatedness forms a part of the homestead image, in these clan narratives it becomes the central image. These narratives characterize clans as subsets of a particular ethnic group whose relationships are contained within that unit. This image is consistent with the classic anthropological understanding of clans as a

¹¹ Interview with Silas King'are Magori, Kemegezi, 21 September 1995 (Ngoreme σ).

¹² "Avoidances" or "totems" are animals or objects respected or "avoided" by specific groups like clans.

¹³ Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," MDB; Baker, Tanganyika Papers.

form of social organization based on lineage or genealogical descent. In a segmentary lineage system a number of clans form an ethnic group. These clans are made up, in turn, of a number of maximal lineages, that are made up of a number of minimal lineages, approximating a neat set of nesting boxes. This model gives the impression that ethnic groups, made up of discrete clans, formed isolated and autonomous units.¹⁴

Beginning more than two decades ago, Africanist scholars mounted an incisive critique of segmentary lineage theory. Some have concluded that the concept is a fantasy of the west and that blood ties never formed the basis for social organization among aboriginal peoples.¹⁵ Kuper went as far as to assert that, "the lineage model, its predecessors and its analogs, have no value for anthropological analysis." His reasons for this radical statement were that the lineage model does not represent folk models of society and that there are no societies that "a repetitive series of descent groups ever organized."¹⁶

Western Serengeti ethnography would confirm that the segmentary lineage model in the strictest sense does not apply here. If the model functions one would expect to find that lineages are unique subsets of particular clans. In Nata, for example, the *ekehita* or lineage of Abene

¹⁴ See Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* for the classical case and R. Cohen, "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 7 (1978): 379-403, for its more recent manifestation. See also Aidan Southall, *Alur Society: a study in processes and types of domination* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1956); and Aidan Southall, "The Segmentary State: From the Imaginary to the Material Means of Production," in *Early State Economics*, eds. Henri J. M. Claessen and Pieter van de Velde (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), pp. 75-96.

¹⁵ See A. Kuper, "Lineage Theory: Critical Retrospect," *Annual Review for Anthropology*, 11 (1982): 71-95; D. W. Hammond-Tooke, "In Search of the Lineage: The Cape Nguni Case," *Man*, (n.s.) 19, 1 (March 1984): 77-93; Jane I. Guyer, "Household and Community in African Studies," *African Studies Review* 24, 2/3 (June/September 1981): 87-137. See also Parker Shipton, "Strips and Patches: A Demographic Dimension in Some African Land-Holding and Political System," *Man* (n.s.) 19, 4 (December 1984): 613-634.

¹⁶ Kuper, "Lineage Theory," p. 92.

O'Mugabho is found in each of the four *hamate* or clans. We have already seen that clans are not unique subunits of ethnic groups. In segmentary lineage terms this is not a neat set of nesting boxes in which each set is a subset of the next higher level of lineage organization. Elders sometimes explained these inconsistencies by citing the stories of individuals who moved between clans in times of stress. Some life stories that I collected told of a grandfather who was left as an orphan and went to his mother's kin to seek help. The clan then adopted him, but he kept the lineage name of his father.

However, one cannot explain this lack of fit within a segmentary lineage system by the exceptional circumstances of individuals crossing clan lines. On the contrary, lineage terminology itself is flexible at every level and a single lineage designation does not necessarily refer to units of the same value. After a great Nata man, like Magoto, who had lots of children dies, his grandchildren may start calling themselves "of the Magoto family" or Abhene O'Magoto. A new lineage (*ekehita*) spontaneously forms around an important man instead of continuing to use the previous lineage name. At the same time, other lineages of the same level go on using the older names. If no great men appear in recent generations the descendants might continue using one name for longer than five generations. The *ekehita* can also divide into smaller groupings to retain the original name. The *ekehita* of Gitaraga refers to the great rainmaker Gitaraga and that name is necessary for those who continue to propitiate his spirit for rain at his grave-site. Yet the lineage has gotten so big that they now subdivide it into three sections.¹⁷ In time little structural similarity exists between lineages of one level of segmentation. The names of clans that suffer extreme

¹⁷ Interview with Keneti Mahembora, Gitaraga, 9 February 1996 (Nata *o'*).

misfortune are often changed while others spontaneously adopt auspicious names.¹⁸ One clan name may refer to different levels of segmentation in different ethnic groups.¹⁹

This evidence confirms what Moore succinctly concluded about lineage theory: "descent ideology in its most basic form is an ideology of identities . . . it is an idea that can be used in many different ways and it is enormously adaptable and manipulatable."²⁰ The same ideology can lead to different forms of social organization according to the historical context. As Guyer suggests, the social identity translated as "clans" in one place is not necessarily "comparable in size, internal structure, legal status, kind of corporate property, or principles of recruitment" to what are known as "clans" elsewhere.²¹ Although most recent studies have adopted a more flexible notion of lineage, just how scholars should describe local social organization remains uncertain. Kuper declares the segmentary lineage model bankrupt, but offers no alternative. Guyer worries that an emphasis on the negotiability of lineage as ideology will make each study too particularistic to allow for comparison.²²

The core spatial image of the homestead embodied in clan accounts is much broader and more flexible than its genealogical aspect. The dominant image of the blood relationships of a bounded community in the clan stories noted above seems to have resulted from the reformulation

¹⁸ Siso, "The Oral Traditions of North Mara."

¹⁹ Prazak, "Cultural Expressions," p. 49, describes the discrepancies in the Kuria segmentary lineage system in this way, "the lack of distinctiveness of descent groups results from the circumstantial character of genealogical rationalization and a tendency for descent groups of different order to phase into each other."

²⁰ Quoted in Guyer, "Household and Community," p. 92, from S. F. Moore, "Descent and Legal Position," in *Law in Culture and Society*, ed. L. Nader, (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), p. 380.

²¹ Guyer, "Household and Community," p. 92.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 93; Kuper, "Lineage Theory," p. 93.

of clan stories into ethnic accounts at the end of the nineteenth century. What changed during this time were not the core spatial images themselves but the emphasis and interpretation of particular aspects of the images. The clan stories transcribed above are part of the ethnic emergence story and thus reflect the core spatial images of the homestead, where the ideology of descent plays a central part.

Using the model of the homestead, people imagined larger units of social organization. Genealogical relatedness ideally forms the basis of the relationship of those people who live together in a homestead. Yet every homestead incorporates strangers and dependents using kinship idioms or by finding other obscure lines of descent. The homestead is an indigenous model of social organization that creates a sense of a discrete bounded community with corporate property but still allows for the flexibility needed to incorporate outsiders. Kuper has shown that people in Southern Africa also used this model as the basis for organizing the Zulu state in the late eighteenth century.²³

The ideology of lineages and clans based on the model of the homestead seems to be a very old concept in the region. The oldest words for lineage and clan refer to the homestead itself. Schoenbrun's study demonstrates that, early in the first millennium A.D., when East Nyanza speakers were moving into the drier and more open environments of the east lake, they brought with them a concept of residential groupings of people based on dispersed and exogamous lineages, expressed by the term, *eka*. This word was an older Great Lakes Bantu word, derived from a Sudanic loan word, for a head of cattle or a cattle camp. Schoenbrun postulates that settlers adopted this form of social organization because "accumulations of wealth in animals were stable

²³ Adam Kuper, "The 'House' and Zulu Political Structure in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 34 (1993): 469-487.

enough to warrant their conservation by developing unilineal principles for inheriting them.²⁴ The male space of the cattle corral signified broader connections to kin with claims on that wealth. Earlier I argued that in the western Serengeti this East Nyanza Bantu word for lineage, *eka*, was used to create the homestead built around a central cattle corral as a formative strategy for expansion on the frontier. A comparison of the terms and the ethnography for clans across the region, shows the elaboration of the homestead concept. While the segmentary lineage model presumes that social organization based on kinship is diametrically opposed to that based on territory, the homestead model incorporates them both.²⁵

Hamate: Clan as Locality

An important aspect of the homestead model is its function as a residential, localized form of social organization. Although clan organization and the words used to describe it vary across the region they hold in common the ideological view that a clan is a group of people who live together on clan controlled land. Today the clan unit is the largest grouping of people who speak about their relationships to each other in lineage and descent ideology below the level of the ethnic group. In the ethnic groups farthest west, Ikizu and Zanaki, each of the clan groups lives in one area and claims clan lands. In the ethnic groups farthest to the east (Ikoma, Ishenyi, Nata, Ngorerne) clans have been dispersed among the three different age-set territories, with people of the same clan tending to settle as neighbors. In Ngorerne, traditions tell explicitly of people moving out of clan lands during the disasters and gradually back again during the colonial period. Even in

²⁴ Schoenbrun, A Green Place, pp. 170-1.

²⁵ This is a classic anthropological assumption, Sir Henry Sumner Maine, Ancient Law (London: J. Murray, 1861); Lewis Henry Morgan, Ancient Society (New York: World Publishing, 1877); these ideas were picked up by later anthropologists as the foundation of much ethnography in Africa, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, The Study of Kinship Systems: Structure and Function in Primitive Society (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 49-51; Meyer Fortes, Kinship and the Social Order (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 27ff.

"Ujamaa" villages organized after the Arusha Declaration in 1977, clan members tended to build their houses together. Clans seem to have been the largest scale level of residential organization before the disasters of the late nineteenth century.

One word for clan used throughout the region is *hamate*, a locative word that specifically refers to the politically independent territorial clan grouping. Oral testimony identifies nine Zanaki and fifteen Kuria clan territories that anthropologist Malcolm Ruel describes as "provinces."²⁶ The prefix for place designation, *bu*, is added to the clan name to indicate clan lands, as in Busegwe (Zanaki) or Bukiroba (Kuria). In Kuria, as elsewhere in the region, all land belonged to the clan.²⁷ The British vacillated between appointing a separate chief in each *hamate* and appointing a paramount chief for the whole ethnic group. Colonial anthropologist, Hans Cory, struggled to figure out which was more consistent with traditional practice. Little evidence exists that in precolonial times these autonomous clans ever united with other clans for joint action.²⁸

The term *hamate* designates a place or territory, with the particle "ha" referring to an exact, particular place, as in *ahaase* or land. Each of the *hamate* in its praise names gives a place of reference. The word *hamate* is also used generically throughout the region as "place." For example in Nata one can use the term to say, "a beautiful place." Because age-set cycles became territorially based in the east at the end of the nineteenth century, people in those areas often refer

²⁶ Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," pp. 14-36; on provinces, Bischofberger, The Generation Classes, pp. 15-16. In Zanaki the clan "provinces" are called *ekyaro* while the "sub-clans" are called *hamati* which are not territorial and move between provinces. Clans are not exogamous.

²⁷ E. D. Dobson, "Comparative Land Tenure of Ten Tanganyika Tribes," Tanganyika Notes and Records, 38 (March 1955): 31-39.

²⁸ Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," pp. 14-36. Hans Cory, "Report on the pre-European Tribal Organization in Musoma (South Mara District and ... Proposals for Adaptation of the Clan System to Modern Circumstances," 1945, pp. 1-14, CORY #173, EAF, UDSM.

to both clans and age-set cycles as *hamate*. Thus at a basic level *hamate* means people who live together on the same land. The Kuria dictionary defines *hamate* as "outsiders, people at large."²⁹ Although one may find it incongruous to use this word to refer to outsiders, the same territorial boundaries that define insiders also designate outsiders.

People within the residential *hamate* are responsible to care for the land, celebrate their own circumcision ceremonies, and take public action. The *hamate* corresponds to the boundaries of what western Serengeti people call the *ekyaro* or the ritually maintained lands of a group of people (discussed in Chapter 8). In the Ikoma narrative reproduced above Wilson explains the term I used for "clan" by referring to the *ekyaro* or land. Tobisson describes the essence of belonging to a Kuria *ikiaro* as the "close link between agnatic descent (real or fictive) from an eponymous clan founder and affiliation to a particular territory associated with him as the 'first-clearer of the land.'"³⁰ There are certain corporate rights and obligations expected from those living in the residential *hamate*. They contribute to compensation in blood suits if another clan accuses a member of murder. At a Nata funeral, the *hamate* of the deceased receive a cow out of the inheritance (*ang'ombe umwando*).³¹

Clan as Metaphorical Homestead

Those people who live together on clan lands attest to their relatedness based on a common ancestor. Yet most of the words for clan or lineage refer not to genealogical relatedness but back to the core spatial images of the homestead, analyzed in Chapter 4 as fundamental to the

²⁹ Muniko et al, *Kuria-English Dictionary*, p.21. The Gusii also use the term *eamate/chiamate* to mean clan. Philip Mayer, *The Lineage Principle in Gusii Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 9.

³⁰ Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, p. 97.

³¹ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 4 October 1995 (Nata ♂).

organization of production and reproduction. This suggests that people have made a metaphorical connection between the relationship among those who live together in a homestead and that among those who share clan membership. People have found it useful to expand the homestead model beyond one family unit to describe relationships within a larger territorial community.

Except for *hamate* all of the words used for "clan" in the western Serengeti refer to the spatial organization of the homestead. In Ikizu the clan is called *irigiha* (hearthstones), in Ikoma *ekehita* (gateway), in Ishenyi and Ngoreme *ekeshoko* (gatepost). Among related Mara-speaking peoples, the Kuria and Gusii, the clan is also called the *egesaku* (doorway) and the lineage the *irigiha* (hearthstones).³² The hearthstones, located in the female space of the house, represent Ikizu matrilineal inheritance principles. In Ikizu the clans (hearthstones) are grouped into loose associations called *zenyumba* or "houses." The patrilineal Ikoma and Ishenyi use terms for clan that refer to the male domain in the homestead, the gate of the livestock corral.

A common characteristic of words for clan and lineage among all Lakes Bantu speakers is that these words are derived from the spatial imagery of the homestead. This seems to indicate that this idiom for expressing relationships is old and probably brought by Bantu-speakers when they first entered the region (c. 500 A.D.).³³ These images suggest that local people conceptualize the relationship among those within one settlement as an extended homestead rather than as a genealogical line.³⁴ A person says that they come from the same "house" as all those whom they

³² See Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, pp. 98-100; and Mayer, *The Lineage Principle*, p. 5.

³³ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies* #107, #121, #135, #117; Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 168-174.

³⁴ Adam Kuper does this in his analysis of the Zulu state as representing deep continuities with the house model rather than in terms of lineage. "The House and Zulu Political Structure." See also David L. Schoenbrun, "Gendered Histories Between the Great Lakes: Varieties and Limits," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 29, 3 (1996): 470-480. Christopher Ehret disagrees and points to the etymology of -lôngò for a line of object in *The Classical Age*.

collectively associate with their mother or sister, regardless of the exact relationship. Likewise they come out of the same "gateway" as those whom they collectively associate with their father or brothers. The relationships among many of these people is by "blood," but because the terms are flexible and metaphorical, people calculate these relationships in many different ways, allowing for the use of a kinship idiom to unite diverse people, to merge generations, or to adopt people from other kin groups.

People also use the same homestead imagery to describe lineage (as opposed to clan) relations but in this case they designate a particular known ancestor of four to five generations removed as the founder. For the lineage divisions below the level of clan people usually use the prefix *abhene* in Nata or *abhahiri* in Ikizu (meaning the people of a particular ancestor), followed by the name of a known ancestor four or five generations removed. Nata call this lineage group the *ekehita* (gateway) and the Ikizu call it the gate post (*egeshoko*).

Although people use the same homestead imagery to represent both lineage and clan, oral traditions about the two forms are quite different and presumably represent different kinds of social identity. Western Serengeti elders can usually recite their exact genealogies to four generations on both their mothers' and fathers' sides—naming up to their grandfathers' grandfathers.³⁵ This knowledge is immediately accessible since most of them grew up knowing their paternal grandfathers (or maternal grandmothers) and therefore would have heard the names of their fathers and grandfathers (or their mothers and grandmothers) within the lineage as a matter of course.³⁶

³⁵ Iona Mayer, "From Kinship to Common Descent: Four Generation Genealogies among the Gusii," *Africa* 35, 4 (October 1965): 306, demonstrates that four generations is "the usual maximum limit for exact genealogical tracing in many African kinship systems" because this is the "natural limit of historical record in a preliterate culture."

³⁶ In the naming system today a person uses his personal name, followed by his father's name, followed by this grandfather's name.

Clan members, by contrast, cannot tell their exact genealogical relationship to each other or to their founder, nor is this knowledge considered important.

Clan members relate to each other as equals within a common category while lineage members must determine the exact nature of their relationship according to gender, generation and distance. This is because lineage members have specific ritual and jural obligations to each other concerning, for example, land, livestock, inheritance or funeral mourning. Therefore, knowing the exact genealogical relationship with other lineage members is necessary to know the degree of personal obligation. Evans-Pritchard defined this difference between clan and lineage as one between relations of personal obligation versus structural relations between collectivities.³⁷

When a man recites his genealogy by saying "I am the son of x, who was the son of y, who was the son of z . . .," after four or possibly five generations he names the sub-clan or clan founder and then the ethnic group founder, rather than the known father of his great great-grandfather. This "telescoping" of earlier generations is a common feature of lineage reckoning throughout Africa. The number of relationships to other groups that people must explain determines the number of generations recited in a genealogy. Based on similar observations in Gusii, Iona Mayer argued that lineage and clan or what she called "kin lineage" and "ancestral lineage" should not be merged in one model of kinship. Instead, the anthropologist can only properly interpret the kin lineage as a kinship group.³⁸

This distinction is also useful in the consideration of oral traditions about lineages and clans. Lineage traditions are frequently reminiscences about known ancestors. People still associate lineage ancestors furthest removed in time (five generations) with the particular places

³⁷ Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, p. 366.

³⁸ Mayer, "Four-Generation," p. 383.

where they lived. They can communicate with these lineage ancestors through rituals performed at these sites. Lineage narratives are the subject of the next chapter. On the other hand, people do not associate clan ancestors with exact places but with general directions nor do they propitiate the spirits of clan ancestors. The name of a clan ancestor often has symbolic meaning, such as Mwancha, for the lake or west, rather than the name of a remembered person. Although the localized clan could take political action based on the defense of corporate property, dispersed clan members had little corporate responsibility to each other.

The lineage idiom implicit in the recitation of a line of ancestors grows out of the core spatial images of the homestead. Ethnic stories create new units by imagining clans as subunits of the ethnic group, just as lineage groupings made up the territory of a residential clan. However, when elders tell clan stories independently, they do not invoke images of bounded subunits related to each other by genealogy. These contrasting images seem to reflect differing social realities behind clan in different historical contexts, before and after the period of disasters. In the context of emerging ethnic units in the late nineteenth century, western Serengeti people increasingly saw clans as units that were like lineages only bigger. The clan stories that remain, not assimilated into ethnic stories, but sometimes presented as the "migration" stories of ethnic groups, present an understanding of clan that seems to predate the disasters.

Clan Histories as Pathways of Regional Association

A few elders told me clan histories unrelated to an ethnic story. The story of the Hembra told by Ikizu narrator Samweli Kirimanjera is a particularly full account. He told this story after we had been talking about matrilineal inheritance, in his case as a Hembra clan member. He said

that inheritance changed as people married into other ethnic groups, as for example when people from Zanaki married in Ikizu.³⁹ [See photo Figure 6-1: Narrators of Clan Histories, p. 251.]

Jan: *There are Hembo in Zanaki too, aren't there?*

Samweli: *Yes, of course.*

Jan: *And are you the same as them? The Hembo of the Zanaki and the Hemba of the Ikizu?*

Samweli: *We are all one. They separated and some went there and others came here.*

Jan: *Did the Hemba begin in Zanaki and then come here or did they begin here and go there?*

Samweli: *Why do you bring up a new history now? You know that the history of the Hembo is different from the history of the Ikizu.*

Jan: *So shall we leave it aside for now?*

Samweli: *You want to know the history of the Hemba? You mean where they come from?*

Kihenda: *She wants to know where they come from, who they come with, and what —*

Samweli: *Is that what you want to know?*

Jan: *I want to know it all.*

Samweli: *. . . The Hemba come — they were great hunters, fierce people who lived in the wilderness. They come from the east, around the oreo of Kilimanjoro. When they left Kilimanjoro they went to Tamoga, Singira and Ragega.*

Jan: *Aaah hoo*

Samweli: *They came and passed Ndamio. Then they come to Ikoma where they left behind some Hembo called Gaikwe. Others divided off from Ikoma and went to Noto. Ok?*

Jan: *So the Gaikwe are Hemba?*

Samweli: *They are one thing. If you hear Gaikwe in Noto it is we Hemba, we are one. When they left there they entered Torime, while they were hunting. These people are called Nchage and they are also Hemba, they are our people too, the Timboru. When they — Have you written that?*

Jan: *Uh huu.*

Samweli: *When they left there they passed here in the land of the Kenye, the Wohiri Hembo, they are our people too, in Bukenyi. From there they went to Mobosi, the Asi of Kigota. When they left there they multiplied greatly and lived a long time and then separated ogoin and went to Buhembo, Sooni — the Hembo of Zanaki. While in the area of Saani others broke off and went to Butuguri of Zanaki. They are the Hemba of Zanaki. Agoin Zanaki B. Zonoki A is here. They were hunters, going here and there to hunt. After that — clon — let's go slowly —*

Jan: *Ok, I'm with you.*

Samweli: *Of the clans that were left, others divided and came to Ikizu. — When they got to Ikizu others dispersed, small groups went to Sizoki, Changuge, the Hemba of Changuge, the people of Mbasho Megunga, they were — one. Then other Hemba*

³⁹ Interview with Samweli Kirimanzeru and Kihenda Manyorio, Kurasanda, 3 August, 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

dispersed and when they got to Bigegu, they went to the area of Mwibaghi, where there were lots of animals. After Mwibaghi they came to Rindara, in Majita. When they lived in Rindara, an elder named Guta built at the place now called Guta, he died there in Guta, this Hembra man. They went to Kiria, near Guta. Then when they were finished, aher Hembra of Rindara, after some years went to Majita. That is why you hear then talking about Wiyemba, Wiyemba — they are in Majita and are the same as we Hembra. We came from one place and dispersed. Then other youth of Guta moved to Nyatwara and then to Nasa. When the Germans came there was a youth named Kitubaha of Guta who was made Mwanangwa (headman) of Nasa. . . . All of them are Hembra, coming from up there. Those that stayed behind there and then dispersed in Tarime, they returned and are called those you hear of, the Ndaroba. They are still hiding out there and even the foreigners cannot capture them, they don't pay taxes. Even when Nyerere ruled they still didn't pay taxes. But they eat meat from the hunt and honey.

Jan: *So those that we call Asi — are they those? The same?*

Samweli: *The same ones.*

Jan: *They came from Tarime?*

Samweli: *Ehhhee. They returned again, after coming from the east they came here, and then they went down again, they went again to the wilderness and stayed there. Don't you see? In a household, one child became a farmer, another a trader, another a hunter — so the household that turned back was of the hunters, they love meat, they don't want to herd or farm. Those who came down were the ones who wanted to farm and herd.*

Kihenda: *I have never seen a Ndaroba who was caught by the Game Guards —*

Jan: *There where you came from in the east — where is it? Soncha Lolionda or farther?*

Samweli: *I told you — It is to the east, on the side of Killimanjara, there are a few hills . . . much farther east than Sancha. Soncha is our neighbor.*

Jan: *So when the Nata tell the story of Nyamunywa and Nyasiganko the first parents who gave birth to the Nata — they say that Nyamunywa was Asi.*

Samweli: *Yes, he was of these people. This one, Asi, they used the name Asi, but when they began to disperse — you see the Hembra were the ones to discover fire. Fire was a problem then. They were hunters who ate raw meat until they discovered fire. So in same places they are called Bahemba morero, "to light the fire." They are the ones to discover fire. Isamongo of Ikizu was a Hembra too. [. . .] They shortened the name as language changed.*

Jan: *So they came from over there and at each step left people?*

Samweli: *They left groups here and there and went on.*

Jan: *Could you still go to those of the Ikoma and claim clanship with them?*

Samweli: *The Nata and the Ikizu are one thing. Until now, even our eldership ranks are the same.*

Kihenda: *Even if you go to my house you will see that the brands for goats and cattle are the same as the Nata.*

Samweli: *And he is the same as me, he is a Hembra.*

The core spatial image of this story is not the genealogical relatedness of a bounded residential unit but the movement of a group of people from one place to another across the

landscape. Similar images are encountered in the Ikoma emergence story in the last chapter, of Mwikoma moving from place to place before settling in Robanda, or the Ngoreme story told above of the lineage of Isabayaya moving until they found their home in Ikorongo. One can identify clan stories, even those incorporated as ethnic accounts, by these core images of dispersed pathways.

Where these stories are incorporated into an ethnic account elders present them as "migration" stories. Here the sons and grandsons of the ethnic group founder move from place to place until they finally settle in their present home. The narrators of these accounts project genealogical unity on the diverse origins of present day ethnic groups. These accounts present places which have been important in the past in a linear narrative as stops on the migration route. However, taken without the ideological assumptions of the ethnic group, one can also see these clan "migration" stories as a mental map of a very different kind.

The listing of all these places and groups of people who live there makes a connection between and unifies seemingly unrelated elements. The lineage idiom does not seem to function at all. Samweli's list cuts across ethnic lines, economic subsistence patterns and geographical distance, reaching from Mt. Kilimanjaro to the shores of Lake Victoria. In this account Asi hunters are the clan brothers of Bantu-speaking hill farmers and lake fishermen from all across the region. Mapping the points mentioned in the story would produce the image of a crisscrossing pathway, doubling back on itself across the region. How were these paths formed by historical process and what kind of relationship do they signify?

I argue that the core spatial images of clan stories, which scholars have often interpreted as "migration" stories, represent the regional connections of dispersed clans in the past. The evidence of historical linguistics suggests that some of the earliest ways in which Bantu-speakers used lineage principles to organize local communities were also used to maintain claims outside their local communities. Schoenbrun demonstrates through the reconstruction of words for lineages that

just as people used lineage as a way to conserve wealth, at the same time the inheritance of wealth by lineage members in other settlements created webs of clientship outside their local residences.⁴⁰ Separating these two aspects of lineage or clan is impossible; the internal and the external exist in a dialectical tension. The community builds itself by boundary formation and exclusion but cannot maintain itself without using those same bonds to establish regional linkages.

The Material Basis for Clan Networks

Regional networks were a crucial part of the total economic strategy as settlers moved into the drier and more marginal agricultural lands of the interior. The environment of the western Serengeti is a productive one in good years but prone to an equal number of years without enough rain, too much rain or unseasonable rain. Differences in rainfall patterns are highly localized, meaning that one hill settlement might experience drought while their neighbors a day or two walk away would harvest in abundance. To survive these fluctuations people needed to develop relations of reciprocal obligation with other people in a variety of locations. Herders and hunter/gatherers accommodated these climatic fluctuations through transhumance. They could pick up and move to the area where resources were more abundant in any one year. Yet hill farmers could not be so flexible. Although they moved every 5-10 years, they were anything but nomadic and only moved short distances. Farmers were tied to the land. The problem for them in times of environmental stress was how to make claims for assistance on people who did not live in their immediate locality.

Using clan, with its implicit reference to the space of the homestead, was an emotionally powerful way of asserting these claims. People bound by clan ties felt some of the same sense of corporate obligation to those whom they saw infrequently as to those living in the same homestead

⁴⁰ Schoenbrun, A Green Place, pp. 170-171.

or settlement. Many of our Sonjo hosts greeted the Ikoma man on the trip, whom they had never met, by saying "we are of one womb." It is clear from the composition of the internal homestead that this sense of unity was not necessarily dependent on blood relations. People find it hard to avoid these claims of obligation between clan members. The metaphor of the homestead allows for many different kinds of relationships (subordination, superordination or equality) based on the generational, parental, sibling or marital relationships of the homestead. Kuper also claimed that "the patron-client relationships of the house system" provided the framework for much larger scale relationships in the Zulu state.⁴¹

Although theoretically it makes sense that people used clan ties (in which they invested social capital in times of plenty) to make claims among distant communities in times of need, how were those paths described in Samwel's story created? How were connections made across great geographical distances and across ethnic and economic boundaries? Again, it is useful to speculate on this process by looking both at patterns that have existed in historical times and at testimonies about the past. If people moved a lot in a frontier situation, they needed to develop not only structures for organizing new settlements but also the means for maintaining connections to people from their home communities. Clan identity served both needs. In his treatment of the "African frontier" Kopytoff theorizes that groups who moved out in search of new land maintained contact with home communities, eventually establishing communication networks over long distances.⁴²

A Tradition of Mobility:

Hill farmers of the western Serengeti have a long tradition of settlement mobility. They might move whole settlements twice or more in a decade. Repeatedly elders would tell me, "we

⁴¹ Kuper, "The House and Zulu Political Structure," p. 486.

⁴² Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier," pp. 7-22.

are a moving people, we never stay long in one spot."⁴³ In their life histories many elders related all of the moves they had made in their lifetimes, including stints as migrant laborers. Some moved out of their ethnic area as youth but moved back again as elders. Today many Ikoma people live in the Ishenyi and Nata areas, with no plans to return. Elders stated that in the past an entire settlement would move together.

Oral narratives suggest that, ideally at least, moving was a decision made by the elders of the settlement, or in consultation with a prophet. The decision rested on the perception of problems in the home area such as infertility and insecurity or the promise of better conditions in another place. It was also possible for one or more families to move out without disturbing the critical mass of the settlement. One family might follow a relative who found a fertile new area in which to settle. People used already established relations of reciprocity to gain a foothold in a new area. Elders most often said they moved to find better farming and grazing lands. Some families said they moved because of a number of deaths and misfortune in their previous home.⁴⁴

The important thing to note in these testimonies is that people chose their destinations based on having a connection, kinship or otherwise, with someone who already lived there. Carole Buchanan's study of inter-ethnic clan relations in Uganda suggests that clan affiliation made these movements less random and more secure. It "maximized the safe options for people in crisis and influenced groups to move less capriciously, particularly if kinsmen were known in comparable

⁴³ Interview with Bitu Makuru, Bugerera, 11 February 1995 (Nata ♂). For Kuria settlement mobility see Prazak, "Cultural Expressions," pp. 65-89, he found that an average homestead lasted for 10-20 years, p. 124.

⁴⁴ These generalizations are taken from many informal conversations, the narratives of traditions about this period, the life stories of elders, including their narration of their parent's life histories and especially interviews with Surati Wambura, Morotonga, 13 July 1995 (Ikoma ♀); and Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

ecological zones." She maintains that clan identity provided a regional framework within which individuals could be more easily adapt to new localities.⁴⁵

Older people told me that before the advent of trucks, buses or bicycles to facilitate moves they carried everything on their heads or backs to the next site of settlement. They described moves as festive times when people called all their relatives, friends and neighbors to help carry loads to the new site, often a full day's walk or more away. If enough people were there to help, they could move the entire homestead--wooden house poles, furniture, utensils and livestock--in a couple of days. They often sent the youth of the family ahead by a full season to plant and build temporary housing. Donkeys or other pack animals were not used in the western Serengeti, not for lack of knowledge but because of tsetse fly infestation and a lack of consistent need for them. Pastoral peoples, such as the Tatoga and Maasai, used donkeys in this area. Elders simply stated that donkeys were not kept because they fed and cared for the animals without getting any use out of them. This clearly suggests a pattern of settlement mobility over a period of years rather than a transhumant lifestyle following the seasonal grazing patterns. It also means that new settlements were located fairly close to the old sites, usually within a day's walk.

A settlement would be located so that residents could move the outlying fields (*ahumbo*) for several seasons without moving the settlement. Once they exhausted all of the potential fields in the area, the settlement itself would have to move to a new center of possible fields and grazing areas, while still located near enough to harvest the fields left behind for another season. Thus, in a leapfrogging fashion, settlements would gradually spread out to their outlying fields and then skip over them to the next settlement site. The Nata village where I lived had been a settlement in the past, was abandoned, then became the *ahumbo* fields for a new village called Mbiso, located on the

⁴⁵ Carole A. Buchanan, "Perceptions of Ethnic Interaction in the East African Interior: The Kitara Complex," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11, 3 (1978): 425-426.

main road ten kilometers away. When the government recently stopped enforcing its policy of "villagization" people from Mbisio started moving out to take up permanent residence in their *ahumbo* fields. Scholars have described this sort of "migration" as "natural drift," which shows a patterned mobility rather than random moving.⁴⁶

Mobility was also possible here because of the relative ease of clearing the land for new fields and obtaining materials for building. Because of vegetation patterns in the area, people cleared new fields by burning brush and chopping down larger trees in the months before planting. This meant that farmers put little long-term labor investment into any one field. Land was not "owned" in the past in the sense of exclusive and inheritable rights of land use. Settlers used fields for a number of seasons before moving onto other fields within the area ritually maintained by the clan. In contrast to this is the system of land "ownership" by Kikuyu lineage groups in Kenya who laboriously cleared farmland over a period of years out of the highland forest.⁴⁷

If one extrapolates patterns of mobility in the western Serengeti over the long term, it is easy to recognize how networks of affiliation developed. Over time the connections between new, old and still older settlements would diversify and extend over long distances. People would be drawn into the networks of others within the settlement as they became acquainted with their neighbor's visiting relatives or friends. As time went on the pathways between communities would become denser and more diverse, no longer linked to specific genealogical lines. The particular

⁴⁶ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest*, p. 55, he calculates that spread of 22 km in 10 years is quite possible with this type of "drift". Christopher Ehret, *Southern Nilotie History*, describes migration as a slow and gradual process of small groups moving onto the next pasture or field, a process of assimilation rather than extermination, pp. 26-27. See also D. P. Collett, "Models in the Spread of the Early Iron Age," in *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History*, eds. Christopher Ehret and Merrick Posnansky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 182-195.

⁴⁷ Kershaw, *Mau Mau From Below*, pp. 22-23.

connections of a few clansmen might become generalized to represent reciprocal connections between specific places, as they appear in Samweli's narration. The connections between places resemble paths of communication and interaction that had practical value.

The most common way that historians have explained this East African pattern of regional clan networks, like the one Samweli describes, has been by dispersal from a central place of origin. The pioneering academic histories of East African societies based on oral sources interpreted clans as descent groups that migrated from original homelands to many places in the region, creating new ethnic groups by the amalgamation of many clans.⁴⁸ These histories were based on the collection of rich and detailed clan traditions, largely accessible to students returning to their home communities. They wrote histories in which the place-names were stops on a migration route--producing dots on a map connected by arrows and correlated with a chronology of generations.

This kind of historical reconstruction is problematic because it projects the image of clans or ethnic groups as we know them today moving as fixed and solid units across the landscape from place to place. It does not take into account the possibility of forming new kinds of units, permeating the boundaries of the units themselves, or incorporating strangers. "Tribal" migration histories draw on models produced in the nineteenth century by Europeans re-envisioning themselves as self-conscious nations of people with a common past as wandering "tribes."⁴⁹ Narrators easily adapted the place-name lists of the western Serengeti to this migration model and many elders tell their story in this way. However, a closer look at these places, the imagined

⁴⁸ For examples from the surrounding regions see B. A. Ogot, *A History of the Southern Luo* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967); Paul Asaka Abuso, *A Traditional History of the Abakuria, C.A.D. 1400-1914* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980); Itandala, "A History of the Babinza;" William R. Ochieng', *A Pre-Colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974); and Henry Okello Ayot, *A History of the Luo-Abasuba of Western Kenya, from A.D. 1760-1940* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979).

⁴⁹ This point is made by Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier," pp. 3-4.

landscapes that they evoke and the social relationships represented in them bring the migration paradigm into question. However, although historians have criticized these early histories for their literal acceptance of clan migrations, scholars have suggested no plausible alternative to explain clan dispersal, apart from this literal movement of people away from their homes, whether in mass and unified migrations or by migratory drift.

There is little doubt that migration played a central role in creating these dispersed clan associations.⁵⁰ The pathways described in the narratives were often literally the paths that people walked back to known home communities or to those of distant relatives to obtain aid. Although clan histories describe a unilineal movement, the paths seem to have been worn in both directions over extended periods of time. Clan histories were social maps that would enable the next generation to find the paths that led to people on whom they could depend.

The Historical Context of Regional Identities

Clan networks provided the means for crossing social boundaries created by distance and time to settle in a different area or gain access to its resources and knowledge. These clan networks did not result only from a simple process of settlers going to new areas and maintaining their old clan names. Depending on the conditions surrounding their arrival they might introduce their old clan name as a new one in the area, they might assimilate into an existing clan as a new lineage or they might abandon their clan affiliation altogether. For example, the Kobera clan among the Ishenyi are in the process of "disappearing." Traditions say that the Kobera people lived near the Ishenyi long ago at Nyeberekera. When the famine came they did not go to Sukuma with the others but the Nata invited them to move to Nagusi with the Ishenyi. There the Bene

⁵⁰ Cohen, "Pim's Doorway," p. 196; and David William Cohen, "Reconstructing a Conflict in Bunafu: Seeking Evidence outside the Narrative Tradition," in The African Past Speaks, ed. Joseph Miller (Kent, England: Folkestone, 1980) and Womunafu's Bunafu, pp. 48-67.

Omugenyi clan in all of its lineages took them in, or "swallowed them."⁵¹ The Kobera go back to the hill of Kobera where they came from to make offerings to their ancestors but also make offerings at the Ishenyi ancestral sites. They maintain a dual identity but are increasingly identifying themselves as Ishenyi.⁵²

We better understand clans as a strategy for asserting useful relationships across social boundaries rather than as fixed and enduring social units of equal value brought by immigrants and inserted into a preexisting structure. People used the generative principles of clan association represented in the core images of the homestead to improvise their relationships, both near and far. By asserting membership in a clan associated with the clan who controlled the land, new settlers could claim rights to the land. The bargaining power that immigrants had with their hosts, who provided them access to land and protection in return for clearing and farming new land, may have determined whether immigrants kept their old clan names or accepted membership in existing clans. This may account for the fact that clans constitute themselves in different ways in different places, depending on the circumstances. In Ikizu the Moriho clan claims pride of place as "first-comers," while in Zanaki the Moriho live as a small lineage within another clan territory, and in Nata the Moriho are one clan among four founding clans. Units with similar names did not necessarily have similar forms or functions.⁵³

The simple image of clans originating in one place and gradually spreading out by a process of settlement mobility across the region does not explain why relatively few clan

⁵¹ Eating is a powerful metaphor for instrumental power throughout the Lakes Region, especially of kingship and chiefship. It is significant that it is used here to mark the disappearance of a clan group name. David Schoenbrun, personal communication.

⁵² Interviews with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); Jackson Mang'oha, Mbiso, 13 May 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁵³ Moore, *Space Text and Gender*, p. 17.

associations are prominent region-wide out of the unlimited number of possible clan names if each father or mother potentially generates a new lineage. Some critical ideological or material criteria must determine the privileged position of some clans over others. Neither does the mobility of individuals of particular descent groups account for the ideological association of some clans with other clans of different names. It seems that the pathways depicted in clan narratives also represent a "deeper and more abstract or metaphorical meaning at a level where clans are embodied ideas." Waller suggests that clan names might indicate both historical settlements and "social pathways or claims between communities."⁵⁴

Although scholars have long acknowledged inter-ethnic clan relationships there are few who attempt to explain these dynamics outside a process of migration. Two notable exceptions are Gunter Schlee in *Identities on the Move* and an article by Carole Buchanan on ethnic interaction in the "Kitara Complex" of Uganda.⁵⁵ However, although their rich data provide evidence for forms of association beyond that of migrating kin maintaining old clan alliances, their analysis does not go far enough. Buchanan suggests that the patterns observed in clan designations seem to suggest that the system of clans constituted a larger "contextual framework" within which people operated. "Clan membership was intrinsic to belonging to the social order and an essential feature of ethnicity itself."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Richard Waller personal communication.

⁵⁵ Gunter Schlee, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Buchanan, "Perceptions of Ethnic Interaction." See also M. d'Hertefeldt, *Les Clans du Rwanda Ancien, Elements d'Ethnosociologie et d'Ethnohistoire* (Tervuren: Musee Royal de l'Afrique Central, 1971); and Luc de Heusch, *Le Rwanda et la Civilisation Interlacustre* (Brussels: Universite Libre de Bruxelles, Institut de Sociologie, 1966).

⁵⁶ Buchanan, "Perceptions of Ethnic Interaction," pp. 417, 425, 427.

Newbury's study of clanship in relation to kingship on Ijwi Island of Lake Kivu demonstrates that clans were not archaic forms of social organization, eventually superseded by the formation of centralized states. Rather, clanship and kingship are "seen as different aspects of a single larger process, that is, as complementary as well as opposed concepts." One cannot understand clans without seeing them within the broader context in which they functioned. Newbury's work shows how changes in clan identity not only result from the incorporation of strangers and the movement of clan members to other areas but also reflect changes in the structure of clan categories themselves.³⁷

These changes in the structures of clan categories in relation to the broader context renders the oral traditions surrounding clans in the western Serengeti confusing for the historian. Clans have operated differently in at least two identifiable historical contexts, mediated by the disasters of the late nineteenth century. The two kinds of clan narratives investigated here characterize each of these periods of clan identity. During and after the disasters the ethnic groups as we know them today began to take shape, with clans increasingly reduced to isolated subunits. Samwel's Hema history places clans in a very different historical context. What then were the wider social identities that formed the context in which clans operated before the disasters?

Wider Social Identities Before the Disasters

Within a regional set of large-scale social identities, clan was one of the few identities that crossed boundaries and united people otherwise divided. People used clans as a mediating device across various kinds of social boundaries to gain access to resources and knowledge controlled by others. Before the disasters a number of large-scale identities operated, based on different principles of organization and function. Some, like the boundaries between the Mara peoples and

³⁷ Newbury, *Kings and Clans*, pp. 4, 227-231. See also, D. Newbury, "The Clans of Rwanda: An Historical Hypothesis," *Africa* 50, 4 (1980): 389-403.

the Sukuma were marked by bodily markings, while others, like the boundaries between North and South Mara peoples were marked by geographical barriers, and still others, like the boundaries between black-smiths and non-blacksmiths were marked by expertise and technical skill. Each of these kinds of boundaries created a regional system of exchange through difference. Although they were marked in different ways each kind of boundary controlled access to certain kinds of resources and knowledge.

For example, we have already seen how the identities of farmer, herder and hunter created a regional system of economic interdependence. People identified others by the ecological niches that they occupied in relation to their subsistence strategies. These categories corresponded to the basic divisions in language groups, East Nyanza Bantu-speakers (farmers), Southern Nilotic Dadog-speakers (Tatoga herders) and perhaps Southern Cushitic or Southern Nilotic-speakers (Asi hunters). Even though farmers also hunted and herded, in their regional interactions they defined themselves as farmers to structure their relations with others. Yet they also had to find ways of crossing those boundaries to gain ritual control over the land from the Asi hunters or to gain prophetic expertise from the Tatoga. They did this by claiming common clanship with the Asi (the Gaikwe or Hemba clan in Samweli's story) or kinship as sons of a ritual "father" with the Tatoga.

Western Serengeti people deployed the kinship idiom of clan to make claims to land, ritual knowledge and trade items across all kinds of social boundaries. We cannot understand clans isolated from the historical context in which they functioned as mediating devices. Yet the mediation of boundaries by clans did not destroy those other social identities of regional difference. People could claim common clanship with each other while still recognizing their difference. Samweli explained how different people could still be related using the familial idiom: "In a household one child becomes a farmer, another a trader, and another a hunter."

Clans crossed the boundaries of other kinds of social identities besides those of economic subsistence patterns. Regionally people distinguished themselves from each other by bodily markings—circumcised and uncircumcised peoples. Uncircumcised peoples bordered East Nyanza Bantu-speaking farmers to the north, south and west. Western Serengeti peoples today define the land south of the Mbalageti River as the land of the Sukuma, in spite of their settlement beyond this boundary. They call the Sukuma *Kereti* (perhaps those who carry "crates"),⁵⁸ who in turn call the Mara peoples, *Shashi*. We know that the term *Shashi* was in use during the period right before the disasters because the earliest travelers who had Sukuma guides named the whole region on their maps *Ushashi*.⁵⁹ The most salient feature of this identity for the Sukuma is that *Shashi* people practice circumcision. The Western Nilotic-speaking Luo, who live North of the escarpment, and the Bantu-speaking peoples around Lake Victoria, of Buganda and Buhaya, do not circumcise. Mara peoples know the Luo as *Gaya* (slaves), who in turn call the Mara peoples *Mwa*.

It is difficult to say whether these divisions were part of the historical context in which clan identity functioned before the disasters. Western Serengeti people took both the terms *Gaya* and *Kereti* directly from the period of the disasters in their reference to the slave and the caravan trades. However, since elders always described the social divisions between themselves and the *Kereti* or *Gaya* as related to the practice of circumcision, the boundaries themselves may have preceded their present names. In spite of changes in cultural practice encouraged by schools, government and churches, circumcision remains a crucial marker of Mara identity and also of the transition to adulthood. This became an issue during the colonial period when the administration brought teachers from Sukuma and Buganda to staff the primary schools. Circumcised teenage

⁵⁸ Interview with Thomas Kubini and Jacob Mugaka, Bunda, 10 March 1995 (Sizaki *♂*).

⁵⁹ R. Kiepert and M. Moisel, "Victoria Nyansa" 10 January 1896, GM 157/1 A3, TNA, is one example.

students would not submit to corporal punishment by their teachers who were categorically still children.⁶⁰ This also made marriage with uncircumcised peoples more difficult, though not impossible.

The institution of age-sets and initiation into age-sets by circumcision seems to have been adopted by East Nyanza-speakers from Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers before 1000 A.D. as a means for learning from agro-pastoralists already familiar with the dry inland environment. Circumcision and common age-sets united hill farmers with Tatoga herders, Maasai herders and Asi hunters. Yet at the same time it divided them from other hill farmers like the Sukuma and the Luo, with whom they came into contact through trade. Shared clans mediated these boundaries created by bodily markings. Creating brothers among people who were outwardly different.

Today western Serengeti peoples also mark a difference between themselves and the Lakes peoples to the west by reference to cardinal directions and geography. Western Serengeti people know those who live on the lakeshore as *Nyancha* (including the ethnic groups of Jita, Ruri, Kwaya and Kerewe), using the same word for both "lake" and "west." The emergence traditions told by lakes peoples trace migrations to their present homes from across the lake. The lakes people speak the Suguti languages of the East Nyanza Bantu family, becoming distinct from the Mara languages by about 500 A.D. The congruence of these categories of lake and inland with linguistic and historical distinctions suggests that this division has also been one of long duration.

However, we must remind ourselves that these categories of lakes and inland were situational and relational. The Lakes peoples knew the western Serengeti peoples as *Rogoro*, or "the people of the east." Yet who fit that category depended on the context. A Sizaki might refer to his Ikizu neighbor to the west as *Rogoro*, but the Ikizu man's Nata neighbor to the east might

⁶⁰ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Musoma, 8 March 1996 (Nata ♂).

refer to him as *Nyancha*. In a report of the White Fathers from the Nyegina station in 1919, among the Ruri people, the priests cautioned visitors not to get directions from local people by asking, "where is Bururi?" "For the inhabitants of the lake will indicate the mountains of the interior, while if you are coming from the east the inhabitants of the interior will indicate the lakeshore."⁶¹

In addition to the east/west division, the Mara River divides the region north and south. The Mara is the largest river in the district. In some places it spreads out into marshy areas many miles wide. Only a few places exist where the river can be crossed or forded with any consistency. It was only in 1989 that the government built a bridge at Kirume, after many years of unsuccessful construction attempts and the use of an unreliable ferry. The colonial government divided the administrative district of North Mara from South Mara because of the difficulty of crossing the river. The oral traditions collected by Siso in North Mara describe one Luo group returning back across the Mara River (even after their hosts offered them land in the south) because the river would cut them off from their kin in what is now Western Kenya.⁶² This geographical boundary may have marked social difference between western Serengeti peoples and Kuria-speaking people to the north of the river.

However, clans cross both the east/west and the north/south boundaries in the region. The same clan names are found among lakes people, inland people and North and South Mara peoples. Those boundaries marked geographically represent divisions according to economic specializations. The lakes people specialized in fishing and hippo hunting and engaged in trade around the Lake

⁶¹ Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), "Nyegina," *Rapports Annuels*, No. 13, 1919-1920, p. 353.

⁶² Siso, "Oral Traditions of North Mara;" E. C. Baker, "North Mara Paper," July 1935, p. 4, *Tanganyika Papers*.

Victoria shorelands. The North Mara people live on the higher elevations of the escarpment where rainfall is consistently high, allowing them to grow bananas. These divisions established a regional system of exchange and interdependence. Yet Western Serengeti people needed to establish contacts across those boundaries to facilitate trade and to find patrons who would give them food in times of localized drought. Common clanship provided the link between otherwise different peoples.

A final social division that seems to be of long duration in the region is that marked by technological expertise—blacksmiths/potters (*Turi*)⁶³ and non-blacksmiths/potters (*Bwiro*). Today blacksmiths (and potters) have their own endogamous lineages but are incorporated into the clan structure of many ethnic groups. *Turi* are kept ritually and socially separate from *Bwiro*. If sexual relations occurred between them (or in the past if a *Turi* sat on the stool of a *Bwiro* or if a *Bwiro* picked up a *Turi* hammer) the offenders would have to perform special rituals to protect the entire community from misfortune. In the case of sexual relations the offender would build a small grass hut and go inside while the house was set on fire. Then he or she would run out naked before it burned to the ground. In Ikizu, *Turi* cannot accompany *Bwiro* to their sacred sites for propitiation of the ancestral spirits even if they share the same clan.⁶⁴ [See Figure 6-2: Blacksmiths and their Tools.]

⁶³ From the root *-tuli*, to castrate, to hammer, from the Mashariki protolanguage. Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #27.

⁶⁴ Interviews with Sarya Nyamuhandi and Makanda Magige, Bumangi, 10 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂); Kinanda Sigara, Bugerera, 27 May 1995 (Ikizu ♂); Isaya Charo Wambura, Buchanchari, 22 September 1995 (Ngorome ♂); Apolinari Maro Makore, Mesaga, 29 September 1996 (Ngorome ♂); Bhoke Wambura (Ngorome ♀) and Atanasi Kebure Wamburi, Maburi, 7 October 1995 (Ngorome ♂); Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, p. 51, describes the avoidance of *Turi* by *Bwiro* in Zanaki; Gray, *The Sonjo of Tanganyika*, on Sonjo *Turi* blacksmiths, p. 78.



Sarya Nyamuhandi, Bumangi, 10 November 1995,
Blacksmith, Holding old Trade Hoe



Blacksmith Implements, Sukuma Museum, Bujora, Mwanza

Figure 6-2: Blacksmiths and Their Tools

Although the *Bwiro* seem to be ostracizing the *Turi*, elders compared the relationship between *Bwiro* and *Turi* to that between blood brothers (*aring'a* or *amuma*), among whom sexual relations and theft are prohibited. This relationship is a result of *Bwiro* respect for the power of those who work with iron. Testimonies put both rainmakers and iron makers in equivalent but exclusive categories. Both are people with medicine and secrets. Through a ritual of oath-taking a *Turi* can become *Bwiro*, and cross the ostensibly rigid boundary.⁶⁵

The word *mwiro/bwiro* comes from the Great Lakes Bantu root *mwiru* meaning "farmer" in distinction to the *batúá* or original hunter/gatherers. In the Western Lakes era the word *mwiro* took on the additional meanings of client, follower or subject in distinction to pastoralist peoples.⁶⁶ It thus seems that the East Nyanza meaning of non-blacksmith, with the connotation of owners of the land, was unique to this area where patron-client relations between farmers and herders did not develop.

The social division of blacksmiths and non-blacksmiths, too, seems to have a long history in the region. The same traditions and practices surround the relationships between *Turi* and *Bwiro* all over the region, even where no *Turi* presently live. *Turi* tell their emergence traditions as clan traditions with origins in Geita, in what is now Sukuma. Other traditions describe patterns of trade existing in the distant past for iron hoes and salt in Sukuma. Almost no tradition of iron smelting in the Mara Region is recoverable from historical sources; blacksmiths got raw iron from Sukuma

⁶⁵ Interviews with Riyang'ang'ara Nyang'urara, Sarawe, 20 July 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); Silas King'are Magori, Kemegesi, 21 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Makuru Moturi, Maji Moto, 29 September, 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Bhoke Wambura, Maburi, 7 October 1995 (Ngoreme ♀); Sarya Nyamuhandi and Makanda Magige, Bumangi, 10 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂).

⁶⁶ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 157; and Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #196 and #331.

to the south or Luo areas to the north.⁶⁷ A *Turi* ethnic group, with its own territory called Buturi, now exists in North Mara; it adopted Luo speech and custom within the last two generations.⁶⁸

The distinctions between blacksmith and non-blacksmith established exclusive control over certain economic resources—blacksmiths guarded access to the secrets of iron-working and iron trade while non-blacksmiths guarded access to the secrets of ritual control over the land and farming. Yet because *Mwiro* and *Turi* lived together as neighbors they needed to cross these boundaries frequently to engage in trade and mutual assistance. In the western Serengeti shared clans assured that blacksmiths and non-blacksmiths were never exclusive categories.

Differences—marked by economy, bodily marking, geography and technological skill—defined control over certain resources and knowledge. Clans operated in this context to mediate these rigidly defined boundaries so that people on both sides might engage in mutually beneficial exchange of resources and knowledge. Shared clan membership crossed each of these boundaries. Thus in this context clanship appears as a crucial means for reaching beyond locality to find security from drought and for reaching across social boundaries to gain access to the expertise and knowledge controlled by other groups. As Newbury suggests, clanship existed in dialectical tension with wider social identities of difference.

Yet in these contexts of great geographical and social distance the probability of "blood" kinship decreases greatly. How then were these clan networks that mediated many different kinds of social boundaries formed apart from kinship ties? How were people able to establish a bond of clanship across the space of these various boundaries? Because clanship works through the idiom

⁶⁷ Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, p. 51, reports that blacksmiths from Zanaki went to Uzinza to get iron heart-shaped hoes.

⁶⁸ Siso, "Oral Traditions of North Mara," reports that the people of Buturi in North Mara used to smelt iron.

of kinship, we may presume that sometimes people developed common clanship across social boundaries either through intermarriage or adoptive kinship. The last chapter discussed the possibility that hill farmers sought adoption into Asi lineages to gain access to the land or that hill farmer matrilineages sought husbands among Asi hunters to gain hunting expertise. In both cases the Asi became "fathers" to the hill farmers and thus remembered as ancestors of particular clans. This could also have been the story of Sonjo and western Serengeti people who met on the hunt. They may have sealed hunting alliances and trade agreements through the *ntemi* mark and through adoption into each other's lineages. Blacksmiths coming to a new area may have sought adoption into a clan in order to live peacefully. Disparate peoples literally became kin and thus clan members.

From this perspective one can derive a new level of meaning from the ethnic emergence stories. The similarities between the story that Samweli tells of the Hamba moves and the ethnic emergence stories are apparent. Both tell the story of the clan of first man the hunter who was the keeper of fire. Yet in the clan version first man leaves his ethnic moorings and crosses cultural, economic and geographical boundaries. In the last chapter first man was interpreted as an Asi hunter. Nevertheless, first man as a Hamba or Gaikwe clan member could have been an Asi hunter/gatherer or from any one of the Bantu-speaking hill farmer localities, from Kilimanjaro to the Lake. It was through the link of clan that these communities could share expertise, knowledge and rights to the land.

Kinship, or even fictive kinship was not the only way that people in the western Serengeti formed clans networks which crossed the boundaries of other regional social identities. Clan networks also seem to have been based on metaphorical associations. Those who controlled similar resources or knowledge in their home communities associated themselves with others in similar positions throughout the region through clan networks. The clan that gained rights to the land or

the medicines of the prophet controlled those resources within clan networks. Those clans who were recognized as first-comers with rights to the land as Asi hunter descendants may have formed associations with clans in other areas who claimed similar rights and expressed their position symbolically. This symbolic association through clan networks of diverse peoples controlling similar resources or knowledge in their home communities is demonstrated in the use of praise names and common avoidances.

Praise Names and Prohibitions

Clans do not represent themselves as genealogically based groups in their praise names and avoidances, but rather as symbolic associations of people who "praise" the same objects. Each "clan," is associated with a set of praise names and avoidances (*emigiro*, from the Bantu root - *gido*).⁶⁹ In the past, young people sang or shouted the praise names at public dances. [See Figure 6-3: Praise Shouts at the New Moon Dances.] For example, Nata has four clans. The Gaikwe avoidance is the zebra and the praise names associate the Gaikwe with Asi hunter/gatherers, coming from Rakana, Moturi and Buhemba. The Mwancha avoidance is fish and the leopard and they name the place of Muganza, to the west and refer to the lake. The Getiga avoidance is the kunde bean, and they name places in Soncho. The Muriho avoidance is cattle; if a drop of milk spills they touch their finger to it and put it on their forehead as a blessing. They name Bwiregi, a place in North Mara known for its love of cattle. One version of the Muriho clan praise names is reproduced in full:

We are the Muriho, people who honor the cattle, the Iregi people of Mbisacha and Tundo: those who store freshly churned butter in the ottic, together with the Iregi of cattle, coming from Itiyoriro. Those who go to the fields are farmers, we took the

⁶⁹ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #287 and #288.

*branding iron and branded nine calves and the rams complained that they were not yet branded. We are the Iregi who praise cattle and millet.*⁷⁰

The symbolic representation of things, places and economies allowed clans to associate themselves with other clans using similar praise names throughout the region. I identified the same clan names and names associated with them, in conjunction with common avoidances and places of reference, in many other ethnic groups throughout the region. For example, I found references to the Iregi, named here in relation to the Moriho, all over the Mara Region, far beyond the territorial boundaries of Nata. Ishenyi tradition says that the Iregi left Ishenyi during the disasters at Nyeberekera. The Kuria Iregi clan has a lineage group called the Isenye with a tradition of migration from the Range hills near Ikorongo, in western Serengeti. Among the Southern Nilotic Kipsigis in western Kenya a clan named Rangji takes its name from these same hills.⁷¹ One could extend these chains of association across vast geographic and cultural distances.

In the Moriho praise shout no indication of lineage-based organization, or descent from one ancestor exists. Instead, the clan praises itself with reference to economy (herding), things (cattle, butter, millet), peoples (the Iregi) and places (Mbisacha, Tunda, Itiyairo). Around the region, the Moriho clan name, and associated names like the Iregi, all have the same identification of economy, things, peoples and places. When E. C. Baker collected clan names in the 1930s, he made an unambiguous connection between places and people names in the praise shouts and the origins of the clans.⁷² The elders with whom I spoke, however, described these as metaphorical associations--the Muriho clan extolls cattle and so admires the Iregi of North Mara who have so

⁷⁰ Interview with Megasa Mokiri, 4 March 1995, Mayani Magoto, Bugerera, 5 April 1996 (Nata *o*).

⁷¹ Abuso, *A Traditional History*, pp. 83-86.

⁷² Baker, "Notes on Tribes," pp. 36-54; Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," MDB.



Mabenga Nyahega, Singer, Bugerera, 19 August 1995, with Nata Dancers

Figure 6-3: Praise Shouts at the New Moon Dances

many cattle. The word for shouting clan praise names is *-ibaaka*, meaning "to praise oneself (by formal declaration)."⁷³ Thus, nothing about these praise names suggests that these are ancestral places or people names.

As an example of the regional distribution of clan associations, their avoidances and place references, I took the four clans of Nata--Getiga, Gaikwe, Moriho and Mwancha--and noted all other clans with which they had association in other ethnic groups around the region in Figure 6-4: The Regional Distribution of Four Major Clans. No doubt with more exhaustive research one could fill out this table further and extend it more widely within the region and beyond.

This evidence seems to suggest that at another level clan culture was a metaphorical association of peoples through a common set of symbols, rather than a line of descent or a history of migration. As Paul Abuso explains, "these people who come to embrace that particular totem [avoidance] need not necessarily have the same historical origin.... [they] agree to accept the myth of origin, as is indicated by the origin of the totem for themselves."⁷⁴ People seem to have formed association with other clans, who were not related by kinship but by common symbolic representation.

Resource Pathways

The metaphorical association of clans, at one level, seem to represent economic networks of regional trade and specialization. The symbols of clan praise names and avoidances often represented economic subsistence patterns. The four clan associations shown in the chart represent the economies of hunting, farming, herding and fishing. This pattern seems to suggest some kind of regional system rather than a random occurrence.

⁷³ Muniko et al, Kuria-English Dictionary, p. 48.

⁷⁴ Abuso, A Traditional History, p. 143.

	NATA (Hamate)	IKOMA (Ekebita)	ISHENYI (Ekebita, Hamate)	NGOREME (Hamate)	IKIZU (Amagitha)	SIZAKI (Ekeshoko)	ZANAKI (Hamate)	KURIA (Hamate)	OTHER
GETIGA	Getiga (Sigera, Abatabori)	Getiga (Masgo) Hikumari also came from Sonjo, Regata, with millet prohibition, Kumari married Mbiise of the Serubati.		Abatabori	Getiga				
Avoidances	henje bean			hyena	kunde bean				
Places	Sonjo			Sonjo, Regata, Ikoma	Urigata, Sonjo				
GAIKWE	Gaikwe	Gaikwe. Gaikwe and Rachia came from one mother. Himurumbe are also Asi in origin		Baasi Timburu from Nyamongo	Hemba	Hemba	Hemba	Nchage Timburu Kanye Abaasi	Sonjo Sigati hunter clan
Avoidances	zebra and millet fire	zebra		zebra sorghum	zebra fire			zebra fire	
Places	Abaasi, Buhemba	Abaasi, Banugi and Siwi.			Buhemba				

Figure 6-4: The Regional Distribution of Four Major Clans

	NATA (Hamate)	IKOMA (Ekehita)	ISHENYI (Ekehita, Hamate)	NGOREME (Hamate)	IKIZU (Amagitha)	SIZAKI (Ekeshoko)	ZANAKI (Hamate)	KURJA (Hamate)	OTHER
MORIHO	Moriho	The Serubati are Iregi of the cattle, Mbiise married Kumari.	Sarega (Iregi)	Iregi	Muriho as founder, mountain of Chu-muriho			Iregi	
Avoidances	cattle			hide rope, cattle, white and blacked spotted cattle					
Places	Iregi			Gwassi, Sabayia					
MWANCHA (The word meaning "west" or "lake," Lake Victoria	Mwancha (Gosi)	Mwancha (Marakanyi) Rache also known as Gosi	Sageti are also called Shora	Gosi, same as Gitare	Mwanza (Shora) also Mwanza Wakehwe and Mwanza from Butiama	Mwanza	Mwanza		Shora in Mugango
Avoidances	fish and leopard		water, fish, mume	mume (fish) or conger eel, sisal, msute fish	pongo or bushbuck				
Places	Muganza Gosi			Gwassi, Gosi, which is near Shirati	Watando in Mugango Wakehwe from Bumare, Ngoreme		Mwanza of Buturi from Simbiti		

Figure 6-4: The Regional Distribution of Four Major Clans, Continued.

For example, the association of the Gaikwe with Asi hunter/gatherers may have been a way for farmers to secure access to forest products for use in regional trade. Asi hunters came to Ikoma homesteads to trade ivory, rhino horn, wildebeest tails and lion manes in exchange for livestock. Gaikwe clan elders most often mentioned friendships with Asi hunters. Gaikwe clan elders said that the Gaikwe and the Asi had taken an oath of friendship together.⁷⁵ If this oath refers to the adoption of hill farmers into Asi lineages to gain access to the land, as I proposed in the Chapter 5, then some hill farmers and Asi would have shared an ongoing clan identity. Or it might refer to the association of peoples harvesting and trading forest products. Clan members may have passed on forest products to other Gaikwe (Hemba) related clans in the networks of trade. It is possible that Gaikwe clan affiliation, although originally based on the adoption of farmers into Asi lineages, later became an important link in the regional economy.

The association of each clan with a different aspect of the economy (herding, farming, fishing, hunting) may have developed in relation to regional specializations. The clan links of western Serengeti peoples with Turi blacksmiths may have given them access to trade with Sukuma for iron and salt.⁷⁶ Membership in the Mwancha clan, associated with the lakes people (Mwancha is derived from the word *nyancha*, for lake or west), may have provided access to the flourishing

⁷⁵ Interviews with Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma ♂); Mahewa Timanyi and Nyambureti Morumbe, Robanda, 27 May 1995 (Ikoma ♂); Mahiti Kwirow, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂).

⁷⁶ For Sukuma salt trade see H. S. Senior, "Sukuma Salt Caravans to Lake Eyasi," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 6 (1938):87-92; Michael Kenny, "Salt Trading in Eastern Lake Victoria," *Azania* 9 (1975): 225-8; Elias Nchoti, "Some Aspects of the Iron Industry of Geita, c. 1850-1950 A.D." (M.A. Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1975).

trade on Lake Victoria.⁷⁷ Each of these trades was crucial to the total economy of the western Serengeti and the means by which men with wide connections achieved prosperity.

On the other hand, like many aspects of the regional configuration of clans, the pattern of four clans and four economies seems more symbolic than experiential. Idealized patterns are characteristic of the ways in which elders conceptualize clan associations. For example, in reference to the four clans traced in Figure 6-4, each represents a cardinal direction and place of origin besides their association with economy. The Mwanicha clan is associated with the Lake or west, fishing peoples from the shores of Lake Victoria, around Mugango. The Getiga are associated with the east, from around Sonjo. The Gaikwe are also associated with the east or the south, from the woodland wilderness ecologies rather than from the hills of the farming communities. The Muriho are associated with the north, or the cattle keeping areas, in connection with Kuria or Gusii. Yet since these directions of origin take on an ideal pattern to represent each of the four cardinal directions, one might question if this is only historical coincidence.⁷⁸

Within the ethnic groups as they exist today, clans also take on an idealized numerical pattern. Most ethnic groups have four, eight or a multiple number of clans. Four is the ideal number and in most rituals and stories, things and events come in multiples of four. In Kuria a word exists for the additional cattle that must be added if a three or seven is agreed on as the bridewealth. Within ethnic groups clans are usually divided into moieties with two or four clans in each half. These perfect structures seem to be the result of conscious manipulation rather than the

⁷⁷ Michael Kenny, "Pre-colonial Trade in Eastern Lake Victoria," *Azania* 14 (1979): 97-107; Gerald Hartwig, "The Victoria Nyanza as a Trade Route in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History* 11, 4 (1970): 535-52; Margaret Jean Hay, "Local Trade and Ethnicity in Western Kenya," *African Economic History Review* 2, 1 (1975): 7-12.

⁷⁸ Buchanan, "Ethnic Interaction," pp. 418-419, reports the same use of cardinal directions for clans in the Kitara complex.

accident of birth. Ethnic groups could have maintained these ideal structures by forming new clans out of existing lineages, adopting stranger clans or eliminating clans that had diminished in number or influence.

These ideal patterns suggest an organizational paradigm for creating regional systems rather than the random spread of clans to new areas. It indicates a systematization of elements that were already functional in many separate communities, in communication with each other over long distances. From this evidence of idealized clan structures and regional patterns that go beyond the random movements of descent groups we might conclude that clan histories took shape after people had already developed the associations between communities based on various kinds of affiliation like kinship, economy or rights to resources. By joining them in a historical account narrators gave substance to the reciprocal claims embodied in these informal pathways. Clan traditions represent a process of looking back and ordering or reordering these regional connections, lineage based or otherwise.

People would then have elected to associate themselves with the regional associations that brought the most benefits. Communities seeking to assert an association with other communities may have adopted the names and avoidances deemed most efficacious. Clan names may have begun as the names of ancestors but, in time, emigrants took them to unrelated communities while at the same time outside communities adopted the names. Historical examples exist of groups who changed their clan name or avoidance because of misfortune.⁷⁹ They took the names of prosperous groups. Some peoples adopted new clan avoidances because of particular experiences. The Sweta of North Mara relate a story in which a group of baboons saved them and so they adopted the

⁷⁹ Baker, "Notes on Tribes," pp. 13-14.

baboon avoidance.⁴⁰ They made this choice with full knowledge of other baboon clans in the region with whom they would now be associated. Many Kuria wild animal avoidances are the same as those used in the Lakes kingdoms of Busoga, Bunyoro and Buganda--states that came to influence what is now western Kenya and the Mara Region in the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Clan names and avoidances may have spread ahead of migrating people. It may have been a little like joining a club or lodge today where members treat each other like family.

Clans as Pathways of Knowledge and Resources

This line of thinking suggests that people formed clan networks by metaphorical association in order to cross various kinds of regionally based social boundaries to gain access to resources and knowledge controlled by others. Membership in a clan allowed a person to make claims on the particular expertise or resources of other members. Although all western Serengeti people practiced a similar agro-pastoral-hunting economy, they maintained suites of knowledge that made each collectively valuable specialists within a larger regional system. If a person wanted to obtain a lion mane or an ivory bracelet, he would go to a Gaikwe clan community where they maintained relations with Asi hunters, for knowledge of cattle medicines to the Moriho clan or for fish poison to the Mwancha clan. Historical pathways between communities became a means to gain access to valuable sources of knowledge and resources.

⁴⁰ Siso, "Oral Traditions of North Mara," Sweta.

⁴¹ David William Cohen, ed. Towards a Reconstructed Past: Historical Texts for Busoga (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Wrigley, Kingship and State; Kagwa, Basekabaka be Buganda; Roscoe, The Buganda; Hartwig, The Art of Survival, p. 40. Hartwig shows that many of the wild animal avoidances in Ukerewe traced their origins to Bunyoro. For the influence of these kingdoms on the other side of the late in the nineteenth century see, David W. Cohen, "Food Production and Food Exchange in the Precolonial Lakes Plateau Region," in Imperialism, Colonialism and Hunger: East and Central Africa, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Lexington Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1983), pp. 1-18.

A person of that clan may not have had the desired knowledge himself but would have acted as the intermediary to those in his clan who would know. This process is similar to the way in which I gained access to knowledge as a researcher. I could not go straight to the person I wanted to interview but had to find an intermediary to whom he or she was connected by reciprocal obligation. Knowledge bases even today are diverse, specialized and highly localized. A cure for hepatitis, the skill to feather arrows correctly or the knowledge of circumcision songs were some areas of expertise that I was aware of people seeking out through these clan channels.

Clans did not confine the knowledge that they controlled to economic resources. People also maintained control over ritual knowledge within the paths of clan and lineage. The Gaikwe clan controls the major places of spiritual power over the land in Nata, at Gitaraga, Nyichoka and Geteku. The Gaikwe have this power as the clan of first-comers who must maintain the ritual relationship to the land necessary for the prosperity of the community. Clan members hold this knowledge as an asset that guarantees their prestige and authority in relation to others who wish to ask for rain or a good crop.

Wealth-in-knowledge is a concept proposed by Guyer and Belinga seeking to move away from the wealth-in-people model, based on accumulation and domination. They suggest, from Equatorial ethnography, that knowledge was diverse, multiple and widely distributed among adepts on the basis of personal capacity, going beyond what would be necessary for survival. Because knowledge, represented in individual people and things, is diverse and multiple, people acquire wealth by composition rather than accumulation and concentration. A wealthy man is one who can tap the differentiated knowledge of a wide variety of people over a diverse social landscape. If

"multiplicity and expansive frontiers" were valued then the social dynamic was not one of domination and appropriation but of improvisational incorporation.⁴²

In this sense Samweli's list is an invocation of the diverse and singular knowledge and power represented by each of the places and peoples named in the Hemba clan history. The process of naming asserts the individuality and personal qualities of each place. The clan is the pathway which connects these peoples and places and brings each into its legitimate social context. Although the representation of economic symbols for each clan avoidance may indicate certain kinds of knowledge, the nodes on the pathway, represented by the places in Samweli's list, would have been far more diverse and specific, as a result of a long-term process of continual change. New adepts would surface, new nodes of power become actualized, and accommodated by the pathway of clan.

Gunther Schlee argues that clans are conservative structures in contrast to ethnic groups that were much more flexible in the past. He surmised that in Northern Kenya the same clan names had been operational for the last 400 years.⁴³ The duration of many clan names in the western Serengeti over a long time period also may be a reasonable assumption. However, if they do represent pathways of knowledge, rather than only genealogical relationship, the particular places, peoples and things listed in clan histories are likely to change as the nodes of power change. Some would stay the same but take on different meaning as new practitioners arose. While the name of the clan and even its avoidance might remain the same, the content of its knowledge represented by the composition of its place-named nodes would have changed.

⁴² Guyer and Belinga, "Wealth in People," pp. 91-120.

⁴³ Gunther Schlee, "Interethnic Clan Identities Among Cushitic-Speaking Pastoralists," *Africa* 55, 1 (1985): 20.

Prophecy as the Specialist Knowledge of Clans

Confirming this hypothesis of clans as pathways in the flow of compositional knowledge is difficult today because these regional clan associations have been considerably neglected. Yet one clear instance in which clan pathways remain is that of the specialist knowledge of prophets and rainmakers whose power depends upon their regional clan associations. It is the connection of ritual specialists to a regional set of networks that not only legitimizes their authority but gives them the knowledge necessary to carry out their tasks.

Prophets, healers, diviners and rainmakers are some of the categories of people possessing specialized ritual knowledge in the region. Although one can "buy" specific medicines, the power of prophecy is always a result of clan or lineage connections. The spirit of a particular clan or lineage ancestor must choose the person wishing to become a ritual specialist and actualize the individual gifts and inclination of the initiate by directing him or her through dreams. The knowledge base that this person taps into is that of the dispersed and diversified clan. Using this kind of power to consolidate hierarchical authority was difficult. Yet these specialists were the most influential in a society without chiefs or kings. Colonial officer Baker stated that, "in nearly every case where a chief was established in Musoma District before European occupation of the country, he obtained his position through the supposed possession of supernatural powers."⁸⁴ Baker found this to be the case in Ikizu, a number of Jita clans, Zanaki and Ukerewe.

The glimpse we get of rainmakers in the early colonial period demonstrates that their authority was regional and dispersed rather than localized and concentrated. Rainmakers could demand tribute in kind and in labor and had a powerful voice in the affairs of the people. Nevertheless, they were experts whom people called on in times of need rather than pro-active

⁸⁴ Baker, "Rain," (typescript), p. 4, Tanganyika Papers.

agents of authority. Authority over land and people was locally based, in the *ekyaro* or landed clan territory, while rainmakers operated on a regional scale, between clans and even between ethnic groups. Claims of a pan-Zanaki identity among the various residential clans in the precolonial era are based on the office of the head rainmaker at Busegwe, who authorities later made the Zanaki Paramount Chief.⁸⁵ In the emergence story, the Ikizu gave the head rainmaker authority only as she agreed to the ultimate authority of local institutions.

The local community controlled the specialist as much as she or he controlled them. Early colonial reports tell of sanctions taken against rainmakers. In Ngoreme, when the rains were delayed too long, the highest ranking women would call together other women by beating a drum and together march off to see the rainmaker. They would beat and curse the rainmaker until he or she promised to send rain.⁸⁶ Baker reported that the community would take all the rainmaker's cattle until the rain fell. He would be placed on a high rock in the sun until the drought ended or his 'death from starvation and exposure proved him to have been an imposter.'⁸⁷ Each community also had other rainmakers in other areas to turn to, or their own sacred places where they propitiated the ancestral spirits for rain. No one person or office could monopolize these powers.

Obugabho: Mara-style Prophecy

Western Serengeti people, and people throughout the Mara Region, conceptualized prophecy and healing as the power of distribution and disbursement, rather than concentration and accumulation. The general word for prophecy, healing, divining and rainmaking throughout the

⁸⁵ Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, pp. 17-18, writes that the rainmaker had no political authority, this was vested in the generation-set.

⁸⁶ Interviews with Maro Mugendi (Ngoreme ♂) and Maria Maseko (Ngoreme ♀), Busawe, 22 September 1995; Njaga Nyasama, Kemgesi, 14 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♀).

⁸⁷ Baker, "Rain," p. 4.

region is *obugabho*. This word is derived from the old Lakes Bantu root, *-gàbá*, or "to divide up, distribute," usually in the sense of one who gives big feasts or gives things away generously.⁸⁸

Mara languages use the verb *kugaba* only in reference to the division of inheritance. Other Lakes Bantu-speakers use this root in reference to one of the oldest forms of authority in which "big men" divided out land among other resources to their clients in return for protection. This developed into ritual roles for protecting the land through the office of the chief or king.⁸⁹ The restriction of this word to prophecy and healing in the Mara Region may indicate the importance of the role of prophets and also their value in sharing out power and blessings.

What *abagabho* controlled was knowledge, the compositional knowledge of clan/lineage pathways and their own idiosyncratic learning from multiple sources. Their power lay in their ability to dispense this knowledge in response to the needs of those who asked. People judged prophets by their efficacy rather than by their position. The widespread regional distribution of *obugabho* in its many variations is an indication of its ancient roots. A consistent feature of *obugabho* is that it is always inherited through clan or lineage and is considered the patrimony of the clan. These features of prophecy in relation to clan are investigated more thoroughly in the case of Ikizu. [See Figure 6-5: Two Ikizu Rainmakers.]

The Kwaya Clan of Ikizu and the *Utemi*

The rainmakers of Ikizu also seem to have been *obugabho*-style prophets in spite of their purported clan origins in Sukuma. The clan affiliations of first woman, the rainmaker Nyakinywa, present another level of meaning in the Ikizu emergence story. Narratives state that Nyakinywa came from the Kwaya clan of the *utemi* (chiefly) line in Kanadi, Sukuma. Before the investiture of

⁸⁸ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #162.

⁸⁹ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 187.



Mwinoki Munyewa with rainmaker's black hide, staff, and *erisambwa* necklace, Bugerera, 21 May 1995



Ikota Mwisagija with rainmaking instruments, Kihumbo, 5 July 1995

Figure 6-5: Two Ikiza Rainmakers

a new Ikizu *mtemi* a delegation visits the Kwaya clan in Kanadi, obtains ritual items for the ceremony, and also consults with the Kanadi elders.⁹⁰

Oral traditions from Kanadi confirm this historical connection through the *utemi*. These narratives relate that the founders of the Kwaya clan came from a place called Usonge and wandered many places, meeting many people from Uganda to Ukerewe before settling in Ururi, Majita on the lakeshore of what is now the Mara Region. There they ruled as *watemi* for many years and got the name Kwaya because of the spears that they used to prove their strength to the local people. Two daughters of the *mtemi*, Hoka and Magawa ran away with their brothers to escape the wrath of their father. The women ended up in Ikizu. Magawa was married to the ruler of one clan territory (Hunyari) while Hoka was married to another (Kihumbo). The brothers went on to found the *utemi* of Kanadi with the cooperation of Tatoga herders who already lived there. The herders gave fire to the brothers in return for rain, and provided leather for making the bracelet of *utemi* investiture (*ndezi*), which the Ikizu must get in Kanadi. Later a man from Ikizu, in the line of Hoka, named Chamuriho, after the mountain, went to rule Kanadi.⁹¹

The pathways of Kwaya clan knowledge thus extend from the Lakes kingdoms of Uganda and Ukerewe to the dispersed Jita communities of Ururi. The Kwaya clan taps the power of Tatoga herders in the ritual of investiture, embodied in the *ndezi* bracelet. The clan mediates the regional boundaries of circumcised/non-circumcised, east/west, herder/hunter/farmer. The Kanadi story demonstrates that a one-way, one-time event did not establish the pathways of clan but they

⁹⁰ Interview with Ikota Mwisagija, Kihumbo, 5 July 1995 (Ikizu ♂), Ikota is from Nyakinywa's clan.

⁹¹ Mtemi Seni Ngokolo, "Historia ya Utawala wa Nchi ya Kanadi ilivyo andikwa na marahemu Mtemi Seni Ngokolo mnamo tarehe 10/6/1928," provided by his son, Mtemi Mgema Seni, 20/5/1971 to Buluda Itandala. Thanks to Dr. Itandala for his help on Sukuma traditions about the Mara Region.

were the result of considerable traffic in both directions. Even conceptualizing the Kwaya clan as "Sukuma" in the sense that we think of it today is misleading. In this story the two Kwaya women who marry Ikizu men come from Ururi, a place that is linguistically and culturally not at all "Sukuma," but closely related to Ikizu.⁹² A present day ethnic group called the Kwaya lives on the lakeshore near Musoma.⁹³ The brothers of these women only later go on to Kanadi and at least one *ntemi* comes from Ikizu to rule Kanadi. In fact, the sisters settled in Ikizu before the brothers ever reached and founded Kanadi. The stories of fire and water suggest further the mutual interaction of oral traditions between Kwaya and Ikizu.

Nyakinywa was the first in the line of rainmakers or *watemi* chiefs in Ikizu. *Utemi* comes from the Sukuma word for chiefship and carries the meaning of the "first clearer of the land" or the "owner of the land." The Sukuma *ntemi* comes from outside, from the wilderness and brings peace to the land.⁹⁴ Just as in Sukuma, the Ikizu inherit the *utemi* through the maternal line. Nevertheless, in Ikizu the *ntemi* does not have chiefly authority over the land as a whole. Rather, he or she is a particularly powerful rainmaker in the tradition of Mara *obugabho*. Given the relationship between the Kwaya clan and the various places in the Mara Region it also seems likely that Kanadi itself did not accept a Sukuma-style *utemi* until much later. Many Ikizu elders gave me a list of the Ikizu rainmakers in the line of Nyakinywa as part of the emergence story. A

⁹² The Kwaya, Ruri and Jita speak languages of the Suguti branch of the East Nyanza languages.

⁹³ See ethnography of the Kwaya ethnic group near Musoma, Huber, Marriage and Family.

⁹⁴ Per Brandstrom, "Seeds and Soil: The Quest for Life and the Domestication of Fertility in Sukuma-Nyamwezi Thought and Reality," in The Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life, ed. Anita Jacobson-Widding (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1990), pp. 167-186; Hans Cory, The Indigenous Political System of the Sukuma and Proposals for Political Reform (Nairobi: East African Institute of Social Research, by Eagle Press, 1954).

comparison of various accounts is reproduced on the next page. [See Figure 6-6: The Ikizu Utemi Lists.]

The *utemi* list of the descendants of Nyakinywa includes anywhere from eight to fourteen rainmakers. The written Ikizu history represented in the first set of boxes has assigned dates to each rule, presumably based on the author's own estimation. For the rainmakers since the beginning of this century written accounts exist to corroborate the dates. Among the five versions of this list that are reproduced here, no two agree on the names or their order before Gibwege (c. 1890).⁵⁵ It is significant that this was the general time frame of the "Hunger of the Feet" and the massive reorganization of society outlined in Chapter 3.

The reasons for the discrepancy in names before Gibwege may be that no unified Ikizu *utemi* existed before the disasters. Rather, many different *obugabho*-style rainmakers operated throughout what is now Ikizu. The stress of the disasters resulted in the need, or opportunity, for a more centralized authority and the creation of Ikizu. Sizaki was also consolidated under Sukuma chiefship at this time.⁵⁶ The oral traditions of emergence were reconceptualized to account for this. If so then it makes sense that former rainmakers, from the Kwaya clan, in various localities would be incorporated into the genealogical line of Nyakinywa to legitimize the centralization of authority.⁵⁷ With the formation of ethnic groups, such as Ikizu, the function of clans would have changed from that of diffuse pathways of regional knowledge to a consolidated line of power within

⁵⁵ Other traditions collected in the 1930s testify that Muesa was "the first remembered chief," (C. 1895) Richard C. Thurnwald, *Black and White in East Africa: The Fabric of a New Civilization, a Study in Social Contact and Adaptation of Life in East Africa* (London: George Rutledge and Son, Ltd., 1935), pp. 46-47.

⁵⁶ Bugomora, *Lumuli*.

⁵⁷ For a recent critique of king lists see Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, pp. 27-41.

Informant #1	Informant #2	Informant #3	Informant #4	Informant #5
1. Nyakinywa (1815-25)	1. Nyakinywa	1. Nyakinywa	1. Nyakinywa	1. Nyakinywa
2. Nyakazenzeri (1825-35)		2. Wakunja		2. Nyekono
3. Hoka (1835-45)	2. Hoka		2. Wang'ombe	3. Nyakazenzeri
4. Kesozora (1845-55)	3. Nyambube	3. Kesozora	3. Kiszura	4. Hoka
5. Hoka Nyabusisa (1855-65)	4. Kirongo	4. Nyekono		5. Guya
6. Wekunza (1865-75)	5. Kikusura	5. Kerongo (first male)	4. Wekunza	6. Kesozora
7. Nyambobe (1875-85)		6. Nyakinywa II	5. Mayai	
8. Gibwege (1885-95)	6. Gibwega	7. Gibwege	6. Gibwege	7. Gibwege
9. Mwesa Gibwege (1895-1901)	7. Mwesa (first man)	8. Mwesa	7. Mwesa	8. Mweda
10. Nyakinywa II (1901-1906)				9. Nyakinywa
11. Matutu Mawesa (1906-1926)	8. Matutu	9. Matutu	8. Matutu	10. Matutu
12. Makongoro Matutu (1926-1958)	9. Makongoro	10. Makongoro	9. Makongoro	11. Makongoro
13. Matutu Matutu (1959-1986)		11. Matutu Matutu		
14. Adamu Matutu (1986 -)	10. Adamu Matutu	12. Adamu Matutu	11. Adamu Matutu	

Informant #1 – P.M. Mturi, "Historia ya Ikizu na Sizaki," unpublished mss., 1995 (Nyamuswa)

Informant #2 – Ikota Mwisagija and Kiyarata Mzumari, Kihumbo, 5 July 1995 (Kihumbu)

Informant #3 – Maarimo Nyamakena, Sanzate, 10 June 1995 (Kirinero)

Informant #4 – Zamberi Manyeni, Gutu Manyeni Nyabwango, Sanzate, 15 June 1995.

Informant #5 – E.C. Baker, "Notes on the Walkizu and Wasizaki of Musoma," Tanganyika Notes and Records, 23 (June 1947): 66-69.

Figure 6-6: The Ikizu Utemi List

Ikizu. Other unlikely sources of *obugabho*-style prophecy still exist in the Mara region, not consolidated into chiefly power.

Tatoga Prophet Clans

Among the Tatoga certain clans also carry the knowledge of prophecy. The Ghaoga are the rainmaker clan whose first prophet came from Lake Victoria and disappeared into it again rather than dying. The Ghaoga go to the lake to propitiate his spirit and their houses all face west. One "house" of the Ghaoga clan, the Omoghira, are not circumcised to show their authority as first sons. The Relimajega clan is the prophet clan who specialize in protection medicines. Their first prophet came from the east and they must return there to the volcanic mountain Gijisem to propitiate his spirit. Their houses all face east. These same clans with the same prophetic stories, indication of places and expertise can be found among all Tatoga groups in East Africa, the Barabaig of Mbulu, the Burerega of Sukuma and the Rotegenga of Mara. They also appear among the Isimajek fishermen and hunters whom the Rotegenga otherwise despise and ostracize.

Although I found no evidence that clanship crosses the boundary between Dadog- and Bantu-speakers, the concept of *obugabho*, if not the name itself, seems to be the same.⁹⁸ Tatoga elders said that the most important and powerful people in the community were the prophets. When I asked Tatoga elders who were their leaders, they would immediately reply, 'the prophets.' Yet the power of these prophets was the same diffuse and distributive kind of power that characterized *obugabho*. Tatoga elders told me that they moved according to their prophet. But when questioned further, it seemed that the prophet did not "tell" them to go as much as he "foretold" that they would go. Another elder said that the Ghaoga and Relimajega prophets would "rule" the Tatoga together. Yet on further questioning it seemed that each clan had more than one

⁹⁸ The Ikoma use the Relimajega Tatoga prophet clan and the Ishenyi the Ghaoga Tatoga prophet clan.

prophet at any one time, in fact all Relimajega were potential prophets. Their authority was ephemeral in nature based on their efficacy and the particular situation that confronted the people.⁹⁹

Because of these shared concepts of *obugabho* power through dispersed rather than concentrated knowledge, hill farmers could incorporate Tatoga prophecy. Traditions from both the Ikoma and Isheryi relate how they killed their own prophets when they failed to make rain or keep away the Maasai. As a result the prophets cursed them, never again could they have another prophet of their own.¹⁰⁰ Western Serengeti people did not seem to understand this as turning over local authority to outsiders but rather the practical need to cross social boundaries and tap into other networks of knowledge that were efficacious. Characteristic of this compositional social process, western Serengeti peoples were broadening and diversifying, rather than constricting and making exclusive, their sources of knowledge. Western Serengeti people used the idiom of kinship and clan-ship to gain access to Tatoga prophetic knowledge by incorporating them as "fathers." They crossed the boundaries that divided herders and farmers in the realm of prophetic power but otherwise maintained their difference.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various levels of meaning in oral traditions about clans. It has gone from an understanding of clan as a bounded, residential unit based on the core spatial image of the homestead to that of the clan as a dispersed regional association based on the core spatial image of pathways of knowledge and resources. Both aspects of clan identity must be kept

⁹⁹ Interviews with Ginanani Chokora and Gejera Ginanani, Kyandegge, 26 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂), of the Relimajega Prophet Clan and Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Marisha Gishageta, Issenye, 28 March 1996 and 27 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂), of the Gaogha Prophet Clan. Gilumughera Gwiyea, Girihoia Masaona, Gorobani Gesura, Issenye, 28 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂).

¹⁰⁰ Machota Sabuni, Issenye, in a letter, 23 March 1997, recorded by Nyawagamba Magoto, ties the Ikoma and Ishenyi curses together.

in creative tension to come to some understanding of the local meaning of clan narratives. The long-term generative principle of clans was inherently flexible and adaptable, allowing people to form cohesive communities based on the obligations of clan members as well as regional networks based on metaphorical associations. These metaphorical associations operated side by side with kinship-based associations so that people did not distinguish who were "real" clan brothers and who were "fictional" clan brothers.

The functions of clans, using the same generative principles inherent in the core images of clan tradition, changed according to the historical context. In the era before the disasters clans functioned as a mediating device for crossing regional boundaries. In the era after the disasters clans became subunits of ethnic groups. As I show in the last chapter, during the late nineteenth century, when clans functioned less as mediating devices, other social identities filled that role in an inter-ethnic regional context. In a recent book on ethnicity and gender, Sandra Greene demonstrated for the Anlo of southeast Ghana that the way of classifying clans and their function within society changed considerably over time.¹⁰¹ In both cases, the seemingly rigid "text" of clan identity was "read" differently according to need.

The picture formed by clan narratives that refer to the pre-disaster era is one of settlements grouped within a territory controlled by a clan. The clan that held ritual control over the land encouraged settlers to come and incorporated them in various ways into the clan structure. Yet those settlers also maintained contact with their former communities (with whom they also had clan connections) and with clan members in distant communities on whom they could depend in times of hunger. In addition people with similar economic or ritual specializations augmented regional clan networks through metaphorical associations. All of these kinds of connections known as

¹⁰¹ Sandra E. Greene, *Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast: A History of the Anlo-Ewe* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).

"clanship" operated together and formed complicated regional pathways used to mediate the boundaries of other social identities and to gain access to the resources and knowledge of others.

In the next section we will turn to look at traditions of a more recent era, not precisely dateable by age- or generation- set but within the time period when people established particular rights to the land before the disasters of the late nineteenth century. Lineage traditions, in contrast to clan traditions, describe particular settlements within these larger clan territories.

PART THREE:

SOCIAL PROCESS IN THE MIDDLE PERIOD OF SETTLEMENT

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE GENERATION OF SETTLEMENT (1850-1870):
CLAIMING A RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND

The oral traditions that represent the "middle time period" of indigenous chronology are characterized by narratives that establish claims to the land for certain lineages who represent themselves as "guardians of the land."¹ These traditions differ from the clan narratives discussed in the last chapter because they refer to individual lineage settlements rather than to clan territories. The traditions from this period are usually little more than a list of place-names occupied by those lineages. I interpret these traditions concerning claims to the land in the "generation of settlement" alongside other evidence to form tentative hypotheses about settlement patterns in the nineteenth century: on what social basis settlements were formed, how new settlements were established, and how new settlers were incorporated.

In this chapter I provide a reinterpretation of place-name lists in oral traditions which are commonly understood as stops on a migration route or as mythical places. I argue that these places represent a long time period collapsed into memories about one generation of ancestors just before the period of disasters who are responsible for maintaining a relationship to the land by mediating the dangerous forces of the wilderness. Individual lineages who have connections to specific places that they no longer occupy, preserve oral traditions about the places and perform

¹ See this concept in J. M. Schoffeleers, ed., *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults* (Gwelo, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1978); and Gregory Maddox, James Giblin and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds., *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (London: James Currey, 1996). Also on territorial cults see J. Matthew Schoffeleers, *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi, c. A.D. 1600* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

rituals there as representatives of "first-comers," those with ritual authority over the land. Western Serengeti people claim a ritual relationship to the land by peopling it with their ancestors, rather than occupying or "owning" the land.

The places-name lists of oral tradition represent former settlements of people organized by the idiom of kinship, yet attracted to these settlements by the patronage of prosperous men. People who were connected to each other by their relationship to the land, through ancestral spirits who guarded the land, used the homestead model to represent the relationship between members of one settlement—as coming out of the same "gateway" or living in the same "bouse." Mechanisms were in place to incorporate strangers as "native born" where inclusiveness was necessary to make use of extensive land resources. The settlements positioned themselves within a wider constellation of multiple and overlapping social networks that radiated out from these fixed and knowable points on the landscape.

The Spaces of Important Places

The narrative process has reduced oral traditions about the middle period of time in indigenous chronology to their core spatial images, representing social processes as place-names. Historians interested in a locally grounded interpretation of the past must therefore investigate these named places because they are the idioms through which narratives convey knowledge about the past. The task of translating local representations of the past into academic historical categories requires the translator to emphasize the cultural meaning of place and space.

Settlement Site Lists

After telling the emergence story, elders often immediately proceeded to recite a list of place-names, representing the time after first man and first woman and their children. For ethnic groups with "migration" stories place-names from this time period formed the later part of the list of migration stops, including known and local places. In Nata, where migration histories are not

told, the place-names refer to abandoned settlement sites. In Ikizu, where many in-migrating groups have come together, the list of place-names refers to the places where different immigrants settled or originated. This is an example from the Nata:

*We are the people of Gitaraga and Mochuri, Rakana and Moteri, Sang'anga and Kyasigeta, Torogoro and Site, Magita and Wamboye.*²

Although similar lists of place-names occupy an essential place in the corpus of oral tradition throughout Africa, scholars have not often taken the cultural meaning of these places seriously in their own representations of the past. Many anthropologists have assumed that these are mythical places and so treat them symbolically. Others recognize that they are known places, but argue that naming them serves primarily to validate present claims to land or to convey a sense of immediacy and validity to the text.³ Yet elders in the western Serengeti do not understand the place-name lists in the same way that they understand the places of mythical origin or emergence. Each are the product of the history and self-understanding of a particular social group. The ecological and gendered spaces of frontier hill farmers, the places marking the dispersed pathways of clan knowledge, and the ancestral places of lineages all represent histories about very different subjects. However, a literal interpretation of place-name lists as migration routes has also led to historical anachronisms, as were discussed in the last chapter.

The settlement site or place-name lists that represent the middle period of indigenous chronology have a different provenance from the clan "migration" stories to which narrators often append them. The social basis for the "migration" traditions presented in the last chapter are clans, while the social basis for the settlement site lists are lineages. As I argued in the last chapter,

² Interview with Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1994 (Nata σ).

³ See for example the analysis of T.O. Beidelman, *Moral Imagination in Kaguru Modes of Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986; reprint ed., Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), pp. 67-83.

lineages and clans are very different kinds of social identities, although narrators present them both within an idiom of kinship ideology. Both are flexible ideologies that can be used in different ways in different contexts. Lineage, like clans, do not fall into a neat order of segmentation. The last chapter presented evidence for the hypothesis that clan traditions represent long-term generative principles in the region. However, elders represent the settlement site lists preserved by lineages as dating to three to five generation ago, conveying the histories of known ancestors who are still actively involved in the life of the community.

Walking the Places

Many of the elders who recited lists of place-names were anxious that I visit those sites. I gained additional insight into the cultural meaning of place-name lists by going to these places and walking over them with elders who knew their histories. While visiting past settlement places elders spontaneously told other related stories and identified the socially significant elements in the landscape—each rock outcropping, hill and stream with its own history. Places serve as mnemonic devices to remind men of the stories behind them. The land is a "text" of history and walking over it with the elders who tell their stories is an act of "reading" the past. As long as people remember these places they will also remember the ancestors and their histories.⁴

The ancestors claimed by specific lineages dwell at these places. While elders identify and tell stories about many hundreds of places only a few appear in the list of place-names in the historical narrative. Those places are most often either *emisambwa* sites, places where spirits of

⁴ In much the same way Ranger describes pilgrimage places in Zimbabwe, Terence Ranger, "Taking Hold of the Land: Holy Places and Pilgrimages in Twentieth-Century Zimbabwe," Past and Present 117 (November 1987): 158-194. For a similar approach outside of Africa see Keith H. Basso, Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990).

ancestors who have power over the land reside, or they may also be *ebimenyo* sites, places where important settlement sites of the past were located.

Mapping the Places

The exercise of walking the places showed me that place-name lists refer to known and identifiable places, rather than to the mythical or forgotten places of the emergence stories of ethnic groups or clans. Men who have a thorough knowledge of local geography from hunting, trading or raiding trips, can locate these now-uninhabited places in a wilderness without roads or maps. Western Serengeti people remember these places because they mark the graves of ancestors, ancestors whose spirits still reside there and who are still intimately involved with the workings of present day society.

All these place-names, even those from groups with migration stories from Sonjo (Ikoma, Ishenyi, Ngoreme), can be located within the western Serengeti. Ishenyi tradition provides some evidence that Regata, the place often referred to as the Sonjo origin place for many western Serengeti groups, was found within what is now the Mara Region. The place-names refer primarily to important social processes within the western Serengeti rather than to migration stories, although people were surely moving. This chapter discusses the "generation of settlement" without positing massive migrations from anywhere else. [See Figure 7-1: Nineteenth Century Settlement Sites.]

Although elders list place-names of the "generation of settlement" as discrete sites associated with their own ethnic group, mapping the sites on a geographical grid reveals a pattern of settlement that invites a different explanation. All these sites are hill settlements, demonstrating similar subsistence patterns to those described in Chapter 5. They are located farther to the west than the emergence sites. The sites named by each ethnic group situate themselves somewhat territorially. Yet the sites of each ethnic group are also located side by side with, and often closer

19th Century Settlement Sites of the Western Serengeti

- Nata
- Ikoma
- Ikenye
- Ngoreme
- Ikizu



Graphics by

Peter Shaffer
Dove Creek Information Services
IDRISI and Macromedia Freehand

Scale

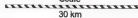


Figure 7-1: Nineteenth Century Settlement Sites of the Western Serengeti

to, the sites of other ethnic groups than to other sites of their own group. This patterning could be read to suggest that if ethnic groups existed at all they did not control a bounded and exclusive territory. Their proximity to each other as neighbors suggests a pattern of interaction, rather than isolation, between people who now claim and maintain different ethnic identities. Different ethnic groups claim some of the same settlement sites, such as Mangwesi Mountain, indicating that the distinction of ethnic groups did not exist at all or that the site was contested.

Although Nata elders often claimed that they were reciting the place-names in chronological sequence of settlement by one group moving from place to place, this ordering may refer to concepts of space rather than of time. When asked to name the places in a certain area, elders ordered place-names linearly, as they would appear sequentially on a journey. Thus when Nata elders list place-names sequentially from east to west one must question whether these are successive settlements in time or in space. While some elders list these names in a sequential order of settlement, others simply list all of the places without order. I suggest that the ordering of place-names is spatial rather than temporal and that narrators conflate all of the settlements into the time of one generation just before the disasters. Elders order the settlement site names in this way not because they are sequential settlements in time but because that is how people remember their sequence on a journey. Memories are attached to a place rather than to a time sequence.

Dating the Places

If the ordering of place-name lists is not a temporal sequence but rather a spatial sequence how might the historian locate places from lists of place-names in time? Narratives link the place-names and their landscapes to a specific period of time, known locally as the "generation of settlement" (in Nata the word for settlement, *ebimanyo*, comes from the verb, *komenya*, "to build"). This is the period of time that Vansina refers to as the "floating gap." It has been a particularly difficult period for historians to analyze because of the cryptic nature of these traditions,

"telescoping" a long period of time into one generation. Vansina explains this "gap" by the inability to keep chronology after a certain time depth, depending on the nature of the social structure and its way of reckoning time.⁵ Although this has validity, what is more important is understanding why this particular set of place-names and the "generation" to which it refers represents the period of settlement in the western Serengeti.

Place-names from the lists of oral tradition represent the period during which the land was settled by telescoping a long period of time into the memories about the generation just before the late nineteenth century disasters. Although many elders could not put a relative date to the settlements (they assured me it all had happened a very long time ago) others identified them as having happened in the time of the generation of the Abamaina, Amatara, or Amasura. These are among the earliest generation-set names that people remember in connection with specific ancestors and the last generation before the massive social transformations of the late nineteenth century. They probably date to between 1850 and 1870. In this area cycling names for both age- and generation-set are in use today. Yet narratives usually refer to these settlement sites in relation to a generation-set, rather than an age-set. This leads me to think that they refer to settlements before the late nineteenth century disasters when the way of calculating time shifted, particularly in the east, from one based on generation-sets to one based on age-sets.⁶

The social processes referred to in these narratives about one generation just before the disasters operated over a long period of time. We know from the evidence cited in Chapter 4 that hill farmers had settled in this area before 1000 A.D. However, these oral traditions tell of the generation of ancestors in living memory who established claims to the land that everyone still

⁵ Vansina, *Oral Traditions as History*, p. 23.

⁶ This shift in the reckoning of time from generation-set to age-set is argued more fully in Chapter 9.

recognizes. Although settlers had sparsely populated the land before, people preserve the memory of "the generation of settlement" because it represents direct historical continuity with those living on the land now. The particular place-names in the lists recited by elders today seem to refer to remembered people and places just before the period of disasters, while representing social processes of much longer duration.

Because social identity changed so drastically during the late nineteenth century disasters, people preserve only unconnected bits of knowledge from the period immediately before the disasters. Still, the survivors of the disasters did pass on the knowledge preserved by lineages who had obligations to their ancestors at specific sites on the land. The history of the period before the disasters, like these points on the landscape, appears as unconnected images of life in the nineteenth century, with no master narrative.

The generation of settlement represents the first settlements of people whom western Serengeti people identify as lineage ancestors and who thus possess the power in present day life and historical imagination to provide protection and security for the living. People do not propitiate the spirits of first man and first woman in the emergence stories, nor do they remember their graves.⁷ Clan founders, too, have no known graves nor do they have power to influence events in the present. The generation of settlement is the first generation that narrators remember by place and thus by name. Those ancestors are a living presence, with their own demands and obligations, among western Serengeti peoples today. This generation is responsible for preserving the health of the land and its people.

⁷ The exception to this is the grave of Nyakirywa as first woman of the Ikizil. The reformulation of this origin story in the late nineteenth century was explained in Chapters 4 and 6.

The Living Dead

The dead are a part of the community and their descendants must maintain relationships to them with as much care as they give to relationships with living people and with the same possibilities for benefit and obligation. The word for the burial in Nata is *kutindeka* or "to store." A deceased person has not gone away but simply taken on a different form. The ancestors buried at the sites listed in these traditions occupy a special place as guardians of the land and the living must appeal to them for rain, fertility and protection.

Obligations to the Dead

Western Serengeti people bury their dead in the homestead and abandon the graves when they leave the settlement. Families or lineages do not maintain common burial plots through the generations. People are, however, expected to remember the grave-sites of their ancestors for at least two to three generations, to clean their graves and offer gifts there at least once a year (*kusengera*, meaning "to beseech" in Nata), often on the anniversary of death. They must return often to old settlement sites to meet their obligations.

Numerous conversations over the course of my research convinced me that should a mother or father on their deathbed administer a curse on their children, this curse could have consequences in the children's lives. I heard many stories of people who refused to go to their father's death bed because they were too busy or did not do what their father asked before he died. Later their children began to get sick and die, they lost their cattle and wives, or their business went bankrupt. A father's blessing brings prosperity, good crops, many children and cattle, a thriving business and a large home full of people. The foolish son does not take this power seriously.

People also remember their ancestors by naming children after a deceased grandparent. [See Figure 7-2: Respect for the Ancestors.] Until very recently parents would not give their child the name of a living person, because the ancestor lives through the child. The child acquires the



Granddaughters named after Nyangere Bukaya, at her grave, Mbiso



Sons of Magoto Mossi Magoto: Faini, Nyamaganda, Joseph Sillery, Mayani, Mossi, Nyawagamba, Manyika, at their father's grave, Mbiso on the anniversary of his death.

Figure 7-2: Respect for Ancestors

characteristics and personality of the person he or she was named after, and is treated as that person reborn. When a child is born parents or grandparents on either side often have dreams in which an ancestor appears to them and expresses the desire to have the child named after them or they see that their child resembles a deceased grandmother.

Western Serengeti people experience the presence of the ancestors in the community by their frequent communication with the living in dreams. If the family no longer uses an ancestor's name or forgets his or her grave site, the spirit passes into a more dangerous realm of "loose" spirits, without community moorings.⁸ When problems occur in the homestead, such as illness or death, the head of the homestead consults a diviner, who often diagnoses the misfortune as the result of forgetting the ancestors.

The word for the ancestral spirits of a family in the western Serengeti is simply *omokoro/abakoro* (derived from the word for "big" or "elder") or *ekehwe/ebehwe* ("ghosts" or "shadows"). Other Lakes Bantu speakers refer to the spirits of the ancestors by using the root -*zimu* (from *-djm*, "be lost, extinguished"). These are the homestead ancestral spirits for whom a small spirit hut is constructed and whose propitiation is handled by the head of the homestead. Peoples of the western Serengeti do not normally build spirit huts in the homestead (exceptions may be healers and diviners).⁹

Emsambwa: Guardians of the Land

Yet the spirits connected to many of the important places named in oral traditions of the generation of settlement are different from the *abakoro* or ancestors in general. They are the

⁸ See M. J. Ruel, "Religion and Society Among the Kuria of East Africa," *Africa* (London) 35,3 (July 1965): 295-306, for outline of different kinds of spirits among the Kuria.

⁹ This information about spirits comes from innumerable discussions but in particular an interview with Kinanda Sigara (Ikizu ♂), Nyawagamba Magoto (Nata ♂) (who were my assistants), Chamuriho (Ikizu ♂) and Mahiti Kwiwo (Ikizu ♂), Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996.

erisambwa/ emisambwa spirits, spirits of important ancestors, often rainmakers or prophets, who are buried at the named sites where their lineages still make offerings to them. These spirits are always connected to the land and people propitiate them for help in resolving community problems such as rain, protection and fertility. Although ancestral graves (*abakoro*) are usually located in identifiable places and the spirits dwell in those spots, they have no efficacy over the land itself unless they are *emisambwa*. People consider the spirits of ancestors who were efficacious in life as rainmakers or prophets as *emisambwa*: those to whom the living will appeal for assistance. Nevertheless, not all important prophets or rainmakers become *emisambwa*.

Erisambwa/emisambwa in Mara languages derives from a Great Lakes Bantu root, *samb-(ua)*, meaning "territorial or nature spirit, which protects first comers (often represented as an agnatic group)."¹⁰ In other Lakes Bantu languages it means variously: "nature spirits of rivers," "spirits attached to larger lineage groups and to areas associated with these groups," "woods-dwelling spirit," (North Nyanza), "clan spirits and habitat for them--wild animals, rivers, etc.," and the "protective spirit of a settlement" (Rutara). Both Kirwen, who interviewed many diviners in Luo and Zanki areas of the Mara Region, and Ruel, who worked with the Kuria, interpret *emisambwa* (*abasambwa* in Kuria) as forgotten and potentially dangerous, malevolent spirits.¹¹ The western Srengeti elders with whom I spoke consistently referred to the *emisambwa* as powerful but none-the-less beneficent spirits, while the few Kuria interviews that I did confirmed Ruel's assessment. In other parts of the Lakes Region *emisambwa* can also be malevolent spirits.¹²

¹⁰ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #347; See discussion of spirits in Chapter 5 and 6 of Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*; This substantive meaning was itself derived from a verb meaning "to judge" or, possibly, "to grant blessing," found more widely in Savannah Bantu.

¹¹ Ruel, "Religion and Society," pp. 296. Michael Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diviner* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), p. 6

¹² Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #347.

The shift in meaning among peoples of the western Serengeti, from territorial, nature or malevolent spirits to ancestral spirits which guard the land, seems to suggest a particular kind of relationship to the land, dating to as early as five hundred years ago when North and South Mara speakers separated from each other. Western Serengeti people have collapsed the spirits of particular important dead ancestors (*abakoro*) with the spirits of particular places (*emisambwa*) to the point where they are now indistinguishable as *emisambwa*. This explains why western Serengeti people perceive *emisambwa* as beneficent--because they are known ancestors, not forgotten and lost spirits. The elders themselves were not clear whether *emisambwa* mean "the spirit of the ancestor" or "the spirit of the place," the two meanings have become synonymous. The meaning of *emisambwa* is implicit in the use of the *emisambwa* places in the place-name lists of oral tradition referring to the "generation of settlement."

The Ngoreme, who are much closer to the Kuria geographically as well as culturally than other western Serengeti peoples, join these different conceptions of *emisambwa*. Many of their *emisambwa* do not demand ancestral sacrifices but are places remembered for important events. At these locations elders gather mud, particular tree branches, honey or water for other rituals. Animals or monsters inhabit some of these sites that are not connected to stories of ancestors but which a particular lineage is still responsible for propitiating. They also have *emisambwa* that are both ancestors and spirits of the land. One of the most famous Ngoreme *emisambwa* sites is the hot springs at Maji Moto. An elder of the Kombo lineage, who are ritually responsible at this site, said that the people of a whole village live under the water. Sometimes people hear a child cry there. When the colonial government came to explore volcanic activity at Maji Moto, the earth swallowed up all of their large machinery and those who did the work died once they got home.

When the machines drilled into the rock, they brought up blood.¹³ [Figure 7-3: *Emisambwa* in Ngoreme.]

By collapsing the meaning of specific dead ancestors into the concept of a territorial spirit of a place, peoples of the western Serengeti made claims to the land that they occupied. Yet more than that, they made a profound identification of themselves, in the form of their ancestors, with the land. The spirit of the land is the spirit of the ancestors, one and the same. Kirwen's informants said that ancestors "are the ones who put us into the land, they are the elders and owners of the land, they are the ones with power to prevent or ward off sickness, famine and death, evil comes when we break our ties with the ancestors, they ensure that the moral order is kept."¹⁴

Although Tatoga herders deny that they have *emisambwa* sites, as do their Bantu-speaking neighbors in the western Serengeti, much evidence exists to suggest shared understandings of ancestral spirits. In Ngoreme a local farmer showed me a pair of large rocks worn smooth, presumably by the touch of hands, that he described as a Tatoga *erisambwa* for which Tatoga periodically returned to do the sacrifices [Figure 7-3: *Emisambwa* in Ngoreme.]. As the deeds of great prophets of the past were remembered so the landscape was appropriated with their relics. Tatoga elders said that the stone axe of the Relimajega prophet Gwataye is still embedded in a tree near the Mara River.¹⁵ The hunter/fishermen Tatoga, Isimajega, have a profound attachment to the mountain that they call Somega, in the western corridor of Serengeti National Park, now known as

¹³ Interview with Maro Mchari Maricha, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

¹⁴ Michael Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diver*, pp. 8.

¹⁵ Interviews with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Marisha Gishageta, Issenye, 28 March 1996; Merekwa Masunga and Giruchani Masanja, Mariwanda, 6 July 1995; Gilumughera Gwiycya, Girihoia Masaona and Gorobani Gesura, Issenye, 28 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂); Wambura Nyikisokoro, Sang'anga Buchanchari, 23 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Marunde Godi, Juana Masanja, Mayera Magondora, Manawa, 24 February 1996 (Isimajega ♂).



David Maganya Masama, Wambura Nyikisokoro and Mayani Magoto, Sang'ang'a Buchanchari Ngoreme, at the Tatoga *Erisambwa* Rocks, 23 September 1995.



Maji Moto Hot Springs

Figure 7-3: *Erisambwa* in Ngoreme

Simiti hill across the Grumeti River from the Girawera game post. The Isimajega call the spring there Yiwanda, after the rainmaker prophet Ghamilay who is buried there. People went there to ask for rain, fertility, health or prosperity.¹⁶

The ancestors as *emisambwa* are just as real a presence in community life as those more recently deceased. An example from my field work shows the feeling of their personal presence. When I went with the elders to visit the grave of Gitaraga, a rainmaker, they did not address the spirit with formal ritualized speech, they spoke to him as one would speak to a living person. One elder from the lineage of Gitaraga brought along a gourd of water. We sat for awhile at the grave talking and then went to the place where the rainpots were buried in the ground under an overhanging rock. After discussing whether I should take photos here and disallowing the use of pen and paper,¹⁷ he poured the water from the gourd out on the ground and spoke to Gitaraga:

*Mzee (elder) Gitaraga, we have come to greet you, we are your children, do not be angry with us but send us blessings, do not be astonished that some others of your children have come to greet you. They have not come for a long time, but they are never-the-less your children. They are from across the ocean.*¹⁸

One the way home that day it poured down rain. [See Figure 7-4: Nata Sites, Gitaraga and Riyara.]

¹⁶ The Isimajega elders requested that I ask the Park for permission for them to return there to propitiate the *erisambwa*. Tatoga ethnographies report large funeral mounds built for important elders in their cattle kraals. Poles which were planted in the mound grew into trees and a "sacred grove" was established, which would be visited by the man's ancestors for propitiation of his spirit. George J. Klima, *The Barabaig: East African Cattle-Herders* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 102-107. He reports that only rarely are these mound built for women. G. McL. Wilson, "The Tatoga of Tanganyika, Part 1," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 33 (1952): 34-47.

¹⁷ They finally agreed that I could take a picture but the photo did not turn out on a roll of otherwise good pictures. This was the last picture on the roll and when I went to change film I could not find the roll that I was sure I put in my bag that morning.

¹⁸ Interview with Keneti Mahembora, Gitaraga, 9 February 1996 (Nata σ).



Mokuru Nyang'aka, Barichera Machage Barichera, Nyawagamba Magoto, and Sochoro Kabhati, Riyara, 7 March 1996, the bee cave.



Keneti Mahembora, Mokuru Nyang'aka and author, Gitaraga, 9 February 1996, Gitaraga's grave.

Figure 7-4: Nata sites, Gitaraga and Riyara

The association of *emisambwa* with forces of the wilderness, as opposed to the civilized spaces of the homestead, provides further insight into the identification of the spirits of the land with the spirits of the ancestors. People may not cut the groves of trees that grow up around these sites and they foster the untamed growth of these groves. *Emisambwa* sites are always located away from present settlement sites, in the bush. Even those in the more densely populated areas of Zanaki are found outside the village. One elder described these as places inhabited by leopards, snakes and where lions give birth.¹⁹ Traditions associate these places with the ritual symbols of water, fertility, women and growth. Many other anthropologists and historians of Africa have noted the recurrent ritual theme of mediation between the forces of the bush and the forces of the home. Feierman and Packard demonstrate the role of the king or chief as intermediary between wilderness and culture.²⁰ The peoples of the western Serengeti assign this role to a variety of important ancestors, located at specific places of power to mediate between wilderness and culture.

Other Kinds of *Emisambwa*

Emisambwa belong to a polysemous category used in a variety of other circumstances. *Emisambwa* spirits can also reside in particular objects or animals. The *erisambwa* of a place may appear as a snake or a hyena. Testimonies often call these animals the messengers of the *erisambwa*, but just as often say they are the *erisambwa* itself. One elder differentiated the *emisambwa* as "big" and "little" *emisambwa*.²¹ According to this elder, the "big" *emisambwa* are those ancestors at certain places propitiated by particular lineages for rain or fertility. The "little" *emisambwa* are animals associated with lineages or clans, the *emigiro* or avoidances discussed in

¹⁹ Interview with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

²⁰ Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, pp. 69-93; and Packard, *Chiefship and Cosmology*, pp. 1-54.

²¹ Interview with Yohana Kitema Nyitanga, Makondusi, 1 May 1995 (Nata ♂).

Chapter 6, that people must feed and be careful not to harm. The most common animals are a particular kind of snake (often pythons), the hyena, or a tortoise. Some Ikoma lineages with the hyena *erisambwa* have a special gateway cut in the homestead fence for the hyena to enter. Some people told me that the *erisambwa* at Nyichoka is a snake while others related the story of a barren woman, told in Chapter 2.²²

Scholars have interpreted this understanding of *emisambwa* as "clan totems" or avoidances (*emigiro*).²³ Yet seeing avoidances as *emisambwa*, with the nuanced meanings enumerated above, subtly shifts the traditional understanding of this phenomenon. For western Serengeti peoples, clan avoidances are more than a symbolic representation of the spirit of the collective. They are the located spirit of an ancestor who provides for the welfare of that clan and the health of the land they live on and use. This may also explain the references to "clan" as territorially based. If the clan has an *erisambwa* then that spirit must, by definition, have a dwelling place related to a people. This is another example in which narrators blur the distinction between lineage and clan by using the same idioms in reference to both.

Ritual specialists such as healers, prophets, diviners and rainmakers each have their own *erisambwa* that directs their work. They are the spirits of known ancestors or perhaps the spirits that their ancestors used to do their own work. The *emisambwa* communicate with ritual specialists in dreams and tell them what to do. While people can learn or buy some medicines, ritual specialists do not choose to do this work. The *emisambwa* choose them and may make them ill or appear crazy until they agree to become a prophet. Yet this is not a possession cult as such and the ritual specialists do not take on the person of the *erisambwa* as much as receive help from

²² The word, Nyichoka, means "the place of a snake."

²³ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962).

it.²⁴ Each *erisambwa* has its own rules and prohibitions that the ritual specialist must follow to do their work effectively. Ritual specialists often have a special ornament or implement used by the ancestor that they call the *erisambwa*. The *erisambwa* relates to people of a particular lineage and ancestry. An *erisambwa* cannot direct a person outside the lineage, on either side.

Dreaming is the most important way that the living communicate with the dead. This is the source of power for all ritual specialists: prophets, rainmakers and healers. Without the knowledge communicated by ancestors in dreams, prophets cannot perform their task. A general word for a prophet who dreams (and they all must dream to have power) is an *omoroti/abaroti* (from the verb, *-rota*, "to dream"). Common people also communicate with the dead in dreams and receive instruction, warning or encouragement for their daily activities.

Emisambwa Sites as the Spaces of Lineage

Specific lineages always control the *emisambwa* sites. Not just anyone can guide a stranger to these places. A representative of the particular lineage, *ekehita*, whose ancestors are buried at that place, must be present to approach those places and do the required rituals. They tell stories about the lives of these ancestors during a particular period of crisis, for example when there was famine and the rainmaker brought rain and prosperity. These sites are points on the map which represent particular lineages and the histories of great men and women in the past.

Emisambwa may represent a matriline or a patriline. In Nata, *ekehita* (patrilines or "gates") control all of the communal *emisambwa* of the land. Those of the matriline, (*nyumba* or "houses") are individual or "small" *emisambwa*. The Nata recognize only three important

²⁴ Differentiated from Cwezi cults, see Renee Louis Tantala, "The Early History of Kitara in Western Uganda: Process Models of Religion and Political Change" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1989); and John Beattie, "Group Aspects of the Nyoro Spirit Mediumship Cult," *Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Journal* (1961): 11-35; or Ngoma in John Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

emisambwa, while in Ngoreme and Ikizu each community or clan controlled territory, *ekyaro*, has its own.

The Ikizu describe the *emisambwa* as both prophets and as spirits whom their founder, Muriho, put there when he conquered the land. They say that each prophet came to give direction to a particular lineage and place, so that they would have recourse in times of trouble. A particular lineage propitiates each of the *emisambwa* at their grave site. The Ikizu elders who wrote a book on their history listed twenty-one ritual places inhabited by the *emisambwa*. Out of that list more than half of the ancestors came from outside of Ikizu, for example, Nyambobe was a Luo woman who came in a boat with potatoes and bananas.²⁵

Although not stated explicitly, those lineages who propitiate the spirits of their ancestors at the *emisambwa* sites may have authority there because of their status as those who came first. The ancestor buried at that place has a special connection to the land. As an *erisambwa*, the ancestor becomes one with the spirit of the land and thus is responsible for the health of the land.²⁶ Those who settled in the area first made the accommodation with the land (perhaps through association with first-comers like the Asi hunters) and have ritual authority over it. Because of the association of these places with symbols, like the python, that are ancient throughout the Bantu-speaking world and commonly used at sacred spots like shrines, one is tempted to hypothesize that these are ancient sites of power that have changed hands many times as new groups and new identities took control.²⁷ They could also represent critical sites of productive value located at the ecotone

²⁵ Mturi, "Historia ya Ikizu," pp. 25-27.

²⁶ For an example elsewhere in Tanzania of ritual precedence given to "first-comers" in ceremonies concerning the land see, H. A. Fosbrooke, "A Rangi Circumcision Ceremony: Blessing a New Grove," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* (1958): 30-8.

²⁷ See Schmidt's analysis of the "tree of iron" in *Historical Archaeology*, p. 105.

between mixed farmers and herders or hunters. In either case they are now represented by fairly recent lineage ancestors.

Ritual Possession of the Land

In relation to the generation of settlement, the meaning of these lists of place-names is more than simply remembering people and events from the past by places on the landscape. By naming places on the landscape western Serengeti people took possession of these sites. One cannot become a people without a land and the land must be ritually possessed rather than simply occupied. Ritual possession makes the land available for proper political use and ecological management; it "humanizes" the land.²⁸ It becomes "our land" through the practice of naming it and peopling it. The peoples of the western Serengeti were extremely mobile. They moved their homes and fields every 5-10 years, as many as ten times in a life time.

Many historians have confused mobility with a lack of territoriality or feeling for the land. Paul Abuso, in his history of the Kuria states,

The Abakuria did not have that sacred attitude toward land as a land of their ancestors. They had no such claim to the land they lived on. The owner of a home, when dead, was buried inside his cattle kraal and when the people migrated from the place the grave was completely forgotten. The people had no more attachment to it. This detached attitude of the Abakuria was seen in the way they welcomed many strangers in their midst.²⁹

A similar sentiment is expressed by B. A. Ogot in his history of the Southern Luo.³⁰ Both seem to confuse attachment to the land with the exclusive occupation of one kingroup in the same plots of land for generations. This bias is perhaps the result of comparison with the dominant studies of kingdoms and centralized states in Lakes Region.

²⁸ David Schoenbrun, personal communication, with reference to ritual possession of the land throughout the lakes region.

²⁹ Abuso, A Traditional History, p. 35.

³⁰ Ogot, Southern Luo, pp. 38-39.

People possessed the land, not in terms of ownership, but rather identified with it by ritual occupation, or by peopling it with the spirits of the ancestors who continue to respond to propitiation. That is why oral traditions represent the land as empty before first man and first woman came—because one's own ancestors did not people it. The ancestors of others must either be expelled or coopted in order to live peacefully there.³¹ The land is empty not when no people occupy it, but when no *emisambwa* dwell there. The Nata claim a much larger territory than that in which Nata people now live. However, the graves of their ancestors inhabit that larger territory and thus embody its extent.

Muriho Possesses Ikizu by Planting the *Emisambwa*

The story of Muriho taking possession of Ikizu is the most vivid example of the process of peopling the land with the ancestors among the western Serengeti narratives:

Muriha himself was a healer and a prophet, in his prophesy he was promised authority in a land of tall mountains and so it is at this high mountain that he established his settlement, Itonga Muriha. His goal was to possess the mountain now called Chamuriha, but he was not at first successful because people were already living there, called the Abahengere (shart people). Muriho came up with a plan for overcoming these people. The Abahengere also became aware of the presence of Muriho and his people at Rosambisambi. So they came to attack Muriha, but when they arrived they found nothing there because Muriha had surrounded the settlement with protective medicine called orokoba. Muriha then passed the protective circle of medicine all the way around the mountain of Chamuriho and installed his own ancestral spirits in these places. There were five spirits in all, each had a name, specific powers, appeared in the form of a different snake and were placed in each stream where they are still appealed to today. The water in these streams became bitter so that the Abahengere were unable to drink it and had to leave the mountain of Chamuriha. . . . Muriho went on chasing them out by putting medicine in the water to make it unfit to drink and after they left each successive place he would pass the orokoba, the circle of protective medicine, so that they would not return to live in these caves. He chased them all the way to Lake Victoria. When Muriho was sure that his enemies would not return he went home and made a plan to complete the authority that he had gotten for himself. He went to the mountain Chamuriha and did the ritual purification called ikimweso, in order to bless these acts of courage and to protect his new settlement established on the mountain Chamuriha. By

³¹ For a discussion of firstness as a principle of legitimacy see Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, Chapters 4 and 5; and Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier," pp. 52-61.

*this time the prophet Muriho had many followers and had married eight wives, who were given to him as gifts of thanks for his actions. After this, once more, he had to use his powers and his medicine to drive out spirits and encircle the land with protective medicines, so that they would not return.*³²

The mountain where oral tradition says that Muriho lived is today called Chamuriho, the place of Muriho. Chamuriho is the tallest mountain in the area. The Germans used it for one of their heliograph stations. Approaching Chamuriho from the west, the small hills and tightly packed settlements of Zanaki suddenly spread out to the great Serengeti plains at the base of Chamuriho. The mountain marks a boundary between the lakes and hill peoples of the west and those who live on the interstices between hill and vast plain, to the east. Ikizu still make offerings on Chamuriho and know it as the origin spot and most powerful *erisambwa* of the Ikizu. Most of the other important Ikizu rituals either begin or end here. The Ikizu claim the land because Muriho planted their *emisambwa* at specific places to guard the land. [See Figure 7-5: Ikizu Sites at Chamuriho and Gaka.]

Nata and Ngoreme Ritual: Mediating the Forces of the Wilderness

The Nata ritual at the *emisambwa* sites illustrates the ongoing role of these spirits in mediating the dangerous but fertile boundary between wilderness and culture which makes habitation possible. When a problem arises the whole community comes to ask the lineage elders to do the sacrifices at Gitaraga so that they might have rain. Anyone can come along but only the lineage of Abene O'Gitaraga will do the sacrifices. When they go to Gitaraga only men and one young woman go, taking along a black sheep. The young woman carries a gourd full of water and dresses in traditional skins and beads. When they get to Gitaraga they clean out and refill the rain pots. Elders kill the black sheep and cut it in half from head to tail. The half with the head is for Gitaraga and the other half for his wife Nyaheri, at another nearby site. The group roasts and eats

³² Mhuri, "Historia ya Ikizu."



Chamuriho Mountain



Mtemi Adamu Matutu, Warioba Mabusu, Ntabusogesi Nying'asa, Wilson Wanusu, Godfrey Mayai Matutu, Mturi Wesaka, Joseph M. Nyaganza, Ikota W. Mwisagita, Kibiriti Kekang'a, Makongoro Wambura, P.M. Mturi, Ikizu elders at the grave of Nyakinywa, Gaka, 31 August 1995

Figure 7-5: Ikizu sites at Chamuriho and Gaka

the meat at the site. Then a young man climbs the tree (*omusangura*) near to the grave of Gitaraga and pours water over the head of the young woman who is bent over below the tree. The others cut branches from the tree and wave them while the youth pours water. They also sing songs. As this is happening, a lineage elder asks Gitaraga to send rain. The same thing happens at the other Nata site, Geteku: the elders propitiate both male and female *emisambwa*, pour water out to imitate the rain, sacrifice, roast and eat an animal. At this site women are specifically there to sing and dance the *eghise*. If the *erisambwa* is happy with the ritual, the beat of a drum sounds (*ambere*).³³

In Ngoreme, the *emisambwa* of Kimeri and Nsoro are two springs up on the hill behind Maji Moto. The Gitare lineage cleans the springs periodically. They take tobacco, milk and honey for the prayer, the women take flour and the men a white tasseled goat. The women draw lines on the ground with flour and the men spit the mixture of honey and milk to the four corners and onto a stone that they walk around as they invoke the spirit. Elders said that the rain would start before they reached home. They do not kill the goat there but take it back home with them. They also bring leaves from certain trees at the site home for other rituals. At circumcision time the initiates come there to get water and white mud for the ceremonies.³⁴ The Gitare perform these rituals in times of trouble, such as lack of rain, ill health, infertility or threat of enemies, rather than at regular intervals. They visit the *emisambwa* regularly at the initiation of a new age- or generation-set. The new set goes there to receive the blessing of the spirits for a prosperous period when their age-set is in power.

³³ The most important informants on the Nata *emisambwa* were from Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 May 1995; Mokuru Nyang'aka and Keneti Mahembora, Gitaraga and Nyichoka, 9 February 1996; Makuru Magambo, Geteku, 9 March 1996; Mahiti Kwiwo, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂).

³⁴ Interview with Reterenge Nyigena, Maji Moto, 23 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

These rituals reenact the relationship of people and land. The young fertile woman standing beneath the tree represents the land receiving from above the male spirit rain. The women dance the *eghise* to please the spirit who blesses the land with rain. The people bring the products of their labor on the land as farmers (flour), herders (goat and milk), and hunter/gatherers (honey) and offer it back to the spirit that has made prosperity possible. In turn they take the powerful things of the wilderness (leaves, clay, water), now made safe for use in the civilized world by the spirit of the land, back to perform community rituals.

People recognize prohibitions commonly associated with *emisambwa* sites. Where there are pools or springs, women can only draw the water using traditional vessels like gourds. They may not use metal or plastic buckets, nor anything that is red. The forest surrounding these sites never burns nor can it be cut.³⁵ Each of these items marks the *emisambwa* as spirits associated with the wilderness, whose power is mediated by the ancestors.

The Ikoma Machaba *Erisambwa*: Domesticating the Ancestral Spirits of Others

The Ikoma *erisambwa* of mobile elephant tusks, rather than a fixed place, demonstrates the adaptability and flexibility of these concepts through which people gained possession of the land through the spirits of the ancestors. Here a relationship to the land could only be claimed by appropriating the ancestral spirits of the Tatoga herders. Although the Ikoma lineages have their own *emisambwa* sites, these have become subordinate to the collective Ikoma *erisambwa*—a large set of elephant tusks known as the Machaba. Relative dating by generation-set places the story of

³⁵ Interview with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

how the Ikoma got these tusks in the middle time period and around the mid-nineteenth century.³⁶

[See Appendix for other versions]:

Then later the rain stopped ogoin and they called everyone together to take action, along with the Ishenyi people. They met to decide where to go to get a prophet who would help them. They decided to go south to the Totaga, the Bachuto, at Ngarongara Crater, in Mbulu. They went to beg him for help and he gave them their erisambwa, the Machobo (which is named after the Tataga prophet himself). It was to be for bath but the Ishenyi were unable to carry them. The prophet gave one cow to the Ikoma and one to the Ishenyi. The Ishenyi were not happy with their cow because it was so thin and they wanted the Ikoma cow that was fat. The Ishenyi had more people and so thought they should have the fatter cow. They took the Ikoma cow and the prophet let them go ahead and do it. When they butchered it, they found it was thinner than the other. When they got the erisambwa of the Machobo the Ishenyi could not carry the tusks. Mwishenyi said, "let them go ahead and carry it home and we will take it from them there." They came first to Ikoma and then went onto Nyeberekera. They said they were tired and would come back for the Machobo later, but they never did. It stayed in Ikoma. The Mochoba is their elder. Anything you want to pray for he can grant. It is o Tatogo erisambwa.³⁷

Another version varies only slightly.

They went to the Totoga prophet, east in o crater but nat Ngorongoro, another one near Mbulu called Mwigu wa Machaba. There was a lake in the crater. They went there because they had o problem with fertility. The Ishenyi, who were more numerous than they, come along too. The Ishenyi slept at the first place inside the gate, the Ikoma slept outside the gate. The prophet said they should grab o sheep as they jumped over the gate. Ikoma got o skinny one and Ishenyi o fat one but when they butchered them, the sheep looked the same and when they were cooked the Ikoma one was fatter. The prophet tried each of their bows and shot the Ikoma arrow for aff and said they should follow it. He prepared the things that they should take along with them (mbanora) and showed them the path to take when they saw vultures up ahead. The youth ran ahead to get the prize. The first to get there was Mayani (a Goikwe clan member of Ikoma) who took the top (right) tusk of the elephant and second was o youth of the Ikoma Himarumbe clan who took the lower (left) tusk. The Ishenyi wanted to take it from them but the prophet

³⁶ While most informants would not date the Machaba story one elder said that the Ishenyi were at Nyigoti (Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995) which would put it during the period of late nineteenth century disasters, others dated it to the time when the Ishenyi were still at Nyeberekera, just before the disasters (Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 October 1995 and Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996). Tatoga informants dated it to the time of the prophet Saigilo's father which would also date it to the mid-nineteenth century period just before the disasters (c. 1850-1870). The fact that they went to the Tatoga prophet because of infertility problems would suggest that the disasters had already begun.

³⁷ Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

*had said not to fight. They tried to take it away but could not lift it or move it. The Ikoma were at Tonyo at that time.*³⁸

At all important communal rituals the Ikoma bring out the Machaba tusks. The people receive a blessing by touching the tusks. The Ikoma clans are divided into two moieties, Rogoro (east) and Ng'orisa (west). Each moiety guards one tusk. Elders tell many stories of times in which the Machaba were hurt or taken and the bad consequences of that action. The colonial government tried to take them as well, but failed and brought them back.³⁹

The Machaba story also defines the relationship between the Ikoma and Ishenyi, both going together to find prophecy concerning their lack of fertility. This story explains why the Ishenyi are such a small group today and the Ikoma relatively larger. The Nata have a version of this story in which they go along too and the prophet gives them a set of buffalo horns that were later lost when one group failed to pass them on at the proper time. The Machaba story stands alongside the origin stories as a way of explaining the relationship between western Serengeti peoples. Yet given the time period of this story (c. 1870) it may also commemorate the formation of Ishenyi and Ikoma ethnic identities as ritual communities related to particular *emisambwa*.

In Ikoma the clans, rather than the lineages, control the *emisambwa*, the Machaba. The Gaikwe (Ng'orisa) have the right hand, upper or male tusk which confirms this clan as first-comers, similar to their status in the origin stories as the clan of first man. The Himurumbe (Rogoro or "east") control the female side or left tusk, often related to first woman from Sonjo (to the east). One elder confirmed that the Himurumbe clan was also Asi, or hunter/gatherer in origin.

³⁸ Interview with Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

³⁹ Interview with Mabenga Nyahega and Machaba Nyahega, Mbiso, 1 September 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

These clans have special ritual functions when they bring out the Machaba and they also keep the tusks, in separate places, one located in the east and one located in the west.

On the other hand, in contradiction to all other western Serengeti *emisambwa* theory, the Machaba are not ancestral spirits of the Ikoma but of Tatoga origin. This brings the Ikoma into a very special relationship with the Tatoga. One Ikoma elder said that the Tatoga were "people of the oath (*ring'a*)," or "our parents."⁴⁰ The Ikoma commemorate the Tatoga role as spiritual parents in ritual practice, as described in the next chapter. In one version of the origin story the first Ikoma man from Sonjo came because a Tatoga prophet told him to follow the animals until he found a place where lions lived, he should then stay at that place.⁴¹ The Machaba story seems to mark another era of negotiation and interaction between Bantu-speakers and Dadog-speakers long after the original period of settlement.

Because the Machaba is a Tatoga spirit, it is a mobile, rather than a located *erisambwa*. The Ikoma have domesticated this spirit and appropriated its power by fixing it to the land.⁴² The Machaba *erisambwa* dwells in the tusks rather than a physical feature of the land. The spirit represented by the tusks is a Tatoga prophet from Ngorongoro. The next chapter will describe the rituals to encircle and protect the land carried out by the generation-set. The Ikoma generation-set fixes the tusks to the land by carrying the Machaba in their ritual walk to seal the boundaries of the land. In addition, they cannot take the Machaba across the Grumeti River, which Ikoma acknowledge as their "traditional" territorial boundary. When the British took the Machaba across

⁴⁰ Interview with Sabuni Machota, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂), he was an important informant on all aspects of the Machaba.

⁴¹ Interviews with Mabenga Nyahega, Bugerera, 5 September 1995; Moremi Mwikicho, Sagochi Nykipegete, Kenyatta Mosoka, Robanda, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

⁴² For this process in other parts of the Lakes Region see Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, Chapter 5.

the Grumoti their car broke down and the Machaba were out of the tin house (where the officer stored them) in the morning. When one of the keepers of the Machaba moved them across the river his whole family began to sicken and die until he moved them back.⁴³

Thus, the Machaba represent a further cultural elaboration of the polysemous category of *emisambwa* spirits and their guardianship over the land and the health of the people. The Ikoma are the people farthest east and farthest out on the plains. The village of a Robanda clusters around a hill which rises out of an otherwise flat and featureless plain. The ecological setting suggests that the only way to prosper on this kind of land is to appeal to the spirits of those who own the grasslands, the Tatoga herders. Nevertheless, the Ikoma fix and domesticate mobile Tatoga power by an Ikoma understandings of the relationship between land and people.

Nineteenth Century Settlement Patterns

The cultural understanding of the places listed in oral traditions about the pre-disaster period not only provides insight into the sequences of relationships between early and later settlers to the land, but also sheds light on the kinds of settlements occupied during the nineteenth century. Because these traditions only provide glimpses into individual settlements, reconstructing patterns or forming generalities, without a master narrative, is difficult. Nevertheless, I use evidence about specific settlement sites in conjunction with ethnographic and linguistic evidence to reconstruct some idea of what settlements were like in the nineteenth century.

Abandoned Settlement Sites and the Patronage of "Big Men"

Some places in the list of place-names are not *emisambwa* but primarily old settlement sites or what the Nata call *ehimenyo* (literally "built places"). Traditions distinguish these sites

⁴³ Interviews with Kimori Gamare, Bugerera, 15 July 1995 (Nata/Ikoma ♀); Nyaruberi Kisigiro, Morotonga, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂); Sabuni Machota, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

from the *emisambwa* sites by arguing that, although people remember specific ancestors and events of the past at those sites, they do not propitiate the spirits there by sacrifice nor do these spirits have power over the health of the land and its people. Elders from different lineages may recite these settlement site names differently, given that they would remember those of their own lineage. While all elders fairly consistently name the *emisambwa* sites, they disagree on the *ebimenyo* sites. Elders speak in most detail about the sites more commonly known that seem to have been the most prosperous settlements of important or wealthy individuals.

People often name places after the well-known individuals who lived there, without formal title but with charismatic ability to attract people as a "speaker" (*omukina/abakina, omwerechi/abawerechi, omugambi/abagambi*). A speaker in western Serengeti tradition is a man whom people respect for his ability to speak the mind of the community with wisdom and fluency.⁴⁴ These men may have had wealth to back up these claims but they measured their wealth in people whom they could attract through extensive relations of reciprocity rather than in things. They were men with many "children" and large homesteads. The place-names Magita and Wamboyi in the Nata list refer to such wealthy men and their settlements.

Local languages use the term *omwame* (or *omonibi* particularly for cattle wealth) to refer to a wealthy man. Many conversations over the research period concerning the definition of wealth convinced me that people value wealth in crops or livestock only in so far as it generates people as wives, children or dependents. Men aspire to the respect that wealth brings when they are able to feed a large crowd of people at a feast, a community ritual or a dance.⁴⁵ All wealth is not equal

⁴⁴ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 199-200, demonstrates the connection between the power of speech and healing or divination, or more generally speech as creative power, "Introduction."

⁴⁵ Interviews with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi σ); Sarya Nyamuhandi and Makanda Magige, Bumangi, 10 November 1995 (Zanaki σ), dealt with these

and only the wealth generated by the sweat of farming and herding is called *umwame*, used to produce a large lineage. The wealth from the mines or from hunting elephants is illegitimate wealth with which one can never build a homestead.⁴⁶

The wealthy men of settlements remembered in oral tradition are lineage elders who represented a period of prosperity. People still remember these men and the places where they lived because they forged networks of reciprocity over a large region. A wealthy man was one who "fed" his people in times of trouble and, in turn, commanded respect, labor and support. In the uncertain environment of the western Serengeti these lateral links to wealthy men provided security and resources for building prestige throughout the region. A wealthy man was an *omwame* because of his informal ability to control widespread and diverse networks of security through his wealth.

The word *mwame* is an old Lakes Bantu word from the root *-yámí*, meaning "chief."⁴⁷ In the early period of Great Lakes Bantu (500 B.C. to 500 A.D.) settlement these leaders held their position, in part, because of their ability to distribute wealth.⁴⁸ Vansina describes similar "big men" (named *mukumy*) in the Equatorial tradition whose authority lay in their ability to attract followers through their wealth. Historical linguists have established the ancient "link between leadership and the exchange of goods" through political terminology generated from the words for "gift," "to give away," or "to divide" throughout Bantu-speaking Africa.⁴⁹ The difference between

topics in particular.

⁴⁶ Interview with Philemon Mbota, Mugumu, 17 November 1995 (Kuria σ).

⁴⁷ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #261.

⁴⁸ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 183; See also Ehret, *Classical Age*, Chapter 5. Miller uses a similar model to explain the slave trade, Miller, *Way of Death*.

⁴⁹ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest*, p. 74.

Vansina's "big men" in Equatorial tradition and the Lakes Bantu use of the word *mwaami* was that in the Lakes region these leaders achieved their role, in part, as lineage elders.⁵⁰

The use of the term *mwame* in the western Serengeti represents a variation on an ancient bundle of political culture and practice in response to an environment where resources were extensively available in plentiful but marginal land rather than intensively controlled for exclusive use. Here the *mwame* was not a chief but a wealthy man, who was the leader of a (at least purportedly) lineage-based settlement. His extensive and informal links throughout the area forged by his wealth were more important than a concentration of followers at home. The word for a poor person (*omuhabe*) is the same as the word used for an orphan or a person without family, affirming the central role of descent idioms in elaborating theories of "wealth-in-people." Elders were at loss to give me the words for "patron" or "client" because the concepts did not exist, except in reference to the late nineteenth century practice of capturing slaves, in which case they used the Suguti term for slave (*omuseese*).⁵¹

The Zanaki called the powerful rainmaker from the clan territory of Busegwe, the *mwami*, which is also derived from the word for a wealthy man. In the colonial years the Zanaki successfully argued that this was a chiefly title. Indeed many aspects of the Zanaki *mwami*'s power were chiefly—other clan territories brought him or her tribute in goods or labor and clans

⁵⁰ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 183. Ehret, *Classical Age*. For the ethnography of "big men" elsewhere see, J. P. Singh, *Politics of the Kula Ring: An Analysis of the Findings of Bronislaw Malinowski* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971, first published 1962); Douglas L. Oliver, *A Solomon Island Society: Kinship and Leadership among the Siuai of Bougainville* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

⁵¹ Various sessions with Nyamaganda Magoto over the course of 1995 to fill out the Cultural Vocabulary list. Seese—"a wild unruly animal, usually a dog, sometimes a jackal," Schoenbrun, personal communication.

throughout Zanaki respected his or her word.⁵² However, I suspect, given the use of the term throughout the Mara Region, that *mwami*, as a title of chiefly office rather than a generic term for a rich man, was reintroduced in the nineteenth century from across Lake Victoria. Busegwe tradition says that the first *mwami* came from the Mugango peninsula on the lakeshores, as an immigrant in the line of the great female rainmaker Muse from Buhaya. The rainmaker lineage claims kinship with the *mukama* (chief) from Kerewe Island, also with origins across the lake.⁵³ Ruri elders on the Mugango peninsula said that the Busegwe must return here to make the powerful rain drum used by the *mwami*.⁵⁴ The *mwami* lineage of Busegwe included powerfully respected rainmakers who began assuming the authority of chiefship only in the late nineteenth century and in the context of colonialism. Immigrants from across Lake Victoria seem to have brought the meaning of the term *mwami* as a chief, rather than a wealthy man, as a tool for asserting the authority of their lineage. On the other hand, the shift of *mwami* from a wealthy man to a chief may just as easily have occurred as an internal innovation in the context of nineteenth century societal stress and increasing hierarchical accumulations of wealth from the caravan trade. The connections to the coast and across the lake may in that case have underpinned the access to wealth that the Zanaki used to transform the rainmaker into a chief.⁵⁵

⁵² Benjamin Mkirya, *Historia, Miita na Desturi za Wazanaki* (Ndanda, Tanzania: Benedictine Publications Ndanda-Peramiho, 1991), pp. 45-55.

⁵³ Hans Cory, "Report on the pre-European Tribal Organization in Musoma (South Mara District and ... Proposals for adaptation of the clan system to modern circumstances)," 1945, CORY# 173, EAF, UDSM. See also an evaluation of the Zanaki mwamiship, Kemal Mustafa, "The Concept of Authority and the Study of African Colonial History," *Kenya Historical Review Journal* 3,1 (1975): 55-83.

⁵⁴ Interview with Daudi Katama Maseme and Samueli Buguna Katama, Bwai, 11 November 1995 (Ruri σ).

⁵⁵ Thanks to David Schoenbrun for this alternate interpretation, personal communication.

It also makes sense that where chiefly authority began to develop in the Mara Region (Zanaki, Ikizu and among the Lakes people) rainmakers assumed this power through the *obugabho* tradition (discussed in the last chapter). This word is derived from the old Lakes Bantu root, *-gabira*, or "to divide up, distribute," usually in the sense of one who gives big feasts or gives things away generously.⁵⁶ Mara languages use the verb *kugaba* only in reference to the division of inheritance and the noun form only in reference to ritual specialists such as prophets and rainmakers. It may be then that those most closely connected to the "big man" tradition described by Vansina were the prophets and rainmakers, *abugabho*, who distribute a different kind of wealth, in knowledge. However, in the Mara Region *obugabho* was not a gendered term and some of the most famous rainmakers, like Muse (Zanaki) and Nyakinywa (Ikizu) were women. Vansina's characterization of big men would thus have to be revised. In other parts of the Lakes region people conceived of political and spiritual or healing power as separate categories in the two offices of the chief and the prophet. In the western Serengeti, without political centralization, the categories were not distinct.⁵⁷

The association of "big men" with the distributive power of prophecy is evident in some settlement sites that are not *emisambwa* sites and yet represent wealthy men or women who controlled powerful "medicines." In Nata one of the important settlement sites is at a hill, named after a man called Riyara. Elders said that Riyara was a prophet who had control over bees that he kept in a cave here. When a conflict emerged, the Nata warriors came to Riyara, who gave them a small wooden box with bees and other medicines inside. On the battlefield they released the bees against their enemies. The bees are still at the place of Riyara and someone in his lineage inherits

⁵⁶ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #164.

⁵⁷ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 194-201.

the power of his medicine bundle. [See Figure 7-4: Nata Sites, Gitaraga and Riyara, p. 333.]

Medicine bundles for protection in war, *ekitana*, are commonly used and inherited through the lineage. The prophet Riyara links this medicine bundle to a bee hive in a cave at Riyara and so places it spatially. Important Nata generation and age-set rituals must use honey from the bees at Riyara even today. People do not make sacrifices there because this is not an *erisambwa*, instead they ask Riyara, whose spirit dwells there, to calm the bees so that they can take the honey. Only Nata people can take honey there, because the others do not know how to call on Riyara to calm the bees. Other *ebitana* of the Nata are place-fixed in that the person in the lineage who is chosen to keep the *ekitana* must not cross the river boundaries of Nata.⁵⁸

These *ebimenyo* or settlement-sites recounted in oral tradition may also be associated with the age-set or generation-set which lived there, and some important events of the time. The remembered sites were usually prosperous with lots of food and people. Elders remember Torogoro and Site because these settlements produced so much food that they had lots of leisure time to dance. The Abamaina generation danced so much that the youth pounded the dance field at Torogoro into a depression that one can still see today.

Elders say that some settlements, such as the ones as Sang'anga and Kyasigeta for the Nata, were settled long, long ago, abandoned and resettled around the time that the Germans began to build Fort Ikoma in that area. At that time a woman at Sang'ang'a used the *ekitana* from Riyara to protect against the Maasai with bees. She had a drum in her loft that would sound when enemies were near. She took the drum outside and stripped off her own clothes as she released the

⁵⁸ The main information on Riyara from a trip to Riyara with Makuru Nyang'aka, Sochoro Kabati, Barichera Machage, Nyichoka to Riyara, 7 March 1996 (Nata *o*).

bees.⁵⁹ Her medicine was so powerful that when the Germans first began to build their fort at Sang'ang'a every morning they would awake to find their foundations torn down. They finally gave up at that spot and built at Nyabuta, Fort Ikoma. The history of re-occupation of settlements, of settlement names used in other settlements and the telescoping of time makes it almost impossible to differentiate the settlements chronologically.

The spaces of these settlement sites represent the spaces of small scale communities as points on a landscape. Elders can identify almost every settlement site according to the lineage or clan that lived there, without reference to ethnic group. Since wealthy men and ritually powerful women, held authority, in part, because they were lineage elders, traditions identify their settlements according to lineage. These settlements seem to be separate communities, inhabited during approximately the same time period, who were linked to each other by networks of redistribution, across what are now ethnic boundaries. By naming and remembering settlements of prosperous men and times of plenty, people identify themselves with the same processes of reciprocity between land and people that made prosperity possible.

Settlement Patterns: the Oruberi

These stories about particular settlements are consistent with the testimony of elders concerning settlement patterns before the disasters. The people I talked to described settlements in the pre-crisis era as a relatively concentrated collection of patrilineally or matrilineally related homesteads called an *oruberi*. Further confirmation of this pattern comes in the identification of nearly all past settlements with particular lineages. One person said that the homesteads were

⁵⁹ Interview on the *ekitana* of Mantarera with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata 8).

close enough to each other that people could hear a shout from the adjacent homestead.⁶⁰ People of the same clan grouped their settlements within one area, or on one set of hillsides, called the *ekyaro* or territory. A brush fence often surrounded the *oruberi* that contained four to ten or more homesteads. Elders contrasted this pattern with the much more highly concentrated settlements and stone forts at the height of the Maasai raids. Without archeological evidence, to tell how far before the disasters this pattern might have extended is impossible.

A common grazing area called the *ekerisho*, always lay near the *oruberi*.⁶¹ It is not clear whether farmers always grazed their livestock near to the *oruberi* or whether this was another change that resulted from the time of raids. In any case elders remember no other pattern and grazing near to the village is consistent with the strategy for maintaining trypanosomiasis immunity discussed in Chapter 5 and is a wide-spread regional pattern. Members of the *oruberi* grazed their livestock together and farmed in areas often many hours walk from the *oruberi* called the *ahumbo* fields.⁶² Each family, and each wife, had their own *ahumbo* fields that were adjacent to each other and surrounded by a brush fence. Young people were left at the fields during the night to guard against wild animals. They stayed in temporary houses called *ekeburu* during the farming season. The old and the very young stayed back at the *oruberi*, along with enough youth to guard the cattle

⁶⁰ Interviews with Surati Wambura, Morotonga, 13 July 1995 (Ikoma ♀); Jackson (Benedicto) Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995 (Nata ♂); Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995 (Nata ♂). Much of this information is pieced together from conversations which contrasted the fort settlements of the disasters with this early pattern and the contrast to present village structure.

⁶¹ See Ehret, *Classical Age*, for a sense of the great time depth here.

⁶² An early German report states of the "Washashi and Wangorimi," "the fields in some cases are several hours' journey from the houses." Geographical Section, *A Handbook of German East Africa*, pp. 97.

in case of a raid. Economic cooperation and mutuality within the *oruberi* were as important as within the homestead.

People discussed the ideal *oruberi* of the past as a homestead on a larger scale. The *oruberi* fence had one gate for livestock and a secret backdoor for emergency escape, just like the homestead. Elders compared the brush fence surrounding the *oruberi* to the homestead fence, using the same word (*orubago*). By definition everyone in the *oruberi* was part of the same patrilineage, as they would be in the ideal homestead. Yet just like a homestead, many people were incorporated that did not share a genealogical connection. The ways that communities incorporated strangers in the past demonstrate how the homestead model makes allowances for people not genealogically related. Lineal descent was the idiom through which western Serengeti peoples conceptualized the relationships within one settlement.

The settlement structure of villages today, even with the vast changes of the past century, represents the ideal of lineage-based settlement. These changes include the reformation into concentrated age-set settlements at the end of the nineteenth century; the movement back to dispersed settlements oriented around wealthy men in the colonial period; and finally the imposition by the independent government of Tanzania of concentrated "Ujamaa" villages in the 1970s.⁶³ In spite of this history, organization of most villages in western Serengeti, whether "Ujamaa" or not, tends to revolve around the relationships of a couple of key families. The spatial organization of the village often situates lineage-related families in the center, with those related by friendship or patronage to those families on the periphery.

⁶³ "Ujamaa" was a nationwide scheme instituted after the "Arusha Declaration" in 1967 to deploy "African Socialism" by resettling everyone in planned villages rather than dispersed settlements.

The present day village of Mbiso in Nata is a good example of these ideal patterns in practice.⁶⁴ Magoto Mosi, the father of my host in Nata, founded this village. His original rectangular, tin-roofed house, sits at the crossroads of the village, on the truck route to Arusha, Musoma and Mugumu. The rest of the village grew out from that point with his sons' houses closest to his and his daughters', who married within the community, farther out. Many people in the village came there because they respected Magoto and because his prosperity had generated many relationships of reciprocity, relationships he considered friendships. Almost everyone in the village, whether of his clan/lineage or not, can trace a relationship of some kind back to Magoto himself. The village grew up around the personal patronage and influence of a "big man."

The internal spatial structure of the village differentiates itself into lineage and age-set based categories. Almost everyone in the village is of the age-set cycle of Bongirate, reflecting changes in the residence patterns at the end of the nineteenth century. Bongirate of Magoto's clan, Moriho, live at the east end of the village, while Bongirate of the Getiga clan inhabit the west end of the village. A few families of the Saai age-set cycle, who came in because of association with Getiga clan members of the Bongirate age cycle, live on the west end of the village. A number of Getiga clan members from Ikoma also joined fellow clan members at the west end of the village. Quite a mix of people came in at the time of "Ujamaa" from the settlement of Sibora that they abandoned because of its designation as a game-controlled area by the government. Sibora people were all Bongirate and so moved into the east end of the village, of whatever ethnic group or clan. The exception to this pattern is the enclave of school, court, police and other government workers living in the government housing section on the west side of the village.

⁶⁴ This information is based on an informal village survey that I did with Nyamaganda Magoto in late 1995 in which he and others named the inhabitants of each house in the village, their clan, age-set, relation to Magoto, occupation and other relevant information.

These diverse people who moved to Mbiso because of personal ties to Magoto found a place for themselves by settling near to those with whom they shared age-set, clan or lineage membership. People related both through Magoto's mother's family and his father's family claimed kinship as the basis for moving to the community. Since most Nata people are related to each other in multiple ways, these settlers used kinship to assert their strongest claim to a reciprocal connection with Magoto. Structurally, then, the village is a lineage-based settlement, but the logic of those who decided to move was based on personal patronage.

Considering these more flexible ideas about how people understand their relationships to each other and how they come to congregate in one area, we must also question the assumption of strict lineage-based settlement in the past. Because local languages derive the names for lineage from the model of the homestead--gateway (*ekehita*), house (*anyumba*), hearth (*rigiha*), we might more usefully think of the understood relationship between peoples within one settlement as an extension of the homestead model.⁶⁵ People may have congregated together in one settlement because the presence of an influential man assured them that they could find prosperity and security there. Yet the formal ways in which they explained their choices and related to others within the settlement were based on the idiom of lineage and later age-set.

Abasimano: The Incorporation of Strangers

While elders said that everyone in an *oruberi* claimed one lineage, the underlying philosophy of people and land in the western Serengeti was not exclusive. Because land was plentiful, and people scarce, communities gave inclusiveness high priority. According to local testimony specific mechanisms existed to incorporate individual strangers (*abasimano*) and even

⁶⁵ Kuper does this in his analysis of the Zulu state as representing deep continuities with the house model rather than in terms of lineage. Kuper, "The House and Zulu Political Structure," Schoenbrun, "Gendered Histories," pp. 470-480.

stranger clans into the group. Their incorporation rendered them natives (*abibororu*, meaning "those who were native born"). Wealthy elders incorporated hard working strangers into their own lineages or grafted the stranger lineage onto their own. These strangers accepted initiation into the local system of titles and took an oath not to leave the land or betray their adopted people.

Lineage and genealogical relatedness was the idiom through which people understood their rights and obligations to each other but it was their common residence that united them and made them one people. The children of an *omosimano*, or stranger, are *omwibororu* (*abibororu*), or "native born," and not differentiated from their peers of native born parents. At issue is not blood or biological inheritance but where a person was born. These devices quickly erase the origins of *abasimano* and few signs of it remain for their descendants. The family cannot discuss their stranger origins until a couple of generations have passed. While Nata genealogies disguise this diversity, almost everyone can identify some *abasimano* ancestors. Many people declared that they were "pure" Nata but when I questioned them more closely they would tell me stories of a grandmother or a great-grandfather coming from another place. The structure of genealogies completely erases stranger origins by incorporating them into existing lineages.

People not only tolerate and incorporate strangers but also value them highly. The life histories of elders today provide evidence for inferences about strangers in the past.⁶⁶ Although most elders contracted their marriages within the immediately surrounding localities, some took stranger wives because of friendships between their fathers and men of other localities. Other women fled their homes, sometimes with young children, exiled because of pregnancy before circumcision or witchcraft accusations. Nata men sought stranger wives because their children

⁶⁶ Each informant that I interviewed was also asked about their own life history. This information generalizes from many of those histories and from specific conversations particularly with the Magoto family on strangers. Informal discussions in Ikoma on stranger wives confirmed these ideas.

would then inherit from their father rather than their maternal uncle.⁶⁷ In Nata the children of an *omosimano* wife inherit equally with their paternal uncles at the death of their grandfather. A stranger wife carries on the homestead of her husband, which his brothers do not inherit. Neither do they inherit his widow, as is normally the case. Stranger wives also represent important in-law connections outside the community. These are useful on trips, in trade and to gain support in political conflicts. Nata respect and fear an *omosimano* wife for her outside connections and strong internal power at inheritance. The liabilities of marrying an outsider are that she may be culturally and linguistically inept and cause embarrassment to the family. Witchcraft accusations most often fall to the stranger wife.

Another common way in which the community incorporated *abasimano*, particularly during the period of disasters was as *abagore* or "people who were bought." This was an important mechanism for coping with famine in the past. Droughts were often local and when a family ran out of food their only option might be to take a child to a neighboring group where they had connections and leave the child in exchange for food. If the child was a girl, the food would be considered as bridewealth, if a boy, as sale. These children were not treated as slaves but as members of the family and incorporated as other *abasimano* children. Chief Megasa bought Rotegenga, who later succeeded him as chief, from Simbete parents during a famine, yet few questioned his ability to represent Nata because of his origins.

The mechanisms for the incorporation of strangers worked a bit differently in Ngoreme, reflecting the diverse histories of the region. The Ngoreme do not use the term *abasimano* at all or, if used, it refers to slaves. The term for people of "pure blood" (whose parents were both "Ngoreme"), was *kicheneni*, in contrast to the Nata and Ikoma emphasis on birth place. Certain

⁶⁷ Also discussed by Huber, *Marriage and Family*, pp. 95-96.

Ngoreme rituals of the lineage require a native *kicheneni* only, whereas elsewhere in western Serengeti children of strangers may participate in these rituals. The Zanaki, Kuria and Lakes peoples have a specific word for slave (*omuseese/abaseese*) that is also used for these strangers. The word literally means "dog" and suggests a very different treatment of strangers than in Ikoma and Nata. They also commonly used the term for "someone who is bought."⁶⁸ The reasons for this pronounced difference in attitude may be a result of higher population densities among the Lakes and highland peoples and thus a greater need to control wealth within the lineage. It may also be a result of closer interaction with the coastal caravan slave trade that operated around the lake from Buganda through Ukerewe to the ports in Sukuma.

Many lineage or clan histories base their narratives on the arrival of a stranger and his incorporation to form a new section of the territory. Western Serengeti people valued strangers in the homestead as wives and sons and also honored them as great and powerful ancestors. This was part of the strategy of wealthy men to incorporate many people as his dependents. Among the important prophets of the past, Gitaraga of the Nata was a stranger, who arrived as a child with the implements of rainmaking in his hands. A man without children adopted him so that the lineage would not die.⁶⁹ Elders say that the woman who makes the medicine bundle of the bees at Riyara (Materera) must remain an *omosimbe* (an independent woman) but take a stranger *omatware* (male wife). The spirit propitiated at Nyichoka was a stranger wife. When the community needed to consult a prophet they often went far away to find one who was efficacious. The relationship of the

⁶⁸ Ngoreme Dictionary, Iramba Parish, n.d. Interviews with Zabron Kisubundo Nyamamera and Makang'a Magigi, Bisarye, 9 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂); Sarya Nyamuhandi and Makanda Magige, Bumangi, 10 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂); Daudi Katama Maseme and Samueli Buguna Katama, Bwai, 11 November 1995 (Ruri ♂); Elfaresi Wambura Nyetonga, Kemgesi, 20 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Bhoke Wambura (Ngoreme ♀) and Atanasi Kebure Wambura (Ngoreme ♂), Maburi, 7 October 1995.

⁶⁹ Interview with Mahiti Kwiro, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂).

Tatoga prophets to Ikoma is one in which strangers have become "parents" with ritual authority in some of the most important Ikoma ceremonies to maintain the health of the land. In each of these situations, the incorporation of the power of strangers was considered efficacious to the health of the local community.

This ethnographic and linguistic evidence, although not conclusive, suggests that there is continuity, at least from the nineteenth century to the present, in the organization of settlements on the basis of a lineage idiom. Yet what brought people together in these diverse settlements was the patronage networks of "big men" and mechanisms for incorporating strangers. Some of the key terms from which I reconstruct these patterns such as *oruberi* (settlement), *omwame* (wealthy man), *omosimano* (stranger) can be argued on the basis of the comparative method to have been innovations by Mara speakers in the last 500 years. Recent ethnography provides models for how these institutions might have functioned in the past. The evidence from both these sources is consistent with the oral traditions concerning individual settlement sites dating to the period prior to the disasters.

Continuity and Relationship to the Land in the Context of Mobility

The last piece of the puzzle concerning nineteenth century settlement and the relationship of people to the land is how the patterns just described fit into the context of settlement mobility. In the last chapter I argued that western Serengeti people adapted to a marginal environment by moving their farming settlements fairly frequently over distances travelled in a day or two. If, as I argue in this chapter, people maintained their relationship to the land through the ancestors located at particular places, then was it possible for people to move into lands not controlled by the spirits of their ancestors? If people moved as individuals or in small family groups the mechanisms of incorporation described above could easily accommodate their assimilation into a new settlement. However, there are also examples, both in oral tradition and in recent times, of larger groups of

people moving into new lands to start their own settlements. The Ikoma story of the Machaba *erisambwa* demonstrates how mobile spirits solved this problem. Yet many other cases exist where people resolved the problem by accommodating the new spirits of the land, establishing their own spirits or moving back to older sites.

People may have moved frequently but their relationship to the land constrained their movements. Those whose ancestors inhabited the land as *erisambwa* ritually controlled it. A family who was not living in an area in which their lineage was responsible for propitiation of the spirits had to establish reciprocal relationships with those who "owned the land." Good reasons existed for doing this but people were ever mindful of returning to the places where they had a connection to the land. Philip Mayer argued that among the Gusii, "the lineage attracts the return of its own members because of its association with patrimony, protection, and the influence of ancestor spirits."⁷⁰ People did not take lightly permanent migration to new areas, which meant the establishment of new *erisambwa* to protect the land and its people. It was only under spiritual direction by ritual means that people were willing to undertake migration to the land of others.

Two recent examples of larger groups of people moving and establishing themselves in new land provide possible models for these patterns in the nineteenth century. These stories also illustrate continuity in ideas about leadership and the relationship to the land that I have discussed in relation to the mid-nineteenth century. Some have argued that because local societies lost political control with colonialism they also lost the ability to generate new innovations on these old principles of social action.⁷¹ Yet these examples suggest that incredible continuity remains despite an utterly changed historical context.

⁷⁰ Mayer, *The Lineage Principle*, p. 31

⁷¹ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest*, pp. 245-248.

The first case is of the Nata patriarch Magoto who moved to Ikizu in 1932 and back to Nata in 1964. The second is the move of Kuria Nyabasi from North Mara into the Mugumu area of the western Serengeti in the 1950s. Although these are both cases taken from the colonial period they seem to reflect the same concerns about land and settlement discussed in relation to oral traditions about the nineteenth century, before the disasters. These cases illustrate cultural continuity in the ways that people have settled and found prosperity on the land.

Magoto Mosi and the Nata Moves to Mugeta (1932-64)

During the late 1920s and early 1930s sleeping sickness became epidemic in the western Serengeti and the colonial officers were concerned about the dramatic decrease in the Nata population. They sent out a Tsetse Fly officer to investigate the causes. Chief Rotegenga was adamant that the cause of population decline was death from sleeping sickness but the officer began to suspect otherwise. He concluded that something else had driven the people to move out of Nata, which had in turn encouraged the return of bush and attracted the tsetse fly. He left without ever solving the problem of why so many Nata decided to leave.⁷²

Back in Nata I heard the other side of the story. During this time (1920's- early 30's) the Bongirate age-set cycle, of whom Magoto Mosi was a part, felt oppressed by Chief Rotegenga (of the Busaai cycle) and had many conflicts with him. Rotegenga had already forced Magoto to leave Nata earlier, after having openly defied the authority of the Chief. In addition this was a time of famine. Magoto Mosi, known as an *omukina*, or a speaker, called together the Bongirate of Nata and any others not happy with the political situation. He convinced them that it was time to move. They secured land and permission from the neighboring Ikizu chief, Makongoro, and moved to Mugeta.

⁷² H.G. Caldwell, "Report on Sleeping Sickness in Musoma District, July and August 1932," pp. 1-7, 215/463, TNA.

A friend and fellow labor migrant in Nairobi introduced Magoto and the Nata delegation to Chief Makongoro. Makongoro heard their request and promised to make Magoto *mwangwa* (headman) of the new area at Mugeta if Magoto could get lots of Nata to move to Ikizu. Chief Rotigenga prevented the first people to move in 1932 from taking out their livestock until Magoto and his men went to Musoma and got the District Commissioner to intervene. Both chiefs were competing for the right to claim these people as their own. Most people came to Mugeta between 1933 and 1934, when Magoto was *mwangwa* (headman). When the Nata heard of his position, even more moved to Mugeta, including some Ishenyi and Ngoreme, who came seeking sanctuary. Estimates of the number of people to move to Mugeta in the 1930s vary from 200 to 400 people, along with their livestock. By 1938 Magoto had too large a herd of livestock to stay in Mugeta. He decided to move again, out on the plains, near to an Ishenyi friend. Magoto moved two more times, following his growing herd and trade with the Tatoga.

Finally, in the 1956 Magoto decided it was time to move back to Nata. Magoto's son, Nyamaganda, in a biography of his father, recreated the speech his father gave in Mugeta to the gathered Nata men:

*The time has come to return our youth to their home in Nata, we elders are getting old, some of our sons have children and even grandchildren. If we die first who will show them the place where they were born and the names of the places where we have built and the places where our fathers lived? The thing that we came here to get, God has helped us to get in abundance, that is cattle, goats and sheep, and further, He has blessed us with people. All of this wealth we must return to our homes in Nata.*⁷³

The move happened slowly and it was not until 1963 that Magoto established the village of Mbiso on the crossroads of the Musoma/Arusha/Mugumu road. Mbiso was a good place to live because

⁷³ Mwalimu Nyamaganda Magoto Mosi, "Historia ya Mzee Magoto Mossi Magoto Katika Maisha Yake," unpublished manuscript, Natta, 1996. Other information about Magoto was collected by talking to and living with his family in Nata. Formal interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 3 March 1995, and Faini Magoto, Mbiso, 6 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

of the respect that Magoto carried and people began to move there. When the moves of "Ujamaa" came in 1977 people from outlying areas congregated at Mbisio.

Magoto only had formal authority during the few years he served as *mwanangwa* in Mugeta. Yet in his informal capacity as a "speaker" he was responsible for a large migration of people to Mugeta and back, following him because of his charismatic leadership. People considered him a man of wisdom and when he spoke they listened. His power was based on an extensive network of reciprocal relationships beyond that of lineage and clan. Magoto had been an orphan who went to live with his mother's people as a young man. This entailed changing age-set cycle as well as clan. He had friendships developed during his youth when he traded in Sukuma, collected arrow poison in Kuria and did migrant labor in Kenya. As he grew wealthy in cattle, he used these cattle to help the sons of his friends to go to school or to begin their own herds. These informal ties of patronage made Magoto a trusted person. Issues of politics and power conditioned mobility. Nevertheless, in the end Magoto had to bring his children back where they had connections to the ancestors and to the land.

Magoto represents a combination of old and new ideas about authority and leadership. His achievement of wealth through livestock is a phenomenon of the early colonial period. The formal title of headman is also a colonial element. However, the methods of historical linguistics date the informal leadership of the "speaker" back to the time of early Lakes Bantu speakers.⁷⁴ He later gained the power of "medicines" when he was initiated into the highest eldership title of the Nata as an *omorokingi*. His relationship to the land within a settlement pattern of mobility is congruent with the evidence presented in this chapter for the nineteenth century. Magoto eventually moved

⁷⁴ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 199-200, demonstrates the connection between the power of speech and healing or divination. As is evident in the example of Magoto the power of speech was linked to both political and prophetic roles.

back to Nata, but many other leaders did not move back and had to establish relations to the land in a new place. The next story provides a present day model for those who did not return to land they once knew that is congruent with evidence about nineteenth century settlement patterns.

Establishing a New Land: The Kuria Move to Mugumu (1956-61)

Some Kuria families from the Nyabasi clan territory in North Mara moved south over the escarpment across the Mara River beginning in 1956 to establish themselves close to what is now the town of Mugumu and capital of Serengeti District. During this time people in the fertile highlands of the escarpment were beginning to suffer from land shortage and younger sons had to find new land for their cattle and fields. Yet Nyabasi elders do not cite these material factors as the reason for the move.

The testimonies of Nyabasi elders agree that they came to Mugumu because their prophet Gesogwe prophesied the move near the end of the German period. They were not able to go at that time because Maasai raids made the area too dangerous. The prophecy said that they would keep moving until they reach the mountain Gaoga, in the northern extension of the Serengeti National Park. There they would encounter the Maasai and end their expansion. Although the park has precluded this goal, the Kuria today keep pressure along the whole northwestern boundary of the park.⁷⁵

The origin story of the Nyabasi says that they once lived at Ikorongo in South Mara, now Ngoreme. Their name relates them to the Asi, hunter/gatherers who figured in the Nata and other emergence stories told in Chapter 4 and 5. One Nyabasi elder said that their ancestor was an Asi hunter, who came to North Mara and traded arrow poison for cattle until he became rich and

⁷⁵ Interviews with Kisenda Mwita and Hezekia Sarya, Matare, 15 March 1996 (Kuria ♂).

founded the Nyabasi clan.⁷⁶ The Ishenyi emergence story says that when the Ishenyi dispersed throughout the region some moved to Kuria and became the Iregi, now known as the Kuria territory of Bwiregi which is a neighbor to Nyabasi. Clearly, important links existed between South and North Mara before the formation of Kuria ethnicity.

Nyabasi elders say that the Mugumu area was then open space, the hunting area of the Ikoma, Nata and Ngoreme. All three chiefs gave them permission to settle and divided the area so that each could benefit from tax revenue. The Kuria immigrants suspected that the western Serengeti peoples welcomed them as an eastern shield against Maasai raids. People did not live in the Mugumu area then, in part, because it was a corridor for raids from Loliondo. The colonial government had already begun to settle Maragoli and Luo immigrants from Kenya in this area as well. The Kuria intermarried with the Maragoli until they returned to Kenya at "Ujamaa."

The dream prophet (*omoroti*) Mbota decided it was time to fulfill the prophecy of Gesogwe and led the Nyabasi immigrants to Mugumu.⁷⁷ He had no power to order people to go, but as with Magoto, where he went, people followed. It took one or two days to move everything from Nyabasi to Mugumu, sleeping one night in Ngoreme. The head of the homestead and some young men preceded the others by at least a year to prepare a place and harvest a crop. It took two years to complete the move, with the cattle coming last. The advance group found friends already in the area to help them choose a place to settle. After they had chosen a spot, the immigrants marked the trees around the perimeter of the area as an indication of possession. After one family settled, their

⁷⁶ Interview with Sira Masiyora, Nyerero, 17 November 1995 (Kuria ♂).

⁷⁷ Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," p. 140, says, "the seers instructed people how to move and told them where to go and when." In her questionnaire on moves back to Kebaroti—from the Zebra people—70 out of 74 in survey claimed their parents moved according to the words of the seers. The four who didn't mention it were youngest respondents. Twenty-four named seers were listed, according to each lineage.

lineage, clan or dependents tended to settle around them on the basis of personal patronage. Today people use clan or lineage designations to identify all of the Kuria villages around Mugumu.⁷⁸

The Nyabasi settled in Mugumu do not intend to go back to Kuria country in North Mara. No land is available for settlement there and they have become ritually independent from North Mara. Kuria elders said they did not have *emisambwa* located in a place but depended on their prophets. When they arrived in Mugumu, the prophet gave them medicine to spread around the boundaries to make the land good. They also sacrificed an animal. Among the Kuria it is the secret council of the *injama* who are responsible for the land. The new *injama* formed in Mugumu carried some of the old secrets from Nyabasi but now has new secrets for the new land. The boundaries that the new *injama* established with the medicines of the prophet are secret and known only to them, they do not correspond with tax boundaries.⁷⁹ The Kuria have established possession of a new land through the moral prescription of the prophet and ritual control of the land.⁸⁰

Conclusion

The Kuria case demonstrates the ongoing potency of ideas about settlement and possession of the land. The relationship between particular places, their spirits and certain peoples undergoes a constant reconfiguration in a context of mobility. People know that their relationship to the land is good when they prosper and grow. People discard relationships that lose their efficacy for ones that are successful. People gather around "big men" who bring prosperity by their wisdom and

⁷⁸ Interview with Kisenda Mwita, Hezekia Sarya, Matare, 15 March 1996 (Kuria ♂).

⁷⁹ Interview with Philemon Mbota, Matare, 27 January 1995 (Kuria ♂). Philemon, now a Mennonite Church pastor, is the son of the prophet Mbota who brought the people from Nyabasi.

⁸⁰ This is a highly controversial and politicized topic in Serengeti district today, the Ngoreme, Ikoma and Nata have a very different interpretation of the Kuria migrations.

leadership. Good crops, expanding herds and many people are signs that the land has blessed the people.

The place-names that people remember in oral traditions, either as *emisambwa* or settlement sites, are a result of the last reconfiguration of those relationships to the land, perhaps in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet they represent social processes, if not the particular settlements, of longer duration. As part of the tribal paradigm introduced in the colonial period it became important to establish an ancient history in order to claim legitimacy. One Ngoreme historian, who had his account mimeographed by the Catholic mission in Iramba, dated these settlement sites to the fourth century A.D. When asked how he arrived at this date he said that it seemed "far enough back."⁴¹ New chronologies push back the dates of oral traditions that were intended for other purposes. These places are important not because they establish the most ancient claims to the land but because they establish connections to the ancestors who still control the land and thus the health of its people.

To prosper on the land people must maintain a right relationship with it, through ritual and memory. The peoples of the western Serengeti continue to recite these place-names because without the identification of people and land they cannot prosper there. They possess the land by the propitiation of ancestors who have become synonymous with the land as *emisambwa*. They remember the "big men" with their extensive networks of people and the places where they lived to connect themselves with that prosperity. It is a form of patronage in which the patron is dead but his spirit keeps "feeding" the people. Because of the importance of this identification of land and people, oral traditions pass on these place-names to the next generation. As Magoto said:

If we die first, who will show them (our sons) the place where they were born and the names of the places where we have built and the places where our fathers lived?

⁴¹ Interview with Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995 (Ngoreme σ).

These sites, each with their own history "read" on the landscape, represent all of the various groups of people that the emerging ethnic identities of the late nineteenth century. The historian better understands these lists of place-names as historically important places in the local politics of ritual and power rather than sequential settlements in a "tribal" migration history. Narrators created a unified ethnic history by joining the histories of unlike units of lineages, clans, generation and age-sets and identification with powerful prophets or "big men." In the early colonial period the pointillist history of settlements became a territorial history of the "tribe." The land of many smaller *ekyaro* (territories) became the administrative boundaries of colonial tribes. By coopting the identification of places and thus the histories that they represent, oral traditions helped to create ethnic identities out of an amalgam of other kinds of identities

The pointillism of settlement sites does not necessarily mean that they were isolated from each other. Social identity was multiple and situational. One person may have lived in a settlement of his patrilineage, but visited the prophet of another settlement for advice, asked for help from a "big man" of another and shared a generation or age-set name with people in settlements all across the region. Clan groupings of settlements into the *ekyaro* (territory), responsible for maintenance of the land, participated in networks of alliance with peoples of the same clan name all across the region. From the traditions of the "floating gap" period nothing indicates that these larger regional connections necessarily corresponded with ethnic identity. One can imagine a map not of fixed ethnic blocks or territories but of smaller communities, dependent upon an identification with the land, whose connections radiated out in complex networks of affiliation and identity all across the region and beyond.

The next chapter adds further to the understanding of the relationship between land and people by exploring the territorial unit which linked individual settlements into one *ekyaro*. The *ekyaro* was formally clan-based but it was the generation-set that performed the rituals necessary

to "cool the land" and provide for its internal security. While the form of social identity explored in this chapter was that of the lineage, that of the generation-set and its historical development in the region is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE WALK OF THE GENERATION-SET:
THE RITUAL DEFINITION OF TERRITORY

This chapter looks at testimonies concerning rituals rarely performed anymore by the generation-set to protect the land and its people. An analysis of these rituals demonstrates that people defined themselves territorially even where the land encompassed by that territory was not a fixed unit. Each time the generation-set performed these rituals it defined anew the territorial identity of a people united by their ritual relationship to the land. These findings challenge historians and anthropologists to rethink their analyses of precolonial African society based on either the assumption of a lack of territorial identity or the definition of territory in terms of a kinship group.

While the last chapter explored oral traditions about particular lineage-based settlements in the mid-nineteenth century, this chapter examines the space of the larger clan territory, or the *ekyaro*, that encompassed a number of settlements in one area during the same period. As with emergence stories and migration traditions, these rituals in Ikizu, Nata, Ishenyi and Ikoma have become the rituals of the ethnic group and legitimate present claims to a territory. However, they also represent much older concepts about the relationship of land and people that suggest further how communities formed the territorial identity that allowed for internal cohesion in a context of expansion and mobility in the mid-nineteenth century before the disasters.

Nineteenth century western Serengeti peoples used the homestead images of houses and gateways to organize themselves into settlements and territories but they united these disparate peoples through an egalitarian and inclusive relationship to the land. Although individual lineages

carried out the sacrifices to ancestral spirits of the land, the generation-set representing all mature men regardless of lineage or clan membership performed the most important rituals to "cool the land." Because people across the Mara Region used the same system of generation-set names they could move into new clan territories and participate as equals with their own generation-set. The generation-set fostered the community consensus necessary for the health of the land and its people.

The generation-set, or *rikora* in power maintained the relationship to the land, or the *ekyaro*, by the ritual of walking over the land (*kukerera*) every eight years and spreading the medicine of protection and rain, assuring fertility and security, or "cooling the land." As I discussed in the last chapter, a right relationship to the land and the ancestors who inhabited it was necessary for prosperity and growth. The *rikora* was responsible for the health of the land and identified with the land. Many elders made this connection clear by asserting that because the *rikora* no longer walked, the land was ruined. The well being of the land was synonymous with the collective well being of its people.

This chapter probes the social identity of the generation-set and its ritual relationship to the land over time. It postulates that the words for the unique type of generation-set organization found here dates back to 100 B.C. - 400 A.D. when East Nyanza Bantu-speakers adapted to the drier lands of the interior by learning from agro-pastoral Southern Nilotic-speakers. The institution of the generation-set provided an ideal device for creating community consensus around the inclusive territorial principle of a relationship to the land rather than around the exclusive principle of lineage.

Although the ritual practices of the generation-set seem to be fairly stable, the territory defined by this ritual walk has varied over time. For example, the territorial unit of communal identity enclosed by the ritual walk shifted from that of the clan to the age-set during the period of the disasters and then to the ethnic group during the colonial period. The core images of these

rituals, including enclosure, binding, covering and mediation of outside forces remain the same despite incredible geographical variation in ritual practices. I trace the shifting and contested meaning of *ekyaro* territory established by the seemingly timeless ritual practice of "walking the land" (*kukerera*). The rituals described in this chapter represent the unification of clans into one age-set cycle or one ethnic group. I argue that generation-set rituals used the same symbols before the disasters to unify diverse lineages into one clan territory.

Although social hierarchy did exist—in the form of inequalities in wealth, gender, seniority, expertise, lineage or clan membership—the generation-set leveled these differences, at least between men of one generation. The rituals to "cool the land" reinforced the communal authority of the generation-set over other forms of emergent political authority such as "big men," rainmakers, prophets or lineage elders. By promoting the "youth" as the "generation-set in power" the elders masked their own authority in controlling the actions of the youth. The "generation-set in power" was the visible hand to carry out the will of the elders who directed them from beyond the public gaze. By this device, the elders fostered community consensus by silencing discussion on the basic inequalities of seniority and gender. These rituals represented and reinforced the authority of elders, based on the principle of generational seniority, as the form of authority responsible for protecting and healing the land and its people.

Finally, I use the generation-set rituals representing the core images of enclosure and the mediation of outside forces as the basis for looking at the concept of territory and territorial identity over time. Although I have already shown that western Serengeti people had various ways of conceptualizing the spatial relations of their various social identities, they employed the core spatial images of enclosure to define an identity with the land independent of lineage ideologies. Historical evidence suggests that people used these concepts of enclosure to define territories containing different social units in different time periods. I conclude this chapter by looking at how

western Serengeti narrators employ these concepts of territory to define newer kinds of ethnic and national boundaries and the identities that they enclose. The generation-set rituals best express these common understandings about boundaries and an identity linked to the land that operated across the Mara Region.

Generation-Set Ritual and the Middle-Time Frame

I discuss the generation-set rituals of "cooling the land" within the middle time frame of indigenous history. One might argue that we should treat the generation-set rituals as representative of the *longue durée*, because the generational principles of growth and healing seem to be quite ancient. However, although the generation-set system itself is very old in the region, the rituals themselves cannot be dated. Oral testimony recounts the transfer of many generation-set functions and ritual to the age-set during the period of disasters. These testimonies indicate that before the disasters the generation-set alone was responsible for the rituals to protect the land and its people. The unit of land around which the generation-set walks is the *ekyaro*, but the definition of *ekyaro* changed in the late nineteenth century from the territory of a clan to that of an age-set. Perhaps before the nineteenth century the generation-set walk encompassed a different social unit. Thus, without more evidence, I can only convincingly discuss these rituals in relation to the period immediately preceding the late nineteenth century disasters.

I also treat the generation-set rituals in the middle time frame (or "floating gap") of indigenous history because that is where elders themselves place these narratives. Western Serengeti elders say that the generation-set rituals are very old but that they began after the descendants of the first parents had multiplied to the point that they needed separate territories and before the period of disasters. Few local traditions describe the origin or development of generation-sets. One informant said that the ancestors formed the generation-sets to unite all the

clans in one land.¹ Kuria testimonies stated that the Saai and Chuuma generation-set cycles were named after the wives of Mukuria, their ethnic group founder.² Kuria in the province of Nyamongo call two twin hills the "hill of Chuuma" and the "hill of Saai," suggesting a territorial origin for the two groups.³ These cryptic stories, like the place-name lists in the last chapter, indicate that elders understand them as belonging to the middle period between the emergence stories and the historical recollections of the disasters.

In elder's testimonies, the generation-set and its ritual represent the concern for "repetitive social processes," as Spear described traditions of the middle period.⁴ In Braudel's terms the middle period concentrates on the slow but perceptible rhythms of social time.⁵ By setting the discourse on territory and boundaries squarely in this middle time frame of history, western Serengeti narrators are putting it out of the reach of overt political debate. Claims to land, territorial identity and the social authority of elders presented in the context of the middle period become unquestioned "tradition."

However, I argue that these rituals are more than simply an "invention of tradition" to legitimate the present social order, or, in this case, specific rights to a territory. Scholars from many disciplines understand ritual as a symbolic text whose meaning they decode. Social historians and historical anthropologists have analyzed rituals by looking at their changing meaning

¹ Interview with Kirigiti Ng'orogita 8 June 1995 (Nata σ). This man is the last surviving leader from the Saai generation cycle who knows the rituals.

² Abuso, *A Traditional History*, pp. 16-17. This is because the two cycles of the generation-set (Saai and Chuuma) are often referred to using the prefix *Mwanyia*- indicating the houses of two wives.

³ Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," p. 20.

⁴ Spear, "Whose History?," pp. 165-181; and Spear, *Kenya's Past*, p. 47.

⁵ Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, p. xiv.

within particular historical contexts.⁶ Sociologists and anthropologists have seen ritual as a means of communicating shared values and dealing with internal conflict.⁷ All try to interpret the meaning of rituals beyond their alleged purpose. While each of these approaches provides insight that contributes to the following analysis, they all deny the claim by participants that these rituals commemorate past events rather than present structures.

Yet Connerton argues that "if there is such a thing as social memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies," which he defines as rituals that ostensibly reenact the past.⁸ Through an analysis of ritual language and gesture in Europe he shows that the structure of ritual in "commemorative ceremonies" builds in a certain invariance because of the performative, formalized, and stylized language on which the reenactment depends. Those who perform rituals do so as members of a group that habituates them to certain bodily practices reserved for ritual, passed down with little variance from the past. While anyone can narrate oral traditions, only members of the group can perform the rituals. The positions and gestures of the body in performance form the mnemonic system of core spatial images around which rituals are elaborated. Performers understand these actions as reenactments of past prototypical actions. Ritual suspends linear time and reconnects people with their past by reenacting the past. The ritual performance of

⁶ The literature on ritual is vast and sophisticated. See M. Bloch, *From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina of Madagascar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Newbury, *Kings and Clans*.

⁷ E. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954); Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954).

⁸ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 71.

the "commemorative ceremony" conveys and sustains "an image of the past" through which a community understands its identity.⁹

In western Serengeti ritual, the definition of the land encircled by the generation-set, the *ekyaro*, changed according to the historical context. However, the relationship between people and land embodied in ritual remained stable as the core spatial images, analogous to that of oral tradition, but inscribed in bodily practice. These core spatial images include those of the enclosure, binding, covering and mediation of outside forces, all of which serve to define the boundaries of social identity and group cohesiveness within a territory.

We know that the core images of enclosure ritual are old because they are found in generation-set rituals throughout the Mara Region and cannot be traced to recent innovations. The language of generation-sets reconstructed through historical linguistics is demonstrably old. The variations in each ethnic group suggest that each group elaborated a given set of rituals from an older pattern. If western Serengeti people adopted these rituals in the last century we would expect them to reflect relations between generations at that time. As I demonstrate in Chapter 10, during the early colonial years young men gained autonomy from the authority of their elders by accumulating their own cattle wealth through hunting, trading, and raiding. The new generation of wealthy men established their own networks of patronage outside of the channels controlled by elders. The historical context of class differentiation and the autonomous authority of young men is not represented in the principles of egalitarian responsibility to the land and the authority of elders over juniors embodied in the rituals of the generation-set. Although these images seem to be

⁹ Ibid, p. 70, 41-71. See also Renee L. Tantal, "Verbal and Visual Imagery in Kitará (Western Uganda): Interpreting 'the Story of Isimbwa and Nyinamwiru,'" in *Paths Toward the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, eds. W. Robert Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David S. Newbury, and Michelle D. Wagner (Atlanta: African Studies Association Press, 1994), pp. 223-243.

quite old, in this chapter I reconstruct the meaning of generation-set rituals in the period right before the disasters because narratives about the rituals refer to this period and because it is impossible to know how these rituals might have functioned before this period.

Age-Organization

Because the generation-set carries the memory of concepts concerning territorial identity in the bodily practice of ritual, we must first understand the ways in which people have used the social logic of "age" and "generation" to organize social relationships before turning to their ritual function. In the anthropological literature the generic terms "age-organization" or "age-system" describe social organization based on age, generation or both. The term "age-grade" refers to the nearly universal tendency toward peer grouping, while "age-set" or "generation-set" is only used where persons are grouped into hierarchically ordered sets with specific social responsibilities as a unit. Some anthropologists use the term "class" interchangeably with "set." "Age-set" recruitment is based on age at initiation, while "generation-set" recruitment is determined at birth by the father's set. In an age-set system, a boy and his uncle could be in the same set if they were the same age, while this is impossible in a generation-set system. "Age or generation-set cycles" are systems in which a cycle of successive names is assigned to each group as it is formed over time.¹⁰ Peoples in the western Serengeti have used the logic of organizing social relationships on the basis of both age and generation, although historically the relative importance and function of each have varied.

The western Serengeti *rikora* (generation-set) and its rituals belong mainly in the male domain. Although women seldom undergo circumcision anymore, in the past women joined an age-set at circumcision and had their own initiation names, different from the boys. When they married, they became part of the age-set of their husband. Before they married, young women

¹⁰ P. T. W. Baxter and Uri Almagor, "Introduction," Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organisation (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 1-2.

enjoyed public dances with their age-set peers. Women acquired a generation-set name from their fathers at birth but did not participate in most of the generation-set rituals or leadership, nor did they maintain a parallel age structure. A woman's generation-set determined legitimate marriage partners—with someone of her own or an alternate generation, never with someone of her father's or children's generation.¹¹ Despite the absence of women in these rituals, the generational principles expressed in the rituals draw on the female symbols of inside space, the enclosed womb, water and fertility.¹²

The History of Age- and Generation-Sets in the Mara Region

The Mara Region is somewhat unique in East Africa since social relations based both on age and generation can be identified and the region does not conform to the stereotypical parameters of societies that emphasize age-organization. Anthropologists in Africa have most often studied age-organization in relation to Nilotic- or Cushitic- speaking pastoral peoples. Mara peoples are not only Bantu-speaking but agriculturalists, surrounded by peoples who have no generation-set systems, cyclical or otherwise. Using a model of diffusion, Bischofberger was at a loss to explain how the Mara peoples acquired this system.¹³ Mara age organization also confounded the typological classification of early anthropologists. P. H. Gulliver attempted to classify age organization into three types, 1) those like the Maasai and Sonjo with a linear age-based system, 2) those like the Nandi, Kipsigis and Luyia with a cycling age-based system, and 3) those like the Jie, Pokot, Tatoga, and Kikuyu with a non-cycling generation-based system. The Mara Region had a linear age-based system, like the Maasai (1), that is subordinate to a

¹¹ Interview with Mwenge Elizabeth Magoto, Mbiso, 6 May 1995 (Nata ♀).

¹² For an analysis of the symbols of wombs and enclosures see Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, pp. 47-81.

¹³ Bischofberger, The Generation Classes, pp. 99-102.

generation-based system, like the Jie (3), but using many of the same eight cycling age-set names of the Nandi (2).¹⁴

These earlier typologies and characterizations treat age-sets and generation-sets as if they were discrete models that were uniformly adopted in different times and places. The examples from Mara show that age and generation are principles of social logic that people applied in different ways in different historical contexts according to their needs. The system of age- and generation-sets in the Mara Region developed not by a process of diffusion from outside sources but by drawing on a common substratum of inherited generative principles from both Great Lakes Bantu and Southern Nilotic societies. Mara peoples used those principles in a variety of historical contexts to create institutions that met their needs. In the context of the late nineteenth century disasters western Serengeti people used these old principles of age-organization to create unity and cohesion in the midst of chaos.

The cycling generation-set names used throughout the Mara Region have a long history. As I noted in Chapter 4, the evidence of loan words in East Nyanza Bantu languages concerning livestock, non-kin relations and the homestead from Mara Southern Nilotic languages suggests that East Nyanza-speakers, moving into the unfamiliar environment of the interior, used common age-sets and the comradeship of peers to improve their livestock expertise and to develop new kinds of

¹⁴ P. H. Gulliver, "The Age-Set Organization of the Jie Tribe," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 83 (1953), pp. 147-168 and Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, pp. 75-81. For other analyses of age-set organization in East Africa see, P. H. Gulliver, "Turkana Age Organization," *American Anthropologist* 60 (1958): 900-922; J. G. Peristiany, "The Age-set System of the Pastoral Pokot: The *Sapana* Initiation Ceremony," *Africa* 21 (1951): 188-206; Robert A. LeVine and Walter H. Sangree, "The Diffusion of Age-Group Organization in East Africa: A Controlled Comparison," *Africa* 32, 2 (April 1962): 97-110; J. J. de Wolf, "The Diffusion of Age-Group Organization in East Africa: A Reconsideration," *Africa* 50, 3 (1980): 305-310. For age-groups in the Mara Region see, E. C. Baker, "Age-Grades in Musoma District, Tanganyika Territory," *Man* 27 (1927): 221-224; and E. C. Baker, "Age-Grades in Musoma District, Tanganyika Territory," *Man* (April 1953): 64.

homesteads built around the livestock corral. Sometime before approximately 400 A.D., East Nyanza-speakers adopted the cycling age-set names used today as generation-set names, perhaps to facilitate their relationships with pastoralists already familiar with the environment.¹⁵

The generation-set system that is found all over the Mara Region, including the Lakes people who speak Suguti languages and the Kuria who speak North Mara languages, divides the eight cycling Southern Nilotic names into two cycles, (Mwanya)Chuuma and (Mwanya)Saai. Each of these divisions has a cycle of four names used for each generation in succession. The ceremonies for passing on authority to a new generation take place first among the Saai cycle of the Saai generation followed by the Chuuma cycle of the Mairabe generation and then back to the Saai cycle of the Nyambureti generation and so on. Elders say that it takes 100 years to complete the cycle.

<u>Saai Cycle</u>	<u>Chuuma Cycle</u>
Saai	Mairabe (Ngorongoro among Kuria and Ghibasa among Ikizu)
Nyambureti	Gini
Gamunyere	Nyangi
Maina	Chuuma

Ehret reconstructed six of these names and their standard order in pre-Southern Nilotic speech communities: 1) Sae 2) Gorongoro 3) Unknown 4) Gini 5) Unknown 6) Nyangi 7) Maina 8) Cuma. Because these six common names are not derivable from Southern Nilotic or Bantu words, he postulates that pre-Southern Nilotic speakers adopted the names from Eastern Cushitic-speakers with whom they had contact on the Ethiopian borderlands as early as the first

¹⁵ Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, p. 46, shows that the Kuria generation-set names could not have come from later Kalenjin sources because of the sound changes and thus attests them to interactions with Mara (Victoria) Southern Nilotic-speakers in the late pre-Southern Nilotic times. All East Nyanza languages share the same generation-set names.

millennium B.C. There, Pre-southern Nilotic-speakers who had age-set systems adopted a cycling system along with these names, and also circumcision and clitoridectomy. East Nyanza speakers adopted the names of Nyambureti, Mairabe (replacing Ngorongoro) and Gamunyere at a later time. Ehret argues that the Kuria did not adopt the cycling names from their Southern Nilotic Kalenjin speaking neighbors to the north but more likely from the earlier Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers in the region.¹⁶ A number of groups in East Africa use these cycling names, including Nandi and Kikuyu.

Although East Nyanza Bantu-speakers adopted cycling age-set names from Southern Nilotic-speakers, they adapted the system to fit their own needs. The evidence of historical linguistics shows that the earliest Great Lakes Bantu speakers (c. 500 B.C.) practiced circumcision and initiation. East Nyanza speakers, already practicing some type of age-organization would have been receptive to elaborations that linked them to existing pastoral communities in the region. In the western Lakes region, age-set institutions were lost with the centralization of political and religious authority and the emergence of clientship. Schoenbrun postulates that the continued importance of age-organization occurred in those places of the Great Lakes Region, such as Mara, where political and religious hierarchies did not develop as a means for cutting across lineage-based identities to create alliances.¹⁷ From earliest times, age-organization formed the basis for unifying local communities of diverse origins.

Although Mara peoples now use the eight cycling Southern Nilotic names as generation-set names, one cannot tell whether they adopted the names as part of a generation- or an age-set system. The word used for the generation-set throughout the Mara Region today is

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁷ Schoenbrun, *A Good Place*, pp. 176-77. "Mara, Luhyia, Forest and Rwenzori branches of Great Lake Bantu have maintained these institutions," p. 176.

rikora/amakora derived from the Bantu root meaning to grow, *gokora*, implying that (although the names of each generation were adopted from Southern Nilotic-speakers) the generation-set system itself was a local innovation around the generational principles of growth, fertility and successional development.¹⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that the cycling Southern Nilotic names were ever used in the Mara Region except in reference to relationships based on generation.

The word used in the Mara Region for age-set, *saiga*, is derived from the Dadog word for age-set, *saigeida*, presumably adopted from Tatoga neighbors who practice a non-cycling generation-set system.¹⁹ Although western Serengeti people may have adopted this word at any time, right up to the nineteenth century, it seems to date to an earlier period since the Gusii, who were not in direct contact with the Tatoga in the nineteenth century, also use this word (*esaiga*) for the house of young unmarried men.²⁰ As I noted in Chapter 4, the fact that the Tatoga dropped the Southern Nilotic cycling age-set names, sometime after 1000 A.D., while their Bantu-speaking neighbors kept the names seems to indicate a period of differentiation and separation between herding and farming communities, where institutions that had unified these communities no longer took priority. However, this also seems to be the same time when Bantu-speaking hill farmers adopted a linear age-set system, called *saiga*, in addition to the older cycling generation-set system to maintain these useful relationships with herders across ecological zones.

¹⁸ In the Suguti language of Kwaya -*kukura*, but not in Kuria. Augustino Mokwe Kisigiro, "Nata-Swahili Dictionary," n.d., author's collection. The word *kukerera*, for the walk of the generation-set is likely a prepositional form of *kukila* a proto-Great Lakes Bantu word meaning, "to overcome, surpass, heal, unify." The prepositional form implies an object, in this case the land and all that it stands for. David L. Schoenbrun, personal communication.

¹⁹ Each circumcision set within the *saiga* are called *siriti*.

²⁰ LeVine and LeVine, "House Design," p. 162.

From this scarce evidence, I have tentatively concluded that the generation-set system in its present form predated the age-set system in its present form and was based on generational principles of growth brought by Lakes Bantu-speakers as they moved into the Mara Region. On the basis of the words associated with the institutions alone, the generation-set names were adopted before the name for the age-set, *saiga*. Obviously both ways of organizing relationships are quite old in the region and both have been used in various ways over the past millennium.

Western Serengeti peoples rarely practice the rituals of the generation-set any longer, in large part, because of events during the colonial period. During the years after the Germans fled the region and before the British took administrative control, generation-sets in territories throughout the region rose up and overthrew the chiefs appointed by the Germans. When the British came in, they reinstated the German chiefs and outlawed the organization of elders known to them as the "baGini" (which is a generation-set name) on accusations of witchcraft.²¹ The Musoma District Books, compiled between 1916 and 1927, record under the Native Court at Nagusi (Ishenyi) that *saiga* (or age-set) "is forbidden."²² The colonial officers were not clear about the distinction between age- and generation-sets and may have feared the military connotations of age-sets. Government persecution forced age-organization to function underground since its rituals were still considered necessary for prosperity on the land.

²¹ E. C. Baker, "System of Government, Extracts from a report by R. S. W. Malcolm," Sheet 51, followed by page 2, "Major Coote took the part of the Chiefs and in an attempt to improve the administration in 1919, the Bagini were suppressed." General Meeting at Musoma, 2/6/1919, MDB.

²² Musoma Sub-District 1916-1927, p. 59, MDB, TNA. Note this is a different and earlier version of the Musoma District Books than is on micro-film and available in the United States through CAMP. This earlier version is only available at the TNA as far as I know.

Few people living today have participated in generation-set rituals. The Ikoma have not performed the generation-set walk since 1978 and the Ishenyi since 1950.²³ The next Nata generation, Chuuma, has lost all of the elders who know the rituals and so must learn the rituals from the Chuuma of Ikizu if they decide to renew the ritual practice. Saai rituals and secrets are kept separately from the Chuuma, so that the same generation-set cycle in different ethnic groups shares the same rituals.²⁴ No *rikora* leaders remain in either cycle today. In Nata, Ikoma and Ishenyi the generational names under each cycle have fallen out of use and only a few of the oldest men can remember any of them at all. One Nata informant told me that Gamunyere and Nyambureti were simply used as names for greeting rather than being generation-set names.

In Ikizu the Gini, of the Chuuma cycle, was the last *rikora* to walk, around 1940. Ikizu elders say that the *rikora* does not walk anymore because the last colonial Ikizu chief, Makongoro, would not allow it. He gained the chiefship from his uncle Chief Matutu after a controversial succession struggle. However, he was not invested with the primary symbol of office, the *ndezi*, a cowry and leather bracelet. Some say that since Makongoro usurped the *ntemi* by force and was not properly installed with the *ndezi*, he could not allow the *rikora* to walk. The *rikora* walk is part of blessing the land at the installation of a new *ntemi*.²⁵ In the Ikizu emergence story the first woman, Nyakinywa, as *ntemi* rainmaker, had to make compromises to her authority by allowing the generation-set to continue. Makongoro would not let the *rikora* walk because they represented a powerful rival to his authority and a threat to his legitimacy. By telling me these stories the Ikizu

²³ Interviews with Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); and Moremi Mwikicho, Sagochi Nykipegete, Kenyatta Mosoka, Robanda, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

²⁴ Interview with Kirigiti Ng'orogita, Mbiso, 8 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

²⁵ Interview with Ikota Mwisagija and Kiyarata Mzumari, Kihumbo, 5 July 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

elders asserted an older communal authority embedded in the generation-set and the control of elders over it, standing against the authority of the chief.

The Historical Priority of Generational Principles

The variation in age-organization throughout the Mara Region presents a complicated and intricate puzzle to fit together. Yet behind this complexity lies a simple logic of generational authority and communal unity in relation to the land. Out of these underlying principles the variations and combinations of age- and generation-sets developed.

One of the most difficult problems in understanding Mara age-organization is to untangle age- and generation-sets that have a complicated and intertwined history. Overall a regional pattern exists of two parallel institutions, age- and generation-sets, in operation simultaneously. Young people joined the linear age-set system when they were circumcised at the time of puberty. Circumcision ceremonies took place every couple of years in separate *ebiyaro* (territories) and several groups of initiates were combined to form one age-set. Each age-set took a unique name that referred to an important event or characteristic of the time when they were circumcised. Since circumcision ceremonies were highly visible and festive events, news of the chosen age-set names spread rapidly and initiates all across the region adopted the same age-set names.

On the other hand, a person acquired his generation-set at birth according to the generation-set of his father. A person's generation-set name followed the sequence in the cycle, according to whether his father was from the Chuuma or Saai cycle. A ceremony took place when the generation-set that held power was ready to retire and pass on authority to the next generation. These took place in approximately the same year(s) throughout the region, although the last generation has been decades late to retire in many areas.

The question then is how these two parallel systems related to each other historically. R. G. Abrahams argues that, because age and generation systems operate on different principles,

societies that use both, must logically give one priority over the other.²⁶ Gulliver notes that generation systems are only possible where the primary function of age organization is not military, since a generation-based system does not ensure that all young men will be recruited at their prime.²⁷ The age-set is a useful tool for societies that promote the ethos of a warrior class while the generation-set is concerned with the orderly succession of generational growth and authority. The warrior class of an age-organized society often gains a fair amount of autonomy from their elders and prestige while a generational system is usually more firmly under the control of the elders.²⁸

Although western Serengeti peoples practiced either age- or generation-sets or both since the distant past, oral testimonies and the evidence of comparative ethnography seem to indicate that, at least by the nineteenth century, the system of cycling generation-sets predominated. With the advent of the disasters age-set structure took on a new and more dominant position among the easternmost peoples, exposed to Maasai raids and to the influence of Maasai culture. The demands for military expertise made age-sets more valuable at that time. Yet even as age-sets became more dominant in the nineteenth century, they were incorporated into a cycling system that retained the organizing principles of generation with the outward ethos of the age-set.²⁹

²⁶ R. G. Abrahams, "Aspects of Labor Age and Generation Grouping and Related Systems," in P. T. W. Baxter and Uri Almagor, editors, *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organisation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 37-68.

²⁷ Gulliver, "Turkana Age-Organization," p. 921.

²⁸ See Berritsen's discussion of the increasing autonomy and power of the warriors over the elders in Maasailand, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," pp. 225-227, 310-317; Galaty, "Maasai Expansion," pp. 75-86

²⁹ See Chapter 9 for more details on the new age-set system.

People of the Mara Region seem to have derived the great variation in age-organization that exists today from a common set of generational principles identifying people with the health of the land. Oral testimonies associate these principles with generation- rather than age-sets in the past. Among the Lakes peoples, or the Suguti language group, the memory of these generation-set names survives but has entirely fallen out of use with more extensive contact and influence from around the lake in the nineteenth century. Their surviving age-organization is more like age-grades, without specific institutional responsibility, although they do practice initiation and circumcision. Ruri elders along the lake, however, still remember the eight named generation-sets that once "ruled the land" and functioned in protecting the crops, providing rain and keeping out disease.³⁰ Among the Kuria and Zanaki peoples, who are farther inland, generation-sets remained the dominant form of age-organization. Elders from among the peoples living farthest east, Ngoreme, Nata, Ikoma and Ishenyi, all acknowledged that generation-sets are "senior" to age-sets, although age-sets began to perform the generation-set rituals and take over many of their functions during the nineteenth century disasters. During the disasters, the Ngoreme divided each generation into age-sets and the Nata, Ikoma, Ishenyi derived the age-cycles of the late nineteenth century from generational principles.³¹ All these variations have in common the ritual precedence given to generational principles.

The generational principle also takes precedence in everyday interactions. Greetings are structured on the generational relationships of the pair greeting each other (i.e., grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter). At any gathering of people, even today, participants arrange

³⁰ Interviews with Daudi Katama Maseme and Samueli Buguna Katama, Bwai, 11 November 1995 (Ruri σ).

³¹ Interviews with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata σ); Kirigiti Ng'orogita, Mbiso, 8 June, 1995 (Nata σ). Both of these informants are Mwanayasaai, which was the only generation to "walk" in Nata memory.

themselves in groups for eating and socializing according to generation and gender.³² A ritualized apportionment of meat corresponds to gender and generation. A common verbal game is to argue over whether one should be greeted according to someone's generation or someone's chronological age. Because of the lack of total correspondence between generation and age a young person may demand a greeting of respect from an old man, whose father was equivalent in generation to the younger man.

The generation-set integrates clans within the ethnic group or the age-set cycle and also serves an integrative function on a regional scale. Ethnic groups across the entire region use the same generation-set names, while they base the particular ceremonies on the individual *ekyaro* or clan territory. The generation-set unites the larger region with one set of names and generations. Because people at approximately the same stage in life use the same generation names across the region one can travel and receive hospitality over a wide geographical area based on norms of relationship between generation-sets.³³ Age ceremonies were also once regionally coordinated. Elders say that both age- and generation-set ceremonies take place in succession, moving from east to west. After the Maasai and Sonjo perform their age-set ceremonies, the Ikoma follow, then the Ishenyi, the Nata, and the Ikizu. The generation-set ceremonies to maintain the health of the land take place after the age-set ceremonies but coordinated with them in the same year, assuring the success of the new age-set.³⁴

Generation-sets function differently in each ethnic group today and take on slightly different forms. In Nata and Ikizu the two generation-set cycles crosscut clans and lineages so that

³² Discussed for the Kuria by Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," pp. 30-31.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁴ Interviews with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 and Kirigiti Ng'orogita, Mbiso, 6 June 1995 (Nata *et al.*).

each cycle would be found in each clan. Here the generation-set functions as a unifying device between the clans. In Ngoreme and Ishenyi each clan territory or *ekyaro* has only one *rikora* and Ngoreme is divided territorially into Saai and Chuuma generation-set cycles. The age-cycle territory unifies a number of clans but corresponds to only one of the generation-set cycles. In this configuration one generation-set cycle unifies clans within the age-set cycle territory, rather than the ethnic territory.

Peoples in the Mara Region and throughout East Africa have used age-organization in countless ways and in countless forms. Rather than understanding them as a specifically defined institution we should see them as tools by which individuals accomplish the important tasks of society. Generation-sets survive only because they continue to perform important ritual functions that protect the people and the land.³⁵ Although Mara people, as well as anthropologists, enjoy a debate on the political or military functions of the *rikora*, studying the one function of ritual, which has survived as secret and vital information for maintaining prosperity, seems more important for the historian. By performing rituals to protect the health of the land, the generation-set inscribed on the ground a specific territory (*ekyaro*) and they expressed the identity of the people who lived within those boundaries.

Scholars writing on age- and generation-sets in East Africa have extensively investigated the political and military functions of age-organization and have paid little attention to their ritual role in relation to land and health.³⁶ Colonial administrators and early anthropologists established this precedent with their concern to identify local structures of political and military control in

³⁵ Baxter and Almagor, "Introduction," *Age, Generation and Time*, p. 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

areas where no chiefs existed.³⁷ The few academic writings on generation-sets in the Mara Region extend their analysis beyond the military and political function of age-organization, but fail to make the connection between generation-set ritual and a communal identity related to the land. Bischofberger, writing on the Zanaki, concluded that the generation-set had political, social and ritual functions, with the overall effect of integrating the kinship-based Zanaki.³⁸ Bischofberger mentions that the Zanaki generation-sets were responsible for rituals that would assure the well-being of the *ekyaro*, but could elaborate no further.³⁹ However, whether these scholars emphasize the political/military/ritual role or the more diffuse organization of daily social interaction, they do not situate age-organization in a specific relationship between land and people, critical to prosperity and the ongoing continuity of the generations.⁴⁰

Although the elders ultimately controlled the generation-set, the rituals of the generation-set in relation to the land created the social cohesion and identity necessary for political authority

³⁷Tanganyika government anthropologist, Hans Cory, wrote that the "supreme power" in Ikoma was the "warrior age-grade," that was "divided into three military units." After they retired from warriorhood, the elders constituted a "chama" under the leadership of a "mukina" who "managed the civil affairs of the respective military units only." Although Cory admitted to his lack of information on the political functioning of the "age-grade system in pre-European times" he assumed that it was "best adapted to meet military emergencies" and was thus now "obsolete." Hans Cory, "Report on the pre-European Tribal Organization in Musoma (South Mara District and ... Proposals for adaptation of the clan system to modern circumstances," 1945, CORY #173, EAF, UDSM.

³⁸Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, p. 100-101. Mustafa, "The Concept of Authority," pp. 55-83. Ruel saw generation-sets among the Kuria as "embodying a systematic pattern of relationships which serves to determine the status of any individual person *vis-a-vis* others." He preferred to see generation-sets as "social categories" rather than "corporate groups." Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," p. 17, 33. Here he refers mainly to the relational norms between generations: those in adjacent classes have a relationship of respect and deference while in alternate or the same class one of joking and intimacy.

³⁹Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, pp. 11-16.

⁴⁰This is due in large part to the reluctance of Mara peoples to talk about the nature of these secret rituals.

to function. Baxter and Almagor explain that age organization is always subordinate to the corporate authority of lineage or kinship-based organization, which controls property relations through older family heads. They posit that scholars have overemphasized the political/military function of age-organization. For these scholars, age- or generation-sets function as "agents of force" rather than "controllers of force," and act as "agents of force" only when community consensus occurs. Age-sets perform critical tasks but are not the source of authority. All age-organizations exist in coordination with other types of social organization. If elders controlled productive resources, including labor, in these societies then age organization was a powerful tool in their hands.⁴¹ To say that age-organization does not have political power is not to weaken its importance, nor should one conclude that age-organization must have had more political power in some pristine "tribal" past. The ritual function of generation-sets was a powerful political force on its own terms.

Scholars in this region have found it difficult to identify the ways in which Mara peoples used the principles of generation to express a ritual relationship to the land, in part, because of the secret nature of these rituals. Outsiders' knowledge of these rituals would endanger the health of the land and its people by opening it to malevolent intervention. In Nata, Ikoma and Isheryi I had difficulty learning anything about the *rikora* except that it existed. The details about the generation-set rituals are second only in secrecy to the eldership title secrets about which initiates swear an oath of silence. Elders usually answered my questions about generation-set ritual with vague and generalized descriptions of the generation-set walk as analogous to the solidarity walks of today. Similarly, Zanaki elders told Bischofberger that the Zanaki *rikora* in power would "walk around" to keep in shape and strengthen the solidarity of the group. Each cycle would do

⁴¹ Baxter and Almagor, "Introduction," *Age, Generation and Time*, pp. 10-19.

this walk separately, wearing traditional skins, carrying sticks and stopping to eat at generation-set members' houses.⁴² Secrets are another way of putting the discourse on territory and identity into an unquestioned category of "tradition" and removed from public debate. The elders who control these secrets assert authority over the definition of territory and a place-oriented identity.

The Rituals of Healing the Land and the Retirement Ceremony

The main task of the generation-set ritual is to maintain the health of the land. I describe these rituals in the "ethnographic present" because that is the way elders told them to me. Most elders whose accounts appear here participated in these rituals, some as leaders. Yet they did not describe the particular "walk" that they observed. Rather, they gave me a general account of a "traditional" walk formed from their own experience and the stories they heard of other walks. This was a deliberate narrative strategy to place these stories in the middle time frame of social process and outside the flow of historical events. Connerton argues that in order for these "commemorative ceremonies" to reenact the past they must move into "ritual time" where an event is indefinitely repeatable.⁴³ Elders enhance the authority of the ritual by portraying their own contingent experience of the ritual as a timeless pattern. I describe these rituals with commentary to point out what I believe to be the meaning behind these rituals in their historical context.

The practice of this ritual among the seven ethnic groups from whom I have accounts varies extraordinarily around several central themes. Ideally, every eight years in Nata and Ikoma, the men who are in the "ruling generation" of the two cycles, Chuuma and Saai, alternately walk around the boundaries of the land, *kukerera*. The walk takes place together with the age-set ceremonies as a way of preparing for their "rule." In Ikizu and Zanaki, where no cycling age-sets

⁴² Bischofberger, *The Generation Classes*, pp. 65-67.

⁴³ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 66.

exist, the walk is part of the retirement ceremony of the generation-set every 20-30 years.⁴⁴ In Ishenyi and Ngoreme the walk takes place in symbolic terms, around a tree or at a feast. Yet in each case the bodily practice of the walk physically inscribes the boundaries of social identity in space. The appropriation of territory through ritual control over the land secures the health of the land and the people. The ritual creation of enclosed space defines a territory and the identity of those who live there as one people.⁴⁵

The walk in all its variation focuses on passing the *orokoba* or the medicine of protection around the land. The leaders of the generation-set literally plant medicine bundles in the soil at intervals around the land or in the bark of certain trees that they slash. This medicine protects the land from enemies and disease and ensures its fertility. Either a prophet, sometimes from a distant land, prepares this medicine or the generation-set itself keeps and passes on the medicines. In either case the job of the *rikora* (generation-set) is to walk around the land and encircle it with protective medicines. The walk also preserves the peace of the land, it "cools the land," and makes it productive. The "coolness" of the land assures the health and well-being of the people. The generation-set achieves this goal by different methods in each of the ethnic groups but the basic principles remain the same--the ritual acts of binding and enclosing ensure safety and health. The word *kukerera* is likely a prepositional form of a proto-Great Lakes Bantu word (*kukila*) meaning "to overcome, surpass, heal, unify." The prepositional form implies an object, in this case, the land and all that it stands for.⁴⁶ I describe the rituals of each ethnic group, as elders narrated them to

⁴⁴ Interview with Kirigiti Ng'orogita, Mbiso, 8 June 1995 (Nata o'). For the Zanaki, Benjamin Mkirya, *Historia, Mita na Desturi za Wazanaki* (Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda, 1991), p. 33.

⁴⁵ See Robert J. Thornton, *Space, Time, and Culture among the Iraqw of Tanzania* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), p. 19.

⁴⁶ David L. Schoenbrun, personal communication.

me. I emphasize those aspects of the rituals of each ethnic group that demonstrate how these rituals function to create territorial identity and group cohesion under the authority of the elders.

In these narratives the ritual unifies diverse clans into one ethnic or age-set territory, *ekyaro*. In previous chapters I showed that clan territories, known in the past as the *ebiyaro*, were the largest functional unit before the disasters of the late nineteenth century. One can imagine that western Serengeti people might have used these same rituals in the pre-disaster era to unite diverse lineages, or people of diverse origins, into one *ekyaro*.

Ikizu: Uniting Clans Lands Under the Communal Authority of the Elders

The ritual walk in Ikizu unites the various clan lands that make up Ikizu by asserting the communal authority of the generation-set elders. The Ikizu walk begins at a point in the westernmost part of the land and moves east, each night the *abanyikora* (new generation-set members) feast and sleep at a different clan center, hosted in a wealthy man's homestead. On the third day they pause at the tree called Sarama mo Mogongo and send a small delegation to the *mtemi* rainmaker's house to get the medicines of rain (*omoshana*) [See Figure 8-1: Sites of the Ikizu Walk, for a photo of the Sarama mo Mogongo tree and the present *mtemi* at Nyakinywa's cave]. The *mtemi*, as a descendant of first woman who brought rain, sends his delegate to oversee the rain medicine but does not participate in the walk. The Ikizu prophet (*omunase*), as a descendant of first man who made fire, provides the medicine of protection and the medicine for the new fire. The whole group arrives for the ceremonial climax near Chamuriho Mountain in the easternmost part of Ikizu, where Muriho first claimed the land by planting the spirits of his ancestors, *emisambwa*.

The ceremonies at Chamuriho Mountain feature the *ekimweso* or the sanctification ceremony of the fire to pass on authority from one generation to another. The older generation retires and the new generation builds a new fire, with the medicines of the prophet, after all Ikizu



Mtemi Adamu Matutu, Gaka, 31 August 1995, at the cave of Nyakinywa



Kinanda Sigara, Kihiri Mbuso and son, Sarama, 20 July 1995, standing at the tree of Sarama mo Mogondo

Figure 8-1: Sites of the Ikizu Walk

extinguish their homestead fires. The elders sacrifice a white goat and cut its hide into strips that the new generation-set wear on their middle fingers smeared with butter.⁴⁷ When the ceremonies finish, the new generation-set that has just taken power retraces their steps back east to complete the circle. They spread the medicines for healing and rain and distributing the new fire to all the homesteads as they go. This act renewed the peace of the land.

Although the Ikizu walk holds many elements in common with rituals around the region, in Ikizu the walk takes on a particularly salient political meaning. The elders use the walk at once to assert the unity of clan lands and to claim their own communal authority over the rainmaker and the prophet. The walk evokes the emergence story to legitimize the authority of the elders as the representatives of Muriho (who first established possession of the land) over first woman Nyakinywa (the rainmaker chief) and first man Isamongo (the prophet). The elders spatially represent their interpretation of the political make-up of Ikizu through the walk. The generation-set pauses in each of the clan lands of Ikizu. The walk does not even approach the seat of the *utemi* in Kihumbu, except to obtain the rain medicine. The *rikora* (generation-set) takes responsibility for healing the land rather than the "chief." The prophet, too, provides the protection and fire medicines but does not participate in the ceremony. The walk of the *rikora* embodies all these issues of contested forms of authority in Ikizu. Through this ritual, the elders reassert their control over potentially powerful sources of authority in the prophet and the rainmaker. The generation-set is their tool, protected by its association with timeless "tradition" and the high stakes of ensuring health and fertility.

⁴⁷ Interview with Ikota Mwisagija and Kiyarata Mzumari, Kihumbo, 5 July 1995 (Ikizu *o'*); Mturi, "Historia ya Ikizu na Sizaki."

Ishenyi: Variation on the Theme of Territorial Unity

Ishenyi elders testify that here the walk of the *rikora* consists only of a symbolic walk around a certain tree (*msingisi* or *msari*)⁴⁸ to prepare for the initiation of a new age-set into power. The clans (*hamate*) of Ishenyi are divided into two moieties, with each moiety representing one generation-set cycle, either Saai or Chuuma, who carry out the ritual separately. By contrast, in Nata, Ikoma and Ikizu each clan claims members of both *rikora* cycles. In Ishenyi the *rikora* did not crosscut and unify the clans. However, it did unify the age-set territories that developed by the end of the nineteenth century to replace clan territories. Age-set territories contained many clans in both generation-set cycles, each time the generation-set would walk it covered the entire age-set territory.⁴⁹

The Ishenyi ritual holds many elements in common with generation-set ritual across the region. The ceremony to install the new age-set takes place at the homes of the newly chosen leaders, lasting for eight days of feasting, singing and dancing. As in Ikizu, the new age-set cuts strips of hide from the ritually slaughtered animal and wears them on their fingers (*ebeshona*). Generation-set elders bless all the people in the ceremony, who then extinguish all of the homestead fires in the *ekyaro* and light them from the new ceremonial fire started by twirling a stick in a board (just as first man lit a fire). The generation-set encircles the land with the medicines of protection or rain according to need. The age-set obtain rain medicines (*amusera*) from the rainmaker that they mix with milk and flour. The age-set leaders spread the medicines with a cow's

⁴⁸ Interview with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). Each particular kind of tree used in rituals has a symbolic significance.

⁴⁹ Main interviews on the Ishenyi *kerera* were: Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Ihara, 26 August 1995; Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995; Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995; and Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

tail as one leader moves east and another west around the boundaries of the *akvaro*.⁵⁹ [See Figure 8-2: *Rikora* Leaders.]

Nata: Generational Growth through the Mediation of Outside Forces

In Nata the age-set ritual, has taken over much of the work of the generation-set. The ritual symbolizes the generational principles of fertility and growth and occurs regularly every eight years. When it is time for these ceremonies to take place, the elders chose the leaders (*abachama*) of the new age- or generation-set and send these youths on various errands. The youths go outside Nata, north, south, east and west, to collect the ritual ingredients that the elders mix together and sprinkle as a blessing on the new age-set. These ingredients include water from Lake Victoria, honey from Riyara, excrement of an unweaned child, livestock manure, and millet or other grains. They also choose a young unblemished black bull for sacrifice. Finally, the new age-set builds a ritual fence around the homestead of their leader where the ceremony will take place.

At the culmination of the ceremony the head of the homestead (the father of the new age-set leader) takes a black cow or wildebeest tail, *eghise*, as the symbol of his elderhood, and sprinkles a mixture of the ingredients brought from outside, along with the stomach contents of the slaughtered bull, on the new set as they stand in a circle with their wives, rubbing it on the breasts of the women. Since the new age-set entered their age-set, *saiga*, eight years after circumcision they were often married with children. As the ritual father sprinkles he prays that the youth might 'have children, abundant livestock, good harvests and rain' during the "rule" of their *saiga*.

⁵⁹ Interview with Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). Two children who wet their beds accompanied the two leaders and actually did the work of spreading the medicine.



Mwita Maro, leader of the Maiba Generation, Bumare, with the horn of the *Rikora*, Majimoto, 29 September 1995



Ruggoyonga Nyamobega, Isheryi generation-set leader, (Ekireri), Mugeta, 27 October 1995

Figure 8-2: *Rikora* Leaders

This ritual unifies the clans of Nata—with one clan moiety represented at the ceremony by the symbol of a bell on the neck of a young black bull and the other by an old heart-shaped trade hoe from the Sukuma Rongo clan. The bell and the hoe are symbols of productivity that the elders pass on to the next generation. The elders cut the hide of the sacrificed bull into strips that the eight (*aba*)*chama* leaders wear on the middle finger. At the ceremony the two leaders, one from each clan moiety, stand together on another hide, with the longest strip of the slaughtered bull hide stretched between them. An elder cuts the strip in half and declares them blood-brothers, *baragumu*. After feasting and dancing all night, they move on the next morning to feast at the homestead of the other clan moiety leader.⁵¹

Although the above paragraphs describe a Nata age-set ceremony, the important exchanges embodied in it are generational. The fathers (rather than the retiring age-set) choose the new leaders, perform the blessing, cut the hide strip between the leaders, and pass on the clan symbols. In fact, the retiring age-set has no part in this ceremony and no ritual marks their passing. In the restructured Nata age-set system of the nineteenth century each age-set cycle lived in a different territory, which meant that they hand over authority to a group physically removed from themselves. Elders describe the relationship between adjacent age-sets as one of animosity. A mock battle of sticks takes place well before the ceremony so that the new age-set "drives out" the old.⁵² Conflict must not enter the rituals themselves. Furthermore, although elders characterized the age-set as the defense against cattle raids, all of the age-set ceremony symbols concern peace,

⁵¹ The most important interviews for information on Nata *saiga* ritual were: Mang'oha Machunchuriani (Mwekundu, elders who make preparations for the Saiga ceremony), Mbiso, 24 March 1995; Sochoro Kabati (*Kang'ati* of the Gikwe for the Bongirate *Saiga*), Nyichoka, 2 June 1995; Kirigiti Ng'orogita (*Rikora Mchama*), Mbiso, 8 June 1995; Mang'oha Morigo (*Kang'ati* of the Morihio for the Bongirate *Saiga*), Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata σ).

⁵² This is also the case with Tatoga generation-sets.

productivity of land and people and prosperity. The ritual blessing of both women and men alike also suggests that the concern is primarily with fertility and not war. In short, the age-set ceremonies seem to have coopted the symbolic content of the generation-set, leaving it with responsibility for the walk, *kukerera*, alone. Nata elders said that the *rikora*, or generation-set, is "bigger" or "senior" to the age-set, with authority over the land that was fundamental to everyone's well-being. They claimed that the *saiga* or age-set "ruled" the land but also portrayed it as a "game" of youth.⁵³

The spatial symbols of the ritual represent the mediation of external forces to protect the internal community. Youths leave Nata territory to collect the symbols of prosperity outside the community, and they return with these things, bringing them inside the ritual homestead fence. Just as first man came from the wilderness and civilized the home by bringing fire, the symbolic reenactment of this movement assures prosperity. The Nata generation-set walk, *kukerera*, also involves collecting things from many places outside Nata used to make the medicine for the land. Elders said that these things brought health to the people, fertility, wealth in livestock and abundant harvest of crops.

The Nata generation-set walk itself is a communal ritual that requires the participation of all for the medicine to work. The institution of the generation-set emphasizes the equality of all those within one generation and the authority of the elders. Everyone walks with the generation-set all around Nata. In the colonial days the walk concluded at the chief's house to feast on the last day. Elders considered it an honor, and also a huge expense, to entertain the *rikora* during the walk. The host provided meat from his own herd and made enough beer for everyone.⁵⁴ The

⁵³ Interview with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁵⁴ Interview with Mang'oha Machunchuriani, Mbiso, 24 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

community held "big men" accountable by requiring them to "feed" the people in return for their respect and support. In Nata during the last walk one man refused to have the *rikora* come to his house and his generation subsequently cursed him.

Ikoma: Appropriating Tatoga Spirits to Protect the Land

The Ikoma use the Machaba tusks, as their *erisambwa* obtained from a Tatoga prophet, in the generation-set rituals to unify the territory. The Tatoga prophet of the lineage of Gambareku, of the Relimajega clan carries the Machaba at the head of the walk. He makes the medicine, the *orokoba* of the Machaba, that the age-set plants around the land, and serves as an Ikoma age-set leader.⁵⁵ The Ishenyi also use the Tatoga in their age- and generation-set ceremonies. A Tatoga prophet of the rainmaking clan of Gaoga serves as the top leader of the age-set, fully functional in the most intimate of Ishenyi ritual matters. This prophet also provides the medicines for rain and to bless the new-year's seeds.⁵⁶ The Ishenyi reliance on the Tatoga is a result of having killed their own prophet, Shanyangi, at Nyeberekera. Both Ishenyi and Ikoma acknowledge the first-comer status of the Tatoga in their rituals to appease the land.

The Ikoma ritual also spatially symbolizes the unity of the clans into one land. The Ng'orisa clan, which controls the male tusk, begins the walk where the tusk is kept in the west and the Rogoro clan begins at the place where the female tusk is kept in the east. They circle the land and meet in the center, each going through the homesteads of the members of their clans. Each

⁵⁵ Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂). The last time the Machaba appeared in Ikoma ritual was in 1994.

⁵⁶ Interview with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Marisha Gishageta, Issenye, 28 March 1996 (Tatoga ♂).

night they feast, dance and sleep at a different and chosen compound in the different clan settlements.⁵⁷

Ngoreme: Generational Passing and the Authority of Elders

The Ngoreme generation-set rituals emphasize the generational authority of elders. Here no *rikora* walk exists but the generation-set still functions in the protection of the land. Each *rikora* carries out its function within a particular *ekyaro*—defined here as clan territory, local community or the territory of an age-set cycle. When the sons of most of the *rikora* mature (having their own wives, children and homestead) it is time for the generation in power to retire. These men have already completed the eldership ceremonies and carry the black tail as a symbol of their eldership. They decide together that it is time to retire and then at another communal ceremony of the *ekyaro* they pass on the symbols of their office.

The public symbol of this transfer of generational authority is the spatial arrangement of generations at a public feast and the division of meat, as is common across the region. When the elders are ready to retire, they allow the young men to eat the meat of the back, *omugongo*, at communal gatherings. At any feast people sit in groups according to generation and gender and eat the appropriate kind of meat. The oldest retired men sit separately by the grain storage bins and eat the softest parts of the cow like the lungs (*sarara*). The ruling elders sit inside the cattle corral and eat the back meat (*omugongo*) and the head. The young men in their *esega* or age-set status sit together outside the cattle corral and eat the chest meat, legs or the hump (*sukubi*).⁵⁸ The spatial position of the elders inside the cattle corral and their possession of the best cut of meat is a sign of their dominant authority in generational affairs. They are the "back" of society, leaving the youth

⁵⁷ Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂). The Ikoma were some of the most reluctant to talk about the *rikora* and keep secret much of this information.

⁵⁸ Interview with Mwita Maro, Maji Moto, 29 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

to do the physical work. The young men most poignantly sit expectantly outside the corral. The oldest men become like women as they sit at the granaries, where young women undergo circumcision. They also eat some softer internal organs that are the portion of women, corresponding to her inside and enclosed space. A common method of putting a young man in his place is for an elder to ask if he has 'tasted the back meat' yet.

Elders mark the passing of generational authority by the exchange of several objects. At retirement the Ngoreme elders give the new generation the horn that calls the *rikora* together for a meeting or sounds the alarm in times of danger. Each clan (*hamate*) has its own horn of the *rikora*. [See Figure 8-2: *Rikora* Leaders] They make this instrument from the long horn of the oryx or greater kudu with special medicines embedded in the strips of buffalo and lion hide wrapped around the horn. Each time the generation-set passes on the horn they slaughter a bull and use the hide to renew these wrappings. The tight binding of medicines with hide strips employs the same symbolic logic as the encircling of the land with medicines of protection or the wrapping of medicine bundles of protection for war. The retiring generation-set passes on the horn to the ritual care of the first son born to their members, the *omotangi*.⁵⁹ Ritual horns are common symbols of generational authority throughout the region.⁶⁰

The last thing that the retiring generation passes on in Ngoreme, at least among the Saai of Bumare, is the generation-set medicines called the *omugongo wa mwensi*, or the protection medicine of the generation. The *omotangi*, or the firstborn of the generation, receives this along

⁵⁹ The most important Ngoreme interviews on these rituals were, Nsaho Maro, Kenya, 14 September 1995; Mwitā Maro, Maji Moto, 29 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂) who kept the horn for the Iregi of Bumare and was the aba Maina *mtangi*, having obtained the horn in 1957 he was well overdue to pass it on to the abaSaai.

⁶⁰ Each Ishenyi clan also had a horn (*enchobe*) which was passed on as the older generation retired. Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

with the horn. Elders consider this medicine more powerful than the medicine of the horn and in Bumare the last group of retiring elders refused to pass on these medicines. I assume that the Ngoreme *rikora* uses this medicine to protect the land. In this variation the *rikora* itself passes on the secret medicine, rather than going to a prophet to obtain it.⁶¹

Kuria, Zanaki and Tatoga: Recurrent Symbols of Generational Growth

Generation-set rituals draw on a common set of symbols recognized throughout the Mara Region, beyond what I have defined as the western Serengeti and beyond East Nyanza Bantu-speakers. The Kuria, Zanaki and Tatoga also practice generation-set rituals using the same symbols. Kuria generation ceremonies resemble Ngoreme ones because they both commemorate and normalize rather than confer or effect a collective change in the status of its members. When the younger generation is ready to establish their own homesteads separately from their fathers, their fathers perform a ceremony called "going to the enclosure" in which they build a symbolic homestead and ritually bless their sons and their sons' cattle and wives. At the end of the eight-day ceremony, each homestead lights a ritual fire. "Sons" could not take individual eldership titles until their "fathers" promoted the entire generation. The generation only acts as a defined social group with its own corporate identity in a ritual context. The southern Kuria territories perform a similar *egekereero* or "retirement" ceremony in which a tree, usually a fig species (*makereero*), is identified with the retiring generation. Elders do not allow the presence of a stranger in the *ekyaro* during this ceremony.⁶² The recurrent symbols of regeneration and growth appear in the tree, the symbolic homestead, the blessing of cows and wives, and the passing on of things from father to

⁶¹ Paulo Maitari Nyigana and Ibrahim Mutatiro Kemuhe, Maji Moto, 29 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

⁶² Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," p. 21-28.

son. Both closing the *ekyaro* boundaries to strangers and enclosing the symbolic homestead with a fence defines a territorial identity.

The Zanaki generation-set retirement ceremony takes place every twenty or more years in each *ekyaro* or clan territory at the *emisambwa* sites of sacred groves or large rocks. There the retiring generation forms a circle, with the new generation behind them. They take off the skins that they wear around their waists and tie them over their shoulders as retired elders normally dress. Their last act is to cut another opening in the symbolic homestead fence for the youth. The retiring elders give the new generation secret medicines (*emigongo*), including a horn (*ekombyo*). The Zanaki generation-set in power also perform a ritual if the land is in an unhealthy state (*okutura ekiaro*). The elders bless the gathered people with a mixture of a sacrificial goat's stomach contents, millet, and water. Each homestead extinguishes their fires and the generation-set lights a new fire by twirling a stick from the *mirama* tree on a piece of ivory and distributes it to each homestead. Then they pass the *orokoba* protection medicines around the land.⁶³

Finally, the Tatoga practice of linear generation-sets, called *saigeida*, share many ritual symbols with their neighbors. When the new *saigeida* comes into power, they build a large bonfire over which the new initiates must walk. Elders said that one Tatoga prophet, Gishageta, used spit and a "cowhide rope" in his prophecy. He embedded his medicines in certain kinds of trees to ensure, fertility, prosperity, rain and protection. Another Tatoga rainmaker killed a black sheep and gave everyone the strips of skin to wear on the middle finger of their right hand. The Relimajega clan controlled protection medicine against the Maasai. An Isimajek informant said that

⁶³ Mkirya, *Historia, Mjila na Desturi*, pp. 39-43, 59-62. Interview with Zabron Kisubundo Nyamamera, Bisarye, 9 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂).

during the circumcision ceremonies they put strips of hide on their fingers.⁶⁴ All these are examples of a shared symbolic world of ritual between farmers and herders. Neither seems to be "imitating" the other, rather through generations of living side by side they have developed a common ritual language, each adopted to a specific lifestyle and historical circumstances.

Interpreting the Walk

Because the rituals of the *rikora* seem to be based on very old generational principles in relation to the land, rather than introduced after the period of disasters, we can then interpret the core spatial images of bodily practice as they might have applied to the historical context of the nineteenth century, before the disasters. Connerton argues that the rituals of "commemorative ceremonies" are relatively invariable over time. Similarly, Maurice Bloch in his analysis of circumcision ritual among the Imerina of Madagascar shows that little change has taken place in the internal content of this ritual over a period of two hundred years, yet the "functional" role of this ritual changed often over that time.⁶⁵ The three previous chapters have reconstructed a picture of economic subsistence, homestead, settlement and territorial patterns as they might have existed in the nineteenth century. I analyze the symbolic content of the rituals to illustrate how communities might have used these rituals (which we know to be old) in the nineteenth century to form a communal territorial identity in relation to the land.

⁶⁴ Interview with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Marisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995 (Tatoga *o'*). Marunde Godi, Juana Masanja, Mayera Magondora, Manawa, 24 February 1996 (Isimajoga *o'*).

⁶⁵ Bloch, From Blessing to Violence. See also Feerman's analysis of the concepts of "healing the land" and "harming the land" reinterpreted in changing historical contexts of Shambaa in Tanzania. Feerman, Peasant Intellectuals.

The Space of the Walk: The *Ekyaro*

The space of the walk is coterminous with the *ekyaro* or the "land," which defines the imagined community, embodied in the act of *kukerera*. The *ekyaro* is not a fixed unit. In ordinary speech the *ekyaro* refers to anything from the local community to the nation state. Whereas in Ikizu the space of the walk corresponds to the united clan territories, in Ishenyi elders define the *ekyaro* as the age-set territory that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ngoreme, Kuria and Zanaki all define the old *ekyaro* as the autonomous units of clan territory.⁶⁶ The generation-set of each *ekyaro* performs their rituals separately. The smaller ethnic groups of Nata and Ikoma today define *ekyaro* as the entire ethnic territory. They also call the age-set territories *ekyaro*. In effect people define the *ekyaro* situationally as the land over which they have control by a ritual definition of its boundaries. The heart of the concept is the relationship between people and land rather than a fixed unit. Yet, I interpret the *ekyaro* as a "territory" because it was defined as an enclosed and bounded area of land.

The space of the *rikora* walk changed according to the shifting definitions of group boundaries. Ikizu was one of the few ethnic groups in the Mara Region with an emerging institution of chiefship when the Germans arrived. The *utemi* rainmaker "chief" united the heterogeneous clans and lineages into one land, *ekyaro*. Before the *utemi* each clan territory might have performed their own generation-set ceremonies. However, in these rituals the generation-set asserts its authority over the *utemi* to represent a united Ikizu. In Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata where the generation-set now walks over the *ekyaro* of the ethnic group, a change in the definition of *ekyaro* occurred, from clan land to age-set cycle land to ethnic group land.

⁶⁶ Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," p. 15. Ruel estimated that the Kuria *ekyaro* of the past consisted of between 3,000 and 10,000 people, which is about the size of all of Nata or Ikoma or Ishenyi today.

If we accept the evidence presented in Chapters 6 and 7 concerning clan territories and lineage settlements, then the *ekyaro* defined by the generation-set in the nineteenth century before the disasters was the clan territory of loosely affiliated lineage settlements within one group of hills and separated from each other by empty wilderness bush area. Within a context of settlement mobility and scarcity of people rather than land, each *ekyaro* would be competing to attract newcomers to open more land. Wealthy men could provide security and extensive regional clan networks with access to a variety of resources that would ensure prosperity. The mechanisms for incorporating strangers as native born were also well in place. The problem that remained was how to unite these diverse peoples into a territorial unit with a sense of communal identity. Western Serengeti peoples used the generation-set to overcome the divisions inherent in lineage-based settlement structures to form territories.

The generation-set walk functioned to unify the *ekyaro*. Nata elders, while reticent about the details of the generation-set walk, emphasized it as a ritual for all of Nata--"it brings Nata together." Bischofberger states that the Zanaki generation-sets integrated the autonomous clans. Although Ikizu was also divided into smaller territorial *ekyaro* of the clans, the generation-set walk symbolically brought together all of Ikizu in the space of the walk. Nata elders said that the *saiga*, or age-set, divided, while the *rikora* unified. The main work of the *rikora* was to bring together the clans and the age-sets.⁶⁷ Ruel states that Kuria generation-set designations in a communal setting emphasize solidarity and responsibility to the larger group rather than division and divergent interests.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Interviews with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995; Kirigiti Ng'orogita, Mbiso, 8 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁶⁸ Ruel, "Generation Classes," p. 33.

The walk identified the *rikora* itself with the *ekyaro* or the land. A Nata elder said that *rikora* leaders could not move outside Nata.⁶⁹ Some elders described the walk encircling the boundaries of the *ekyaro*, while others said that it passed through the homesteads. This may have varied from place to place and according to the advice of the prophet who prepared the protection medicine. Ngoreme call the ceremony for the new Ngoreme age-set *kwitaberi asega*. *Kwitaberi* is derived from the verb *-itaberi*, "to bless the land." This term explicitly connects the initiation of a new age-set (*asega*) with the prosperity of the land.⁷⁰ The *ekyaro*, the land, defined the identity of a people. When I asked elders what the ethnic group names meant, most said that they referred to a place.⁷¹ They could not abstract group identity from its grounded context in the land.

The walk of the generation-set formed and was formed by communal consensus. The ritual health of the land was dependent upon this consensus. To carry out this large-scale ritual, the elders mobilized the whole community and each did their part--prophets and rainmakers provided medicines, wealthy men provided food, women prepared food and beer, elders and youth cooperated in the preparations and the huge investment of time and energy in the process. The walk itself was symptomatic of the state of relationships in the community and thus the health or "coolness" of the community.

The Symbols of the Walk: the *Orokoba* and the Fire

The symbols of the walk, the *orokoba* and the fire, are central to the core spatial imagery that defines *ekyaro* or territorial identity. The images of encircling to form protective boundaries, binding up exterior forces to control their power, and covering the land with the smoke of

⁶⁹ Interview with Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995 (Nata *o*).

⁷⁰ Interview with Nsaho Maro, Kenyana, 14 September 1995 (Ngoreme *o*).

⁷¹ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata *o*).

purification all indicate how people have understood the forces necessary for the health of the land and its people. The spatial images of enclosure and boundaries are different from those of gendered homestead spaces, interstitial ecological niches, clan pathways, or nodes in a network of relationships because they represent different kinds of social identity. The territorial identity of enclosure creates a sense of cohesiveness for a diverse and mobile population living together on the same land.

The term, *orokoba*, used for the medicine that the *rikora* passes around the land, is a symbolically charged word evoking the spatial images of enclosure, binding and interiority. An *orokoba* means literally a cowhide thong or rope but its meaning is multivalent and contextual. People use the leather thong for tying a cow to milk and so associate it with productive labor. The rope is made from hide and thus suggests the hide as the exterior cover, boundary or enclosure of the animal. That the hide thong is used to tie things up connects it to medicines for neutralizing malevolent power.

Elders also used the term *orokoba* to refer to the strips of hide from the sacrificed animals that the generation-set members wear on their fingers during the ceremony. This symbol of unity and solidarity is widespread in East Africa, not respective of language group or culture. The boundary ceremony of the Iraqw reported by Thornton makes extensive use of strips of hide in this manner.⁷² In the western Serengeti, one kind of blood-brotherhood is formed having each partner hold the end of an *orokoba* between them that is ritually cut by an elder. They are then true brothers in that they cannot steal from each other, sleep with the other's wife, or form marriages between their children. As described above, the leaders of the Nata age-set representative of each clan moiety perform this ceremony.

⁷² Thornton, *Space, Time, and Culture*, pp. 88-97.

In Nata *orokoba* also means the matrilineage, your mother's kin, and seems to be symbolically compared with the unbroken line (rope) of inheritance through the mother's side. The Ngoreme dictionary defines *orokoba* as "the umbilical cord."⁷³ Local understandings of conception give precedence to genetic inheritance through the mother. When elders consider a potential marriage partner, they investigate his or her mother's side for inheritable disease, mental illness or character flaws. People describe the closest kind of relationship between people as that of "one womb." Men contribute to the growth of the fetus by "feeding it" through intercourse, rather than, primarily, by supplying its substance. Men become fathers by the exchange of bridewealth rather than by a biological function.⁷⁴ In the rare and drastic case where brothers of one womb disagree and can no longer be reconciled, lineage elders perform a ritual in which they pass an *orokoba* through the wall of the maternal house, each brother holding one end of it. The thong is cut in half. The house, *anyumba*, now divides them rather than unites them as "children of one womb."⁷⁵

The *rikora* was not the only group to use *orokoba* medicine. Certain lineages possessed an *orokoba* in the form of an *ekitana* or a medicine bundle for protecting homesteads from theft or illness or to protect young men when they went after cattle thieves.⁷⁶ The medicine was always

⁷³ Maryknoll Fathers, Iramba Parish, Ngoreme-English Dictionary, n.d.

⁷⁴ For the importance and interpretation of folk models of procreation see, Poewe, *Matrilinal Ideology*, pp. 4-7; and Anita Jacobson-Widding, ed., *The Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1990).

⁷⁵ Interview with Nyawagamba Magoto, Musoma, 25 November 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁷⁶ *Ekitana* from the root *-tana*, "to overcome, wear out, bewilder," the noun form perhaps meaning "medicine providing protection from violence." David L. Schoenbrun, personal communication.

protective rather than destructive. An individual homestead or an entire village hired the owner of the *ekitana* to come and pass the *orokoba* for protection against witchcraft, cattle theft or disease.

When elders spoke of the medicine that the *rikora* passes around the land for its protection and healing as *orokoba* they evoked these other related meanings. They passed the *orokoba* around and encircled the land—containing it as the womb contains those linked by one maternal *orokoba*. Just as the hide of the goat, it marks the exterior boundary. Another word for clan lands (*ekyaro*) in Nata is *orokoba*.⁷⁷ The meaning here seems to be the land around which the *orokoba* was passed, the *ekyaro*. It referred not to the lands farmed or "owned" by the clan, but to the land over which the clan had ritual control by means of the *orokoba*. In all of the rituals described above the image of encircling and containing was repeatedly used (passing of rain and protection medicines on the boundaries of the land, strips of hide, fence enclosures, the medicines wrapped around the horn, the walk of encirclement).

The power of the *orokoba* is in binding, surrounding or encircling. Brad Weiss discusses the use of protection medicines in Haya which bind (*okuzinga* in Haya). Wedding ceremonies, new houses, as well as death itself must undergo "binding rites" to ensure protection and peace.⁷⁸ Schoenbrun describes old Lakes Bantu ideas about medicines that bind up malevolent power to control it, evident in the common practice of the tight binding of various substances together in medicine bundles and charms. In many Bantu languages heat is associated with witchcraft while coolness is associated with peace and prosperity. Yet the control of heat through binding is also necessary to activate medicines of healing. The Nata word used to describe people or land that is whole and healthy is *buhoro* that comes from the Lake Bantu root word *-podo*, meaning quietness,

⁷⁷ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Cultural Vocabulary list, Mbiso and Bugerera, 1995-1996 (Nata ♂).

⁷⁸ Weiss, *The Making and Unmaking*, p. 39.

cold water, and good health.⁷⁹ The *orokoba* works to "cool the land" by tying up the powers of disorder. Thus the *orokoba* evokes both the idea of the containment of the womb or the homestead and the rope that ties up potential danger. Dangerous forces are neutralized by tying up their symbolic representations in medicine bundles or horns. The power of the wilderness or outside forces is civilized by bringing them inside. The control and containment, rather than the isolation, of outside forces make the land and its people productive.

However, an encirclement or enclosure without an opening is associated with death. The prosperity of the homestead depends on its gateway that leads to the outside. The term for the extinction of a lineage group in Kuria is to be "stopped up" or "blocked off." Elders perform the ritual "piercing" or opening of a cow's stomach and sprinkling the stomach contents as the central act in any ceremonial sacrifice. All western Serengeti peoples pierce and elongate the holes in their ears, which is also the mark of an adult. Ruel reports that the Kuria derisively call an adult without pierced ears "a shut in" or "a blocked thing." Things that are completely closed in are potentially dangerous (an unpierced gourd, a calf born with skin covering its openings). Circumcision itself is an act of opening or cutting. The community must be enclosed for protection but dies without linkages to the outside, for wives, dependents and security. A healthy community mediates the dangers of outside forces by controlling its boundaries.⁸⁰

The spatial metaphor of outside/inside is operational in all these rituals by using the stomach contents of the slaughtered animal (inside), the hide strips placed on everyone's fingers (outside), the building of ceremonial homesteads (inside) and fences (outside). Weiss connects the

⁷⁹ Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #335 and in personal communication.

⁸⁰ Malcom Ruel, "Piercing," June 1958, Makerere Institute of Social Research. Conference Papers (1954-1958). For an in depth analysis of "blockage and flow" in Rwanda see, Christopher C. Taylor, *Milk, Honey and Money: Changing Concepts in Rwandan Healing* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), pp. 11-12.

ideas of binding and interiority to the physical space of the house. Interiority is used to define close social relations—people of one house or one womb. The construction of the house itself serves as a metaphor for "binding" as the circular rings on the roof are bound around the house.⁴¹ Ritual inscribes boundaries and identity on the land as well as on people's bodies.

The images of fire to purify and cover with smoke, too, have rich and multivalent meaning in ritual. Fire was the civilizing gift of first man, but brought from the outside. The fire or the hearth is what constitutes the moral center of a house. Lighting a fire established a household in its own right.⁴² People fear the purifying, transforming fire of the blacksmith and compare the smithy with the womb of the woman. Elders build a fire to see if the time is auspicious for any act, if the smoke goes straight up, success will follow. When the new Nata *saiga* goes to Riyara to gather honey for their ceremony they first build a fire to see if the time is right.⁴³

Elders use fire ritually in many contexts, apart from the generation-set fire, for purification and blessing. Ishenyi elders light the ritual fire, *ikoroso*, for a single clan (*hamate*) or a single homestead when confronted with the problems of death, sickness or infertility.⁴⁴ The prophet instructs the elders to make the *ikoroso* fire in the wilderness from certain kinds of trees found there and to add the prescribed medicines. Elders said that the smoke from the fire "covered" the

⁴¹ Weiss, *The Making and Unmaking*, p. 47.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31, 51-52, describes the Haya ceremony for blessing a new house which involves lighting the fire for the first time by the father or a senior agnate. These fires too have medicines to protect the house made from specific trees.

⁴³ Interview with Makuru Nyang'aka, Sochoro Kabati, and Barichera Machage Barichera, Riyara, 7 March 1996 (Nata ♂).

⁴⁴ Interviews with Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995; Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

whole land for its purification.⁸⁵ *Rikora* leaders perform the *ekimweso* fire ceremony in Ishenyi to bless the land (*ekyaro*) as a whole. Ikoma call this ritual the *shishiga* and perform it when prescribed by a prophet.⁸⁶ In Ngoreme elders make the *ikoroso* fire from particular trees (*esebe, omoreto, omorama*) that grow at the *erisambwa* site.⁸⁷

Water from *emisambwa* springs is also used in the rituals to bless the land.⁸⁸ Water was the gift of first woman, while fire was the gift of first man. Both are transformative and transitional symbols used to mediate the boundaries, the inside/outside dichotomies of the *orokoba*, the womb and the house. A fundamental ritual act in these ceremonies of purification, protection and sanctification is the sprinkling of a mixture of contents (water, milk, honey, millet flour, etc.) onto the gathered people as a blessing and a prayer for fertility (*komusa*). The sprinkling covers the bodies outside, its boundaries, with the symbolic things of sustenance and life from the inside. Elders say that the smoke, like water, covers and protects the participants in these rituals. Weiss points out that fire and smoke are often used in binding rites, both to surround a house and to drive off malevolent forces.⁸⁹

These symbols operate on all levels from the individual homestead to the territorial *ekyaro*. It is this contextual aspect that makes these symbols so powerful. Testimonies compare the health

⁸⁵ Interview with Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). Each homestead extinguishes its fires and a new one is ceremonially lit with medicines and distributed. Elders ritually slaughter a goat and sprinkle its stomach contents over the people (*komusa*), then they light the new fire and distribute it to each homestead.

⁸⁶ Interviews with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

⁸⁷ Interview with Paulo Maitari Nyigana and Ibrahim Mutatiro Kemuhe, Maji Moto, 29 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

⁸⁸ Interview with Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

⁸⁹ Weiss, *The Making and Unmaking*, pp. 48-50.

of the homestead to the health of the larger territory. They symbolically equate the enclosure of the womb, the homestead fence and the *orokoba* around the land. These ritual practices create an identity embedded in a bounded territory controlled by elders. People use the same symbolic language throughout the region to express these concepts of territorial identity.

The Leaders of the Walk: The *Chama*

Peoples throughout the Mara Region call the leaders of the generation- and age-set (*aba*)*chama*, usually numbering eight members in all, with one top leader whose job it is to "guard the land." The secret council of Kuria elders is called the *injama*. The Ikizu call every member of the *rikora* in power an (*omo*)*chama* while the Nata use this term only for the eight chosen leaders. An Ikoma elder said that these leaders are responsible for anything that concerns the land—rain, disease, peace, war, and hunger. *Chama* is derived from an old Bantu word (*-yama*) with wide use, usually meaning a group that works together or a council. The Kikuyu elders' lodge and the Maasai elders meeting are both called the *kiama*. Because of the dominant position of Maasai in the Rift Valley in the nineteenth century, most obviously manifested in their age-set organization, one wonders if the Maasai adopted the word *chama/kiama* from their Kikuyu Bantu-speaking neighbors and then Mara-speakers adopted it from the Maasai in the nineteenth century.⁹⁰

The requirements for and character of the generation- or age-set leader indicate that Mara peoples gave the generational principles of growth and peace priority over the warrior ethic most

⁹⁰ Interviews with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); and Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). In Kiswahili, *kuchunga nchi*. Among the *abachama* there were specialists with other names. The Ishenyi *ekereri*, whose job it was to "guard the land," led both the age- and generation-set and had eight *abachama* from each clan to support him." The Nata chose eight *abachama* for the generation-set in power and eight *abachama* for each age-set, four from each clan moiety and a leader, *kangati* or *omotiro*, from each. Another Ishenyi *rikora* official was the *omusamu* who prepared the meat on sticks over the fire for the ceremony. Interviews with Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995; Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

often associated with age-sets. The generation-set leader's body must be unblemished, without scar, sore or disability.⁹¹ His parents, children and wife must be alive and healthy. He must be a man of good character and of peace. Once he is chosen, no one was allowed to see him naked, even to bathe. He could not touch blood, handle raw meat, drink water other than spring water, or take lovers outside his homestead. His wife(wives) observes similar prohibitions. His father must be native born, but his mother may be a stranger.

The age-set leader could never fight and on a raid took up the rear position. Instead of carrying a weapon, the *kang'ati* ("leader" from the verb to walk ahead) carries a long stick, *orutanya*, as the sign of peace. He had only to lay the stick between two people to stop them from fighting. Some say that even the Maasai respected the *orutanya*.⁹² The leader of the *rikora* commanded more respect than the leader of the age-set. Far from the warrior hero, he was a man of peace, embodying the peace of the land. Elders said that the ongoing work of both the generation-set and the age-set, in the east, was to "guard" the land. Although some suggested that this task included a military function, in fact, neither the *saiga* nor the *rikora* functioned as a military regiment. When a raid occurred, every able-bodied man took up the chase. Those in their *saiga* might have gone ahead but did not organize separately from every other man on the chase.⁹³

⁹¹ The ritual leaders of the Maasai age-set also had to have a "pure" body and come from a "pure" family, he was a "man of peace" and stayed in the rear during a raid. Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," pp. 79-81

⁹² Although this description comes from interviews with Nata, the qualifications for *rikora* leadership were the same in all the groups I interviewed and the long stick a universal symbol of leadership, called the *ekinara* in Ishenyi. Interviews with Mang'oha Machunchuriani, Mbiso, 24 March 1995; Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995; Kirigiti Ng'orogita, Mbiso, 9 June 1995 (Nata ♂); Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995. Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Prophets and Raiding," p. 202, the Maasai delegations to see the prophets went unarmed with a long black stick as the sign of peace.

⁹³ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

Besides the *(aba)chama* of the generation-set and the age-set in each clan territory, the Ngoreme have *(aba)chama* for the *ekitana* or *orokoba*, sometimes called the *(aba)chama* of the land or *ekyaro*, and the *(aba)chama* of the rain. These people serve as agents to carry out the orders of the elders, prophet or rainmaker, rather than constituting the authority itself. Elders said that the most important attribute for the job was the ability to keep the medicines secret. The *(aba)chama* swore an oath of secrecy. Some of these occupational *(aba)chama* served for one year, others for a lifetime. They had to meet the requirements and prohibitions enumerated above for other *(aba)chama*.⁹⁴

The Ngoreme pattern makes explicit the role of the generation-set as "agents of force" rather than "controllers of force." When the colonial government began looking for leaders, they elevated those in the role of *(aba)chama* to chiefs. No wonder then that the colonial administrators found the Ngoreme chiefs to be powerless and swayed by public opinion. In these cases the most visible people carrying out these rituals were not the ones with authority. The community ritually endowed the generation and age-set leaders as visible symbols and representatives of community consensus. However, it was the authority of the elders, the generation of fathers, that controlled their actions.

Territories and Boundaries:

The walk of the generation-set ritually created the space of a bounded and enclosed territory and the territorial identity of the people contained within those boundaries. To appreciate this local concept of territory and territorial identity defined by ritual space, we must find a more

⁹⁴ Interviews with Paulo Maitari Nyigana, Maji Moto, 29 September 1995; Isaya Charo Wambura, Buchanchari, 22 September 1995; Nsabo Maro, Kenyana, 14 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂). The *abachama* of the *orokoba* passed the protection medicine on behalf of the prophet who provided the medicine (*omogitana*), the *abachama* of the rain passed the rain medicine (*omusano*) on behalf of the rainmaker (*omogemba*).

nanced understanding of territory than the traditional academic understanding of territory as "the ecological locus of use or the political limits of domination and sovereignty."⁹⁵ Without chiefs or kings, people did not define their territory by centralized political authority. In Chapter 5 we saw that the ecological landscapes over which western Serengeti people ranged as hunters, herders and farmers covered the whole Serengeti-Mara ecosystem, certainly not defined territorially. One could argue that the homestead image also defines a political unit without centralized authority and the hills define an interstitial ecology. However, these definitions presume the prior assumption of how these spaces were constituted in the first place.

Robert Thornton's definition of territory--as the symbolic differentiation of space and the appropriation of that space into a structure of meaning, so that it may be represented as a coherent and enduring image--is a more useful place to begin.⁹⁶ This definition does away with the false dichotomy so often posed by anthropologists and historians between "the social definition of territory" (assumed to be the precolonial African model) or the "territorial definition of society" (assumed to be the western imperialist model).⁹⁷ This dichotomy goes back more than a hundred years to the work of early anthropologists, Maine and Morgan, who distinguished between kinship and territory as two "mutually inconsistent modes of social organization." The functionalist anthropologists used this premise to hypothesize that kinship was logically prior to territory and that kinship was the basis for territorial groupings. The point made by Thornton is that people must first imagine and create the space of the territory, whether the society is organized on the

⁹⁵ Thornton, *Space, Time and Culture*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Christopher Gray, *Modernization and Cultural Identity: The Creation of National Space in Rural France and Colonial Space in Rural Gabon*, Occasional Paper No. 21 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Center on Global Change and World Peace, February 1994), pp. 37-38.

basis of proximity or kinship. People imagine and represent boundaries and the territories they enclose through the performance of ritual and the practice of everyday routines.⁹⁶

Yet space can be appropriated in a number of ways that do not imply a bounded "territory." Chapter 7 demonstrated a conceptualization of space defined by the sites of ancestors, *emisambwa*, who acted as guardians of the land. These sites are often located in places well removed from the settlements in which people now live. The core spatial images were those of networks radiating out from fixed points on the land. Chapter 6 described the regional pathways of knowledge controlled by clans that constituted a radically different appropriation of space reaching over vast distances of geographical and social space. Chapter 5 suggested that space was also defined in terms of the ecological zones in which people practiced certain economic subsistence patterns. Yet these too were not enclosed territories but interstitial, interdependent spaces existing within a regional economic system. Ethnic groups, clans, lineages, generation and age-sets each appropriated space in a different way and formed their identity in relation to those socially created landscapes.

For the western Serengeti the only appropriation of space that can usefully be called a "territory" is the ritual creation of the bounded and enclosed space of the *ekyaro*. Although the *ekyaro* was by definition a clan territory, the social unit used to create a territorial identity was the egalitarian generation-set. Kinship was not the basis for a territorial grouping. The concept of an enclosed and bounded territory was a different way of appropriating space and used to contain different social units that were defined territorially over time. The geographer Robert Sack makes a distinction between various social conceptions of space and "territory," which he defines as the

⁹⁶ This debate discussed in Thornton, *Space, Time and Culture*, pp. 8-16. Refers to Sir Henry Sumner's work, *Ancient Law* (1861) and Lewis Henry Morgan's work, *Ancient Society* (1877); See Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, Chapters 4-6.

geographical area over which an individual or group asserts authority and control.⁹⁹ I put less emphasis on the control of these areas since all appropriations of space involve the authority of a particular social group. I prefer to understand territory in the western Serengeti as the geographical area appropriated by a social group using the core spatial images of enclosure and boundaries. While many kinds of social identities define themselves in relation to the land only a territorial identity conceptualizes space in terms of bounded units of land.

"Tribal" Boundaries and Territory

Elders today use the core spatial images of an enclosed territory embodied in the generation-set rituals of walking the land to define "tribal" boundaries. They employ these older concepts of territory to conceive of the newer kinds of ethnic territories that gained prominence in the colonial period. These boundaries of ethnic territories enclosed the space of a variety of social identities such as clan, lineage, age- and generation-set that now made up the emerging ethnic identities.

When I asked elders to show me their territorial boundaries, they were quick to respond with both the "traditional tribal" and the "colonial" sets of ethnic boundaries. Nata elders said that their "traditional tribal" boundaries were the Grumeti River with the Ikoma (east), first the Sanchate and then the Tirina River with the Ikizu (west), the Morega or the Somoche River with the Ngoreme (north) and the Mbalageti River with the Sukuma (south). Elders described the old Ikoma boundaries as the Orangi River with the Maasai (east), the Grumeti River with the Nata (west), Bangwesi mountain with the Ngoreme (north) and the Mbalageti River with the Sukuma

⁹⁹ Robert David Sack, Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 19.

(south).¹⁰⁰ These boundary recitations follow a formula in which boundaries are defined by 1) the ethnic identity of who was on the other side of the boundary, 2) a cardinal direction, and 3) a physical feature that marked the boundary such as a river or a mountain.

The "traditional" boundaries indicated by elders usually followed physical features such as rivers, mountains or long stretches of impenetrable bush.¹⁰¹ These wilderness tracts of a no-man's-land often correspond to the boundaries of tsetse fly bush characterized by John Ford as the *grenzwilderness*.¹⁰² The colonial files assert that a 35-mile wide belt of tsetse fly bush separated the Maasai seasonal grazing areas on the western edge of the Serengeti plains from the farming peoples to the west in the Musoma district. During the Ikoma sleeping sickness outbreak, colonial officers documented that tsetse infested bush surrounded Ikoma, extending for 30 miles to the Ngoreme boundary to the north, and to the south across the Mbalageti River to the Sukuma boundary.¹⁰³ Given the tradition of bush control discussed in Chapter 5, this evidence may suggest that tsetse bush was allowed to remain and demarcate social boundaries. Schoenbrun's work shows that from earliest times Lakes Bantu-speakers carved out their farming communities

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with Jackson Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995; Mahiti Kwiro, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂); Pastor Wilson Shanyangi Machota, Morotonga, 12 July 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

¹⁰¹ See Hans Cory, "Land Tenure in Bukuria," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 23 (1947): 70-79; Prazak, "Cultural Expressions," p. 97.

¹⁰² Ford, *The Role of Trypanosomiasis*.

¹⁰³ From H. J. Lowe, Senior Veterinary Officer, Northern Province to Provincial Commissioner in Arusha, 6 March 1931, Land and Mines, Chiefdoms' Boundary Dispute Files, North Mara District, 83, 3/127, TNA; J.F. Corson, M.O., Ikoma, 15 April 1927, "Third Note on Sleeping Sickness," Extracts of Report by District Veterinary Officer, 1926-29, Provincial Administration Monthly Reports, Musoma District, 215/P.C./1/7, TNA.

between uninhabited buffer zones of tsetse bush wilderness.¹⁰⁴ Because rivers, mountains and tsetse bush represented barriers to easy communication, people developed a sense of territorial identity within the boundaries of their daily interactions and routines. They perceived the peoples on the other side of these wilderness boundaries in stereotypical terms and in relation to idealized cardinal directions.

Oral testimonies show that the concept of the "other" was integrally tied to these wilderness boundaries. People create boundaries in relation to what is outside those boundaries and their identity in relation to someone else. Oral testimonies most often define communal, now ethnic, identity in contrast to the "people of the wilderness" (*Nyika*) or the Maasai and Asi who live outside civilized space. Elders consistently identified Maasai herders and Asi hunters with the animals of the wilderness, "who go here and there without a home." The plains and bush areas were outside possible homestead space and full of danger, from both wild animals and uncivilized people.¹⁰⁵ Civilization meant a ritual relationship with the land that transforms it from wilderness to home. Anyone who is outside the boundaries is by definition, the stereotypical "other."

Oral testimony and ethnography reflect this understanding of boundaries as wilderness tracts and portray boundaries as dangerous and liminal places. Elders spoke of boundaries as the place where they disposed of polluted things. If an uncircumcised girl became pregnant, she was forced to flee over the boundaries or pollute the whole land. In the past the Ikizu generation-set leaders took breech babies or those whose top teeth came in first out to the wilderness, over the

¹⁰⁴ Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 126 -128; David L. Schoenbrun, "Social Aspects of Agricultural Change between the Great Lakes, AD 500 to 1000," *Azania*, 29/30 (1994-1995): 270-282.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata *o'*) says the Ndorobo walk around like wild animals following the herds. Kiyarata Mzumari, Mariwanda, 8 July 1995, says that the plains were a fearsome place because of the danger of Maasai, lions and buffalo.

boundary with Nata or Zanaki, and left them there. The Zanaki generation-set leaders were responsible to care for the boundaries and had to dispose of the polluted Kuria bodies deposited across their side of the boundary. Court cases in the colonial files describe dead bodies being found on the boundaries, in fact on the colonial boundary stone, between two ethnic groups.¹⁰⁶

Today villages on the boundaries of two ethnic groups are often the frontier refuge for young men in trouble who go there to gain a new identity. These places have bad reputations as the home of outlaws and people without respect for traditional authority. While I was in the region, the clinic at one of these boundary villages treated many arrow and gunshot wounds from encounters in cattle raids and other theft on the boundaries. A German tourist was shot in another of these frontier villages. These villages contain people of mixed ethnic background and a preponderance of young people, living outside the bounds of normal society and morality. R. E. S. Tanner's colonial study of cattle theft in the Musoma District showed that the majority of theft cases occurred "along uninhabited district borders."¹⁰⁷

The boundaries that elders described for the old Nata territory were enormous, enclosing approximately 3,600 square kilometers. The colonial census in 1948 lists the population of Nata at only 1,519, giving a density of less than a half person per square kilometer. Even if one would add in the Ishenyi (2,428) and Ikoma (4,474) populations of the time the density would still only be a

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with Zamberi Masambwe, Gisugo Chabwasi, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995 (Ikizu ♂); Zabron Kisubundo Nyamamera and Makang'a Magigi, Bisarye, 9 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂). Criminal Case No. 92 of 1931, Villagers of Watende living in Bunjari, 9 September 1931, Native Affairs, Collective Punishments and Prosecution of Chiefs, 1926-31, 246/P.C./3/4, TNA.

¹⁰⁷ R. E. S. Tanner, "Cattle Theft in Musoma 1958-59," *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 65 (March 1966): 31-32.

little more than two people per square kilometer.¹⁰⁸ Using these figures to estimate precolonial populations is nearly useless of course because of the huge loss of population and migration during the late nineteenth century. Yet it does give us the sense of the vast tracts of land and small number of people in question. Even today the population density of Serengeti District is only 10.2 people per square kilometer.¹⁰⁹

Obviously the Nata definition of its territory depended neither on "the ecological locus of use" nor "the political limits of domination and sovereignty."¹¹⁰ What made it "Nata" territory was that elders used the older concepts of bounded territory to enclose a space that included the variously conceived spaces of a number of social groups that now made up Nata, filling the need for a defined "traditional tribal territory" in the colonial context. These boundaries had to be extensive to include all of the sites of the *emisambwa* still propitiated by Nata lineages, the boundaries of the *ekyaro* defined by the walk of the *rikora* and to exclude those who were different across the dangerous wilderness boundaries. This Nata territory includes the land used to hunt, to gather arrow poison or to trade with the Asi or Tatoga. Although the Nata never occupied all of this land at once by habitation, they claim this land as Nata territory by claiming all of their past interactions within this landscape. The Nata generation-set never walked around these extensive boundaries, it was confined to the area in which people lived. However, Nata elders use the same

¹⁰⁸ East African Population Census, 1948, African Population of Musoma District, East Africa Statistical Department, Nairobi, 1 October 1948, African Population by Chiefdom, 1948, Secretariat Files, 40641, TNA. In the Native Affairs Census of 1926 the Ikoma Federation was listed with a total population of 14,799—Nata 1,923, Ikoma 8,664 and Issenye 4,212. In Native Affairs Census 1926-29, 246/P.C./3/21, TNA.

¹⁰⁹ The population density of Serengeti District is the lowest in the Mara Region but its growth rate at 8.3 is the highest in the region, reflecting a large in migration for open farmland and mining. Mara Regional Statistical Abstract 1993 (Dar es Salaam: President's Office, Planning Commission, Bureau of Statistics, June 1995), pp. 2, 12.

¹¹⁰ Thornton, Space, Time and Culture, p. 19.

core spatial images of enclosure employed by the walk of the generation-set to appropriate this larger landscape with which they have formed a relationship to create a "tribal" territory in the colonial context.

Because these new colonial territories enclosed the space of various social identities that had existed previously there was considerable overlap and boundaries were disputed. The same lineages and clans were now part of different ethnic groups, but maintained claims to the same ancestral places. Age-set territories of what were now different ethnic groups overlapped. A Ngoreme elder who lived on the present boundary with Nata said that Ngoreme used to include all of what is today Ishenyi and Nata, and much of Ikizu, bordering at the Mara River to the north with the Kuria and to the east with the Maasai. A Nata elder however said that Nata used to border the Kuria at the Mara River and with the Ngoreme at the Ikorongo mountains. The overlap in territory of these two statements is enormous.¹¹¹ Yet because these representations of past boundaries refer to a combination of various concepts of space operational at different times that were not exclusive, they overlapped in various ways. Both accounts were valid depending on how boundaries were defined. Other boundaries have become rigid and highly contested. Some versions of the emergence story separate the territory of Ikizu between the territory of first man, Isamongo (Ikitang'anyi), and the territory of first woman, Nyakinywa (Buraze). Elders recited the boundaries of those two halves of Ikizu in great detail, naming the landmarks (villages, springs, trees, rocks, hills) around the perimeter of each.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Interviews with Mwitia Magige, Mosongo, 9 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Mayani Magoto, Bugerera, 18 February 1995 (Nata ♂).

¹¹² Interviews with Kiyarata Mzumari, Jackson Witari, Musa Matabarwa, Webiro Zeze, Mariwanda, 8 July 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

During the colonial period these older concepts of territory easily accommodated and used new ideas about exclusive "tribal" territory. The elders who told the story about the Kuria moves to Mugumu said that the *injama* passed an *orokoba* around the boundaries of the new land to ensure possession. These boundaries did not coincide with the colonial tax boundaries and only the Kuria elders on the secret council of the *injama* knew where they lay.¹¹³ Yet the Kuria in Mugumu also recognized and defended the administrative boundaries that defined their right to live in this territory. Many elders across the region worked with colonial officials to define the "tribal" boundaries. Once the new boundaries were set on administrative maps the elders defended and contested these boundaries by drawing on the authority of "tradition." A Sizaki protest to the Governor said, "there are no exceptions to these boundaries since everyone recognized them since the almighty Creator made all things on this earth, before the Germans came to Africa."¹¹⁴

What was different about these two concepts of territory was that western Serengeti territories were flexible units that were defined anew each time the land was ritually walked over while the colonial concept of territory was a fixed unit of land. In the western Serengeti, territories, both the boundaries themselves and the social groups contained within the boundaries, shifted over time while colonial territories assumed the occupation of a "tribe." Recent scholarship has taken this contrast in concepts of territory to mean that if precolonial African territorial boundaries were flexible, situational, multiple and shifting, they were not meaningful or enduring indications of identity. They theorized that if people were constantly moving they could not form an attachment to the land. Kopytoff describes this African "attitude" as a "relative indifference to rootedness in

¹¹³ Interview with Pastor Philemon Mbota, Mugumu Matare, 27 January 1995 (Kuria ♂), the son of the Prophet Mzee Mbota who came from Nyabasi to Mugumu.

¹¹⁴ From the Askari wa Jeshi la Kikozi cha 46-36-26TT KAR, South East Asia to Bwana Gavana DSM, December 1 1944, Native Chiefs, Musoma, p. 23, Secretariat Files 29626, TNA.

physical space, together with an indifference to a permanent attachment to a place . . . African space is, above all, social space."¹¹⁵ Yet the western Serengeti rituals of walking the land show that place did matter and that a people's identity was deeply tied to the ways in which they had appropriated and created the space around them, whether territorial or not. People understood the *ekyaro* as the land that they ritually controlled, intimately linked to their own health and well being. However, this space was not fixed and immutable through time nor did it always enclose the same social unit.

The Germans began transforming local ideas about territory into western concepts of land as exclusive, measured and fixed units through the process of selling land to the few private entrepreneurs and missions that wanted to obtain land. The Seventh Day Adventists bought land from the Germans in many places in the region. Each transaction involved an elaborate series of steps, including a visit to the site to ensure that no one held claims against it and that compensation had been provided for natives. The boundaries were marked with stones (with bottles buried under the stones) and maps were drawn so that the land transfer could be registered in court.¹¹⁶ The Germans took this process seriously as foundational to the creation of civilization. Rather than randomly grabbing land for the European newcomers, the German officers made doubly sure of its "ownership" and use before granting it as Crown land.

¹¹⁵ Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier," p. 22. Christopher Gray, "The Disappearing District: The Decline of Precolonial Space in Southern Gabon 1850-1940," a paper presented at the American Historical Association, January 10, 1998, pp. 18, also argues that district identity was "almost always overridden by clan and lineage identity" and that "territory was defined socially as there was no real ownership tie to the land per se and territoriality was merely one strategy among others to enhance the wealth of one's lineage or clan."

¹¹⁶ All land was regarded as Crown land unless individuals could claim private ownership or current occupation. The idea of a plot of farmland permanently cultivated was a new concept. Landkommissions Adventisten Mission Magita, 1909-1912, G 15/499; SDA Busegwe File, 1909-1913, G 45/34 LR, TNA. Special thanks to Simon Heck who provided German translation assistance in the archives.

Disputes over Colonial Boundaries and Colonial Maps

The coexistence of these different ideas of territory and the ability of local people to use the definition of boundaries to enclose various kinds of social units is evident in the inordinate amount of paperwork in the colonial files concerning disputes over "tribal" territory. To settle these disputes colonial officers went to the land in question and asked the elders on each side of the dispute to walk over the boundaries, indicating the traditional boundary markers. They drew sketch maps and placed them in the district files for future reference. Where no obvious and agreed upon rivers or hills marked a boundary, the conflict often revolved around earlier colonial definitions of boundaries. The elders argued over which tree "Bwana Baker" set as the boundary marker and who had been present at the original marking.

The determination of territorial boundaries was most important to the colonial chiefs because they could collect taxes and demand labor only from the people within their territory. Thus, chiefs initiated the boundary disputes and the colonial officers experienced continual frustration from these obvious efforts at "land grabbing." One colonial officer reported, "there are to my knowledge seventy-four latent boundary disputes in Musoma District, nearly all of them fostered and exasperated by the chiefs . . . not more than six in which the people evince any interest at all." This report claimed that the inhabitants did not care what the country was named since they intermarried, lived and farmed next to each other across "sub-tribal" boundaries.¹¹⁷

The people within these territories, however, seemed to have had their own ideas about boundaries and acted on them to the great displeasure of colonial officers and chiefs alike.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Annual Report 1933, Musoma District, Native Affairs Section, p.53, Annual Reports, Native Affairs Section, Lake Province, 215/924/2, TNA.

¹¹⁸ Because of the great loss of South Mara files in the National Archives, unfortunately, most of these examples of colonial boundary disputes come from Kuria and Luo (recently assimilated from Bantu Suguti-speakers) related peoples in North Mara. I do not believe, however,

Chiefs often complained that people who moved into a new territory continued to pay taxes to their former chiefs, of their own ethnic origin. When questioned in court the defendants said that although they recognized that this was legally the territory of another chief, in fact, it was uninhabited wilderness area and that no one representing that chief was anywhere around. They therefore felt free to give their tax to their former chief.¹¹⁹ These people acted on the old concept that the wilderness boundary areas between groups constituted a zone of a no-man's-land that settlers could open, make into habitable and civilized space and claim for their own group.

Within the older concept of territory it only made sense that these settlers on the wilderness frontier would pay their taxes or offerings of patronage to the "big man" with whom they had already established ties of reciprocity. In the court case cited above, the migrants from Buturi might have had debts of patronage to the Chief of Buturi that they reciprocated by the payment of taxes. They would have had no former connections to the Chief of Shirati and thus no reason to pay the tax to him. These testimonies seem quite close to the older pattern of expansion in which young people moved out into the wilderness frontiers while maintaining ties to their home communities.¹²⁰ In each of these court cases people refused to pay their taxes to the chief legally in control of the territory because they defined the place where they settled as a wilderness boundary

that the issues would have been significantly different in South Mara, had I the documents to prove it.

¹¹⁹ From Omukama of Buturi in Buhacha to the ADO in Tarime 24 June 1935; From ADO in North Mara to DO Musoma, 3 November 1932; Native Court Testimony, Girango A Court, 31 March 1938; From the ADO Tarime to DO Musoma, 4 April 1940; From Marwa Igina Usimbiti Kumuge 14 March 1948; Land and Mines, Chiefdoms' Boundary Dispute Files, North Mara District, 83/3/127, TNA.

¹²⁰ See Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier," *The African Frontier*, pp. 7-23, on frontier movements.

area. Colonial reports tell of people deliberately building on the boundaries of their chiefdoms or in the wilderness areas of neighboring chiefdoms in order then to make territorial claims.¹²¹

The colonial boundary dispute files also demonstrate the extent to which people still equated their relationship to the land with their identity as a people. In a long letter addressed to the Governor, the Kiseru Area Council complained that the District Officer arbitrarily changed the boundaries of their chiefdom, leaving 170 Kiseru taxpayers who occupied the "lands of their ancestors," under the authority of "another tribe which is different from ours." The Council appealed for the return of "the children, wives and elders who were taken away from us." In another telling phrase the chief said that his people in the disputed area had been "given" another "tribe" which was unlike their own.¹²² The council expressed its outrage against the separation of territorial residence from its moorings in communal identity. It was impossible to conceive of living on your ancestral land but owing allegiance to "others" outside. The council characterized these people as having been "taken away" or "given" a new "tribe" because of the change in authority over the territory in which they resided. Later court evidence demonstrated that the customs of these peoples in question were not so different and that they had been intermarrying for quite some time. The colonial officer concluded that the Kiseru Council elders were leading the people in this agitation because they would stand to lose most from the deal.¹²³ However, the existence of multiple boundaries defining multiple sets of relationships allowed these people both to

¹²¹ From Wakibara Nyamuhika from Suba Kukabwa 8 May 1947, Land and Mines, Chiefdoms' Boundary Dispute Files, North Mara District, 83/3/127, TNA.

¹²² From the Kiseru Area Council to the Chief Secretary and Governor of Tanganyika Territory with copies to the DC and PC, 24 November 1949, Land and Mines, Chiefdoms' Boundary Dispute Files, North Mara District, 83/3/127, TNA.

¹²³ Report from DC North Mara to PC Mwanza 1 February 1950, Land and Mines, Chiefdoms' Boundary Dispute Files, North Mara District, 83/3/127, TNA.

express outrage in being transferred to a "foreign tribe" while still living in their ancestral land and also intermarry and share a common culture with those across the boundaries.

All these examples of colonial interaction demonstrate that earlier ideas about territory and the need for maintaining the ritual health of the land operated side by side with newer ideas about territory. At times, the colonial officers and the chiefs used the same language but with very different meanings. At other times, the chiefs and elders appropriated the colonial meaning of territory for use in local struggles over prestige and authority. They seemed equally at ease walking out the boundaries of the "tribal" territory with the District Officer and walking the medicines of the *arokoba* over the land with the generation-set. The flexible nature of the *ekyaro* adapted itself to colonial definitions without negating its previous and still situationally important definitions.

Nyerere's *Mwenge*: The National Space of the *Ekyaro*

People in the Mara Region have extended the concept of the *ekyaro* as the ritually maintained territory of a people to construct a national identity in present day Tanzania. Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, the first president of independent Tanganyika and later Tanzania, comes from the Mara Region, Zanaki, Butiama. He is the son of the second colonial chief of Butiama, Nyerere Burito (ruled 1912-1942), and the half-brother of Edward Wanzagi Nyerere, the last colonial chief of Butiama and of the reunified Zanaki Federation (ruled 1952-61).¹²⁴ In spite of his training and later his baptism as a secondary school student in the Catholic Church, Nyerere grew up with the concepts of the ritual health of the land as a member of the generation-set.

¹²⁴ Biographical accounts of Nyerere include, Judith Listowel, The Making of Tanganyika (Chatto and Windus, London, 1965); Kemal Mustafa, "The Development of Ujamaa in Musoma: A Case Study of Butiama Ujamaa Village" (M.A. Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1975); Mustafa, "The Concept of Authority"; William Edgett Smith, Nyerere of Tanzania, (Victor Gollancz: London, 1973).

During my stay in the region, I heard many stories about the auspicious signs surrounding Mwalimu Nyerere's birth, his inheritance of prophetic powers through his lineage and his use of these in the politics of state. Given his background in generational authority it is no wonder that Julius Nyerere was one of the first and only African presidents to retire, which he did using the Zanaki word for the retirement of the generation-set, *kunyatuka*.

The two most important symbols of national unity instituted by Mwalimu Nyerere are the torch on top of Mount Kilimanjaro and annual "walk" of the torch or *mwenge* around the nation of Tanzania. Each year since the Arusha Declaration, the torch, *mwenge*, is set on the back of a truck and escorted throughout the nation by soldiers and political dignitaries of each region through which it passes. All other vehicles must clear the road and wait as the long line of new white land cruisers and army vehicles passes. Disrespect for this convoy can incur serious consequences as a national offense. Different routes are chosen each year so that the torch passes through as many of the remote rural areas as possible in a few years time. The *mwenge* always returns to the place that it started at the end of its "circular" tour. Planning the passing of the torch begins months prior to its arrival by the collection of local "donations," the preparation of a feast, arrangements for songs and dances by local school children, speeches by political officials and the attendance of crowds along the roads to cheer it on. The torch is a symbol of national unity and its journey around the nation an attempt at building new symbols of national identity.

The issue of the *mwenge* figured highly in the political debate surrounding the presidential elections in 1995. Opposition candidates called it an example of the misappropriation of funds better spent on development. Others denounced it as a scheme by local dignitaries for redirecting funds. Observers in other regions told me that many people found the whole institution less than convincing. Yet people in the Mara Region, by contrast, seemed to understand and support the *mwenge* institution. I heard the *mwenge* discussed as an *orokoba* for the nation. Some claimed

that the *mwenge* contained medicines that were spread across the land for protection and healing. It was Nyerere's medicine through his prophetic line. The torch's fire symbolized the spread of the new fire to each homestead throughout the *ekyaro*. One local interpretation said that just as the new generation extinguished the old fire of the previous generation, so the new fire protects the authority of those who rule. The medicine of the *mwenge* "puts out" the opposition to the authority of the nation. People said that these things had to be kept secret, just as the rituals of the walk of the generation-set were secret, to protect the nation. All of this is highly suggestive and unsubstantiated since I was not able to discuss motivation and intent with Nyerere himself. It is nevertheless significant that, whether Nyerere understood the *mwenge* as an *orokoba* or not, many people in the Mara Region do. It is an indication that these older ideas about land, healing and territory are still functioning alongside newer ideas about administrative boundaries and nationalism.

Conclusion

All these stories, from the walk of the *rikara* in the nineteenth century to the ride of the *mwenge* in the twentieth century, indicate a 'symbolic differentiation of space and the appropriation of that space into a structure of meaning' that creates a communal identity in reference to the land. Yet this appropriation of space is different from the others explored in previous chapters because its core spatial images are those of enclosure and boundaries, defined here as a "territory." Western Serengeti territory has encompassed the clan *ekyaro*, the age-set cycle and the ethnic group depending on the historical context. Lineages, clans, generation-sets and age-sets each define their identity in relation to the land in a different way. During the colonial years some of these different definitions were combined to enclose the new territorial units of the ethnic group. The concept of territory was used to create "tribal" units in the colonial years but in the process assimilated the colonial idea of fixed territorial units.

Each kind of appropriation of space, related to a different set of social identities, also implied the locus of social authority used to control it. The "fathers" or elders of the generation-set in power had authority over the territory as representatives of communal consensus. Even though these rituals are seldom, if ever, performed anymore, the narratives about the walk of the *rikora* told by the elders reinforces their dwindling communal authority and reasserts them as the legitimate carriers of "tradition" and the health of the land.

The stories about the generation-set and its walk, the healing of the land and the definition of boundaries all belong to this middle period of history that identifies repetitive social processes that are subject to change but at an incremental level. Although the generation no longer walks, the ideas about healing the land remain and people have found new ways to express these concerns in the new contexts of national life. The idiom of timelessness in which they discuss these issues obscures the fact that these are central issues of land and territory that are highly contested.

By exploring these ideas of territory through the rituals of the generation-set, we can imagine how these same concepts were applied to the clan-based *ekyaro* territory of the nineteenth century. In the context of plentiful land but few people, settlements attracted new settlers and integrated them into an inclusive territorial identity through the reenactment of these rituals. Generation-sets were not corporate, property-owning groups, but they embodied communal consensus and an identity with the land that was necessary for the prosperity of those who lived as neighbors.

The narrative now turns to the period of historical remembrances of the late nineteenth century in which the issues of land and territory remain an important focus for understanding the dislocations of that period. The various forms of precolonial social identity discussed up to this point form the basis for analysis of late nineteenth century transformations.

PART FOUR:
SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER NINE
THE GENERATION OF DISASTERS (1870-1895):
CHANGING FORMS OF AGE-ORGANIZATION

The generation-set maintained a ritual relationship to the land, bringing protection and healing to the territories of local lineage-based settlements in the nineteenth century. When this protection failed how did people cope in the face of large-scale environmental and human disaster? How did western Serengeti people imagine their past to cope with the present in the context of the loss of loved ones due to sickness and hunger, the loss of a significant part of the next generation due to widespread infertility, the loss of the resources for survival due to the breakdown of a regional economy, the loss of control over boundaries due to the encroachment of Maasai hegemony, and the loss of control over the environment due to the spread of bush? The disasters suffered by people of the western Serengeti were similar to crises across East Africa during this period. While describing the disasters in detail because local people felt them so horribly, the emphasis here is on the creative response of peoples of the western Serengeti to these problems.¹

This chapter analyzes the historical memories of the "generation of disasters" (c. 1870-1895) and how that generation responded to these crises by reworking existing social relationships and patterns of settlement. In particular, they reconfigured the older institution of age-organization into territorially based units that provided the means for both the unification and the enlargement of scale required for the later emergence of ethnic identities. These larger scale

¹ For an account of the environmental disasters in Tanzania see: Iliffe, *A Modern History*, Chapter 5; Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*; Giblin, "Famine, Political Authority and Foreign Capital." For a critique of the "degradation narrative" see McCann, "Introduction," *An Environmental History*; and Leach and Mearns, *The Lie of the Land*.

territories combined settlements organized around the lineage idiom and linked them together in loose networks of reciprocity. It was during the period of disasters preceding the colonial era that western Serengeti people formulated the basic ethnic identities that exist today within the space of age-set cycle territories, although the advent of colonial rule solidified ethnic identity into territorially based administrative units.

Transformations in identity came as a response to severe dislocations of population and of economic subsistence patterns. Numerous refugees from farming communities fled the region, moving as far south as Sukuma. At the same time incoming Maasai, who gained dominance over the regional system of economic interaction by controlling pastoral resources and developing units of social organization through which to expand that control, drove a large portion of the Tatoga herders as far south as Tabora. The Maasai raided western Serengeti farmers to gain more livestock, particularly after cattle disease swept through their herds between 1880 and 1890. The Asi hunters who had been so important in the previous set of regional relations gradually became clients of the dominant Maasai and moved farther east as the farmers moved farther west. These events shattered the previously existing regional economic system and left the farmers particularly vulnerable to famine and epidemics of disease introduced from outside that swept over the land. The reorganization of lineage-based settlements into age-set territories, however, enabled people to reformulate the interdependent economic strategies of woodlands, hills, and grasslands.

Chapter 3 described the main events and transformations of the period of disasters and the effects of those changes on oral tradition. This chapter looks more closely at how these transformations in social identity came about and how people made creative use of the older generative principles of social organization to effect these changes. While Chapter 3 portrays western Serengeti people as victims of famine, epidemic, and raid, this chapter highlights their

agency in forming communities that not only coped with the disasters but forged strategies that led to prosperity in the next generation.

In this chapter I first show how the ethnic groups of the eastern part of this region (Ikoma, Ishenyi, Nata and Ngoreme) reformulated generation-sets into age-set cycles more responsive to the need for mobilizing young men in raids. Reorganized age-sets resulted in a new way of calculating time and in a new way of organizing territorial settlements. These changes, in turn, indicate a massive transformation of social identity at the time of disasters. Through an exploration of age-set lists, I demonstrate how western Serengeti people maintained continuity with the past in the face of radical change. Elders explicitly tell about the generation that was divided into territorial age-sets. At the same time, their age-set lists project the age-set cycle names of the late nineteenth century back in time before the disasters. I look next at the concentration and fortification of settlements as a response to raids and the need for boundary formation in times of societal stress.

The section on western Serengeti response to Maasai hegemony details the effects of raiding and also peaceful interaction with the Maasai. As a result of Maasai raiding, Sonjo refugees settled in the western Serengeti and brought with them the direct experience of living closely with the Maasai. Origin stories emphasized Sonjo ancestors because of their value as cultural translators during the period of disasters. Western Serengeti people both resisted and accommodated the imposition of a Maasai regional hegemony. They formed new age-sets out of admiration for the powerful Maasai warrior ethos but maintained the regional continuity of the older generation-sets. The territorialization of age-sets allowed western Serengeti farmers to respond to the disasters by spreading out both their risks and their opportunities when the former regional system of economic interdependence broke down. The larger-scale identity of cycling age-set territories became the basis for ethnic identity in the early colonial years.

Age-Set Reorganization

The most important transformations of this period resulted from changes in age-set structure, particularly among the most easterly groups of Nata, Ishenyi, Ikoma and Ngoreme. The preexisting linear age-set system (subordinate to a cycling generation-set system) was changed into a cycling age-set system that largely took over the functions previously assigned to the generation-set. I demonstrate these transformations by showing how these changes are represented in the lists of age-sets provided by elders today. Although elders explicitly tell stories about the reorganization of generation-sets into age-sets, their age-set lists project the continuity of cycling age-set names back before the period of disasters. This chapter rests on the basic knowledge of age-organization laid out in the last chapter.

Time: Age Organization and Dating

As I showed in Chapter 3, the effects of the disasters were so widespread and severe that remembered history begins here. Men living today heard the stories of the disasters from their grandfathers and grandmothers who lived through them. Although western Serengeti narrators now tell all history as ethnic history, it is only beginning in the "generation of disasters" that one can confidently speak about the existence of ethnic groups called Nata, Ikoma or Ishenyi. Western Serengeti peoples used age-set territories to formulate ethnic group identity and ethnic histories during this period of stress.

Beginning with this generation, the historian can offer a sequence of relative dates based on age- and generation-set lists. African historians have long recognized that they can use lists of age-set names to establish a relative historical chronology. Elders in societies that use age organization can list the names of successive age-groups working back from the present to the past

and using a consistent interval of years between each group (eight years in this case).² However, these lists express ideological concerns as much as they narrative relative chronology. Even after a careful analysis of the historical development of these lists, they can provide only a relative sequence of events.³ The lists that I collected among five Bantu-speaking groups in this area were fairly consistent, at least back to mid-nineteenth century. Narrators place the stories from mid-nineteenth century on by reference to a particular age-set, thus making it possible to order events in a relative chronology. However, elders often elide events that happened "a very long time ago," or during the "generation of settlement," into the time of the first remembered age- or generation-set, around mid-nineteenth century. As discussed in the last two chapters, the telescoping device allows narrators to condense a long period of time into the memories of one generation occurring in the middle time frame of indigenous history and acts as a bridge between the older and more recent time periods.

When narrating age-set lists, elders seamlessly weave the abrupt changes in social organization that clearly occurred during the period of disasters into the ongoing flow of time through the birth and death of generations. The encirclement and boundary formation necessary for healing the land in a time of stress depended on continuity with the past to ensure that the medicines of the land and the propitiation of ancestors as guardians of the land would be effective. Elders said that the age-set names recurred in a cycle every third generation, a claim that enabled

² Jacobs, "A Chronology," pp. 10-31. For a critique of dating by this method see Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," pp. 83-93. See also John Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 17-60.

³ For a Maasai construction of time, "spiralling upwards with age," see Paul Spencer, "Becoming Maasai, Being in Time," in *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 140-156. See also the critique of king lists for chronology, Henige, "Oral Tradition and Chronology," pp. 371-389; Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, Chapter 2.

them to project the names back infinitely into the past. This device allowed people to imagine the ongoing continuity of age-sets as an inheritance from the past. The lists of particular age-set names which they provided, however, did not usually go any earlier than mid-nineteenth century, and elders specifically discussed the reorganization in age-sets necessitated by the disasters.⁴ The remembered age-sets before the disasters (c. 1850-1890) were usually generation-set names or linear age-set names assimilated into an age-cycle pattern. Elders never explained how the names from age-set cycles that were, by their own account, invented in response to the disasters could be applied to age-sets in the eighteenth century or even before. They were willing to overlook these inconsistencies in order to establish a necessary link with the past by placing these fundamental changes in an understanding of continuous and repetitive time.

The sense of continuous time and generational authority over its orderly passage permeates idealized description of age-set organization. In theory, each age-set or *saiga* would "rule" for eight years before the next group would take over. While the senior cycle "ruled" the next waited to "enter their *saiga*," having already been initiated during the last cycle. The third and most junior cycle began circumcision of a new set, culminating in the mass circumcision ceremony of the *kigori*. The practical functioning of age-sets was much more flexible than its rules suggest, and elders with authority over the ceremonies that promoted new age-sets could delay them at will in order to remain in power longer. Other acts could prolong the interval between age-sets for more

⁴ Some of the few other works on the Mara Region have taken these names back to the beginning of the 18th century. See Anacleti, "Pastoralism and Development," pp. 14-15. I would argue that there is no evidence to support these longer lists, some of which anachronistically use event-oriented praise names (example, *abaSanduka*) as cycling names. Their dates were also based on initiation at circumcision, while local understandings date each *saiga*, or age-set to eight years after circumcision when they are said to "enter, or step on, their age-set" (*gutaacha asaiga*).

than eight years.⁵ The incoming *saiga* fought for its position in a mock battle with sticks; if it lost, the incoming *saiga* waited another year to take power. If the prophet whom the elders consulted before the ceremony said that the time was not auspicious, elder could delay *gutaacha asaiga*.⁶ Because western Serengeti people synchronized the ceremonial cycle of age-sets regionally, a delay in the ceremonies of one group would delay the others. Elders said that the more easterly Ikoma *saiga* was always ahead of the equivalent Nata *saiga* by a few years.⁷ The system also depended on a cycle of other rituals necessary for the health of the new *saiga*. The installation of the new *saiga* must take place before the *rikora*, or generation-set, could begin its walk to cool the land, which must itself be completed before the *kigori* circumcision ceremonies could take place. Because of all these contingencies, age-set lists can provide only a relative and idealized, as opposed to an absolute, chronology, and only for the period of the late nineteenth century onward.

Age-set Lists and Regional Chronology

A comparison of age- and generation-set lists throughout the region demonstrates how the most easterly peoples reformulated generation-sets into age-set cycles and projected these new names back in time. They did this by including what were generation-set names and praise names of linear-age-sets from an earlier period into the list of the new cycling age-sets.

Because age- and generation-sets throughout the region often used the same names at approximately the same time, correlating the age- and generation-set lists of different ethnic groups is possible. From these age- and generation-set lists I have reconstructed a relative chronology of

⁵ Eight is the most perfect number in this area and it is not surprising that it is also used for the ideal *saiga* rule.

⁶ Interview with Megassa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995 (Nata ♂). One Nata *saiga* was delayed when a raid was imminent to keep the more experienced men in power.

⁷ Comparison to Kjerland's Kuria list shows that they were also "ahead" of Nata age-sets. Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," Appendix.

successive age-sets that covers the entire region. [See Figure 9-1: Chronology of Generations.] Note that the most easterly ethnic groups (Nata, Ikoma and Ishenyi) divide the age-sets into three cycles: Busaai, Bongirate, and Borumarancha. Each of these has three recurring names (not so obvious on the chart because the names mainly recur in the later colonial period), making the age-set name of a man the same as his great-grandfather, if they were both of the same cycle. The Busaai age-set comes into their *saiga* (*gutaacha asaiga*) first, followed by Bongirate, then Borumarancha, and finally returning to Busaai to start the cycle again, with each cycle "ruling" for eight years. The first age-sets in this new cycling system are those with the same names as the larger cycle, the Busaai, Bongirate and Borumarancha, dating to approximately 1870-1895 ("the generation of disasters").

Groups to the north and west, Ngoreme, Kuria, Ikizu, and Zanaki still follow the older generation-set system that consists of two generation cycles, each with four recurring names. The age-set system for these groups (groups who continued to give primary importance to the generation-set) remained the linear type, with a unique praise-name chosen for each new group. The cycling age-set names of Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi developed from the cycling generation-set system and thus can be correlated with generation-set names in other ethnic groups.

The correlation of age- and generation-set names across ethnic boundaries provides evidence for the change from a linear age-set system to a cycling age-set system among the Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi. Although Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi elders list the age-set names before the disasters within the three age-set cycles, these names often correspond with linear age-set names among groups that kept the linear age-set system (Maase, Ngirabhe). Even after the Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata adopted the cycling age-set system they continued to use the regional linear age-set names as praise names (Sanduka, Romore, Kambuni). Other age-set names, listed before the institution of age-set cycles, are generation-set names (Maina, Saai, Nyange) assimilated into the

Chronology of Generations, Western Serengeti, Tanzania						
Generations	Cycling Age-Sets (Saiga) of Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi			Cycling Generation-Sets (Rikora) of Ngoreme, Kuria, Ikizi and Zanaki		Praise Names Kuria Nyabasi
	Bussa	Bongrate	Borumarancha	Monyasaai	Monyachuuma	
(c. 1820)	abaNyanyange (abaNyange) (c. 1828)	abaOrumat (abaHonga) (c. 1836)	abaTing'on (c. 1844)	abaGamunyere	abaGini	1. Gesawin (1857, 39, 41)
				abaMana	abaNyang	2. Kehanga (1844, 46, 48) 3. Gesambiso (1851, 53, 55)
The Generation of Settlement (c. 1845)	abaNgrabne (abaMana) (c. 1852)	abaMutara (abaMegoria) (c. 1860)	abaMesara (c. 1868)	abaSaa	abaChuma	4. Ngritabe (1858, 60, 62) 5. Machare (1865, 67, 69)
The Generation of Disasters (1870)	abaSaa (c. 1876)	abaNgrate (abaMaase) (c. 1884)	abaRumarancha (c. 1892)	abaNyambure	abaMarabe (abaNgorongoro) (abaShinyari)	6. Gebira (1872, 74, 76) 7. Maase (1879, 81, 83) 8. Nginogo (1886, 88, 90)
The Generation of Opportunity (c. 1895)	abaKnocha (c. 1900)	abaKong'ota (c. 1908)	abaKuphura (Rorure) (c. 1916)	abaGamunyere	abaGai	9. Romve (1893, 95, 97) 10. Nginaro (1900, 92, 94) 11. Tamesongo (1907, 99)
The Generation of the "Tribe" (c. 1920)	abaKnoho (Mana) (c. 1924)	abaSarduka (abaMegoria) (c. 1932)	abaMorochige (Masura) (c. 1940)	abaMana	abaNyang	12. Nyesendeko (1912, 14, 16) 13. Kambuni (1920, 22, 24) 14. Kaiher (1927, 29)

Kuria Nyabasi list from Kirsten Alsaker Kjerland, "Cattle Breed, Shillings Don't: the Belated Incorporation of the abaKuria into Modern Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 1995), Appendix, using dates at the time of circumcision.

Dates of Cycling Age-Sets at the time of entering their *Saiga*, ideally eight years after circumcision.

Figure 9-1: Chronology of Generations

three age-set cycles. It seems that elders took the linear age-set and cycling generation-set names before the disasters and represented them as part of the three age-set cycles to create a sense of continuity.

Narrators of cycling age-set lists also included regional praise names of linear age-sets after the disasters. Both cycling and linear age-sets tended to choose the same praise names throughout the region. In the cycling system each age-set has two names. The first name, taken at circumcision, is a praise-name referring to events of the time. The second name, taken at the assumption of age-set "rule" eight years after circumcision, is a "traditional" cycling name that would have been the name of their great grandfather's age-set. For example, the praise name used across the region in the nineteen-thirties was Sanduka, which refers to the boxes that migrant workers brought home filled with things purchased in the city. The age-set name from the 1950s, Hobasi, refers to the "Habasha" or Ethiopians of Second World War who resisted Italian colonial domination. Other praise-names included Ngerecha (English) used in 1960 and Chabani (Japanese) used in 1968. The same praise-names can be found across the whole region, at least from about 1870 on, as indicated by the inclusion of the Kuria linear age-set list in the final column of the chart. This regional coordination of praise names does not mean that formal institutional arrangements operated between these groups. Rather, it signifies only that they were aware of each other and found practical advantage in defining themselves as age-mates.

Western Serengeti people understood corresponding age- and generation-sets to be one "generation," even if their dates of initiation did not exactly correspond. They worked both generation- and age-sets, either cycling or linear, into a regionally-based understanding of time. The textured coding on the chart in Figure 9-1 represents this understanding. These shared equivalencies took on practical importance in this era when people were redefining boundaries and populations were in flux. Equivalent age- and generation-set understandings allowed for the

incorporation of strangers from different parts of the region and the formation of friendships in other areas that people could appeal to for local hospitality in times of hunger, in travel or for trade. The chart that I have drawn represents this idealized understanding of time and society, broken into discrete blocks, or "rungs of a ladder," across the regional space of the western Serengeti.⁸

The equivalencies between generation-sets and age-sets were possible because the newer system of cycling age-sets was an innovation on and still corresponded to the generation-set system. For example, one of the new age-set cycles used the name Saai, which is also a generation-set cycle name. The new system broke up the larger "generation" into three smaller territorial age-set units. These smaller units made it easier to mobilize young men for raids within a localized area. A system based strictly on the principle of generation brings men of all ages and stations of life into one set, with little group cohesion, while an age-set system capitalizes on the fraternity and equality inherent in the age-cohort and competition between different cohorts.⁹ Whether or not these newly reorganized age-sets were effective militarily, they appealed to young men who admired the dominant power of the Maasai warrior sets who seemed to raid with impunity. If the new age-cycle resulted from the growing power of young men and offered a solution to the crises of the times, youth ultimately lost to elders who maintained the principles of generational authority in the unbroken assimilation of the newer age-cycles into a generational pattern.

⁸ Much of the above thinking about time thanks to Richard Waller, "Making and Taking Time" (Paper presented at African Studies Consortium, University of Pennsylvania, 4 October 1996), and in personal communication.

⁹ See Baxter and Almagor, "Introduction," *Age, Generation and Time*, pp. 2-7.

Oral Narratives of Age-Set Reorganization

The clearest evidence for these changes in the structure of age-sets during the "generation of disasters" comes from oral narratives which explicitly tell about the reorganization of age-sets. Elders from Ngoreme, Ikoma, Nata, and Ishenyi identified the age-set of Maina (Ngirabhe), Matara (Megona) and Masura (C. 1850-75) as the time when they redefined age-sets into cycles or territorially-based "associations." A Nata elder said that the first *saiga* or age-set was the Maina, living at Site, where they divided into the three cycles of Bongirate, Busaai and Borumarancha.¹⁰ An Ishenyi elder confirmed that the people divided into cycling age-sets or *saiga* when they left Nyeberekerera or after they got to Nyigoti, which would also have been at the time between the Maina and Saai generations.¹¹ This process of division appears clearly in an Ishenyi text that reads, "The Amasura gave birth to the Amatara who then gave birth to the abaRumarancha, abaSaai and abaNgirati."¹² In the idiom of the fathers and sons, the generation-set "gave birth" to the three new age-cycles, maintaining the continuity of time.

Philipo Haimati uses a similar generational idiom in his written chronicle of Ngoreme history to describe the reorganization of age-sets in response to the feeling of insecurity:

Then they passed a law that each father should not have all his sons living in one homestead in one village. If a war came in one village then not all of the brothers would be killed at once. So they combined five circumcison sets in all to be one company of soldiers, one age-set. They called the first children of the age-set whom they circumcised the Saai and gave the Saai land to live on from Maji Moto up to Busawe. They called this land Ikorongo. The Saai called themselves by another praise name that they made up, the Mar'osikeera. They gave them the horn and the drum. The age-set made their own weapons. These were the first company of soldiers. The second year they circumcised other children, they called them the Amatara to whom they gave the land of

¹⁰ Interview with Kirigiti Ng'orita, Mbiso, 8 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

¹¹ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

¹² "Kikao cha Mila, Desturi na Asili ya Kabila la Waishenyi Kilichokutana Tarehe 6/6/1990, Nyiberekerera, Ishenyi," copy in the possession of the present author.

Kisoka. They called themselves the Bongirote and were given the horn and the drum and made their own weapons. In the third year they circumcised the next children and to whom they gave the same names of Amataara and Abangirate, but who occupied the land of Kewantena and Bumara . . . In the fourth year they called the children whom they circumcised Abagamutenyo and they gave them the land of Ring'woni up to Masinki to live . . . The fifth company of soldiers was called the Amosuuro. They called themselves the Aborumoroncho, living in the land of Iramba. They gave them, taa, the horn and the drum and they made their own weapons. A man who had five sons made this division, following the circumciser's sets . . . He would spread them out among the five companies as they circumcised them in successive years. [. . .] [Each of these companies would take turns ruling the whole country, when they would become too old they would be driven out by the younger company who would then rule in their turn.] [. . .] At that time each lineage lived together in one settlement. They built forts to protect themselves from the raids. They built these forts with high walls made of rocks. In this way each homestead was inside the big wall and inside each homestead were the houses. They built these settlements on the mountain sides and they went down toward the plains to herd and farm. The lineages lived separately because they despised each other. Yet they helped each other when it was necessary and fought their common enemies. They made a plan together to strengthen the companies of youth when they become circumcised. There were five companies of soldiers and each had more than 2,000 men.¹³

The above story depicts a conscious reorganization of social space. Haimati reconfigures the pointillism of lineage-based settlements to an image of more concentrated settlements, joined in an enclosed and bounded territory of age-sets and linked together by the patrilineage and primarily connected to outsiders by the affinity of age-mates. The emphasis is on the warrior ethos of these "companies of soldiers" but the logic behind this formation argues that the spreading out of the sons of one man in different areas, linked together into a territory for mutual support, would preserve the patrilineage. In times of societal stress, the concentration of lineages and clans in one territory was a liability rather than an asset.

Settlement Reorganization

The reorganization of age-sets, in turn, led to the reorganization of settlements on the basis of age-set rather than lineage. In an era of societal stress settlements became concentrated and

¹³ Haimati and Houle, "Mila na Matendo."

boundary formation took on increasing prominence. Philipo's account mentions both the reorganization of age-sets into territories and people building fortified settlements to protect themselves from raids. Western Serengeti people were victims of raiding which resulted from competition among various Maasai groups in the Rift Valley for dominance. Some of the peripheral Maasai-related groups, such as the Lumbwa, after experiencing defeat, began raiding farmers. These pastoral groups also began encroaching on the territory of hill farmers for dry season grazing. Yet oral evidence attests that the threat of disease, general insecurity and the need for boundary definition were equally strong motivations for the concentration of settlements. The medicine for protection, *orokoba*, worked against both disease and raids; its power lay in the act of encirclement or enclosure of the land against external danger. Thus, fortification was a visually symbolic "medicine" for protection against all external forces. At a time when people were reformulating identity, boundary maintenance was increasingly emphasized. Western Serengeti people were building "walls" and boundaries where none had existed before.

Fortified Settlements

The remains of these stone structures all over the Mara Region testify to the movement into more concentrated settlements in fortified positions on the hillsides. Either thick rock walls higher than a man surrounded the entire village (*obugo* in Ngoreme), or smaller stone enclosures (*ruaki* in Nata) protected women, old people and children as a temporary shelter during the raids: [See Figure 9-2: Remains of Stone Walls, Ngoreme Fortified Settlements.] The German explorer Baumann described an Ngoreme fortified settlement with walls two meters tall and almost two kilometers around. One entered the settlement through a gate locked from the inside, finding a large open space inside.¹⁴ White Fathers missionaries, who traveled inland briefly in 1902 and

¹⁴ Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 56.



Figure 9-2: Remains of Stone Walls, Ngoreme Fortified Settlements, Nyansurumunti Kisaka, 21 September 1995

1904, reported that Zanaki, Ngoreme and Ikizu people lived in fortified settlements up on the hills among the rocks.¹⁵ The German traveler Kollmann (1899) described "Ushashi" villages up in the rocky hillsides surrounded by high hedges of euphorbia or thorns. Near to Ngoreme he found even more strongly fortified villages with stone walls five feet high and three feet wide. Inside the walls a virtual labyrinth of euphorbia and thorn hedges divided the individual homesteads.¹⁶ An Ngoreme elder said that each *obugo* had a front gate that was guarded and a secret back door for escape, the walls were 8-10 feet high and had holes to look out and shoot through.¹⁷

Another kind of fortification was to build a *tembe* or low log house, covering the roof with dirt, in the style of the Gogo of central Tanzania. This prevented the Maasai practice of burning thatch roofs during a raid to drive the inhabitants out into the open. People could fortify the door of a *tembe* from the inside to prevent intrusion. They adopted this style from the Tatoga who brought it from Mbulu during the disasters. The Tatoga themselves began building *tembe*-style houses in spite of their preferred mobile lifestyle.¹⁸

¹⁵ Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs), "Ukerewe," *Chronique Trimestrielle de la Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)*, 24me Année, No. 95 (July 1902): 281; L. Bourget, "Report of a Trip in 1904 from Bukumbi to Mwanza, Kome? Ukerewe, Kibara, Ikoma--Mara Region, together with some stories," N.p. n.d. M-SRC54 Sukuma Archives, Bujora, Mwanza, Tanzania. They attributed this to a period of famine to intertribal war and the raids of the Maasai and Luo.

¹⁶ Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza*, pp. 177-78. Ushashi is the Sukuma name given to all Mara peoples, this is still used as a derogatory name by the Sukuma today.

¹⁷ Interview with Elfaristi Wambura Nyetonge, Kemgesi, 20 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

¹⁸ Interview with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂); Gilumughera Gwiyeya and Girihoia Masaona, Issenye, 28 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂). The *tembe* style is an ancient form of architecture brought to the larger East African region by S. Cushitic-speakers. See Ehret, *Classical Age*, Chapter 2.

Fortified and concentrated villages were found from western Kenya all the way down to Sukuma and Nyamwezi during this period. The Sonjo to the east also built substantial fortifications against raids.¹⁹ Although previous settlement patterns grouped people of related lineages in one area, the intense concentration of settlements during this period seems to have been a temporary response to stress. During the early colonial period people moved out of these concentrated settlements. The lineage idiom still united the inhabitants of one fortified settlement but they now grouped these settlements in a territory defined by age-set cycles rather than by clan.

Concentrated Settlements

Scholars have interpreted this trend toward fortified and, more generally, concentrated settlements throughout East Africa during the late nineteenth century as a response to the insecurities of the caravan trade. Iliffe emphasizes the effect of firearms in causing the "ribbon-like settlements along the trade routes to give way to fortified villages."²⁰ Yet, as I showed in Chapter 3, the caravan trade only indirectly affected the western Serengeti. No important trade routes or trade centers existed in this region where concentrated settlements might naturally develop. No powerful trade lords like Mirambo forced people into concentrated settlements with the threat of arms as in Nyamwezi.²¹

¹⁹ For western Kenya see R. T. K. Skully, "Fort Sites of East Bukusu, Kenya," *Azania* 4 (1969): 105-114; and R. T. K. Skully, "Nineteenth Century Settlement Fort Sites and Related Oral Traditions from the Bungoma Area, Western Kenya," *Azania* 14 (1979): 81-96. For Nyamwezi see R. K. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), pp. 81-96. For Kuria see Cory, "Land Tenure in Bukuria," pp. 70-79. For Sonjo see Gray, *The Sonjo*, pp. 33-34.

²⁰ Iliffe, *A Modern History*, p. 75. In southern Tanzania the unrest caused by Ngoni incursions from the south were responsible for concentrated settlements.

²¹ For a nationalist biography of Mirambo see, Norman Robert Bennett, *Mirambo of Tanzania, 1840?-1884* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

In general, people distrusted concentrated settlements and described them as unhealthy and potentially dangerous places. So powerful reasons must have existed for people to move into concentrated settlements. Many colonial reports described the increase in witchcraft accusations with the concentration of settlement. The Mwanza Senior Commissioner reported that, "natives have been advised to concentrate . . . but as they are steeped in superstition and fear of witchcraft in larger communities, refuse."²² During the colonial years western Serengeti people resisted sleeping sickness measures to get them into concentrated settlements. Although the colonial government carried out these campaigns in Sukuma and elsewhere, schemes within the Mara Region ultimately failed.²³ Not only did western Serengeti people fear witchcraft but the fortified structures themselves represented an enormous outlay of labor for people who were accustomed to building their houses of mud and thatch in a few days.

The concentration of settlements contributed to ecological collapse. When people lived in concentrated settlements, competition for accessible farmland increased, causing farmers to overwork the soil. Since people grazed their livestock near the settlement, concentrated settlements also resulted in overgrazed pastures. Where farmers and herders were not opening up new land for farming and settlement, tsetse bush tended to encroach into once-clear areas, as when refugees left for Sukuma.²⁴

Scholars elsewhere have postulated that concentrated settlements were associated with the increased authority of political leaders and the control of elders over young people. It might be that

²² Report from A.M.D. Turnbull, Senior Commissioner, Mwanza, to Game Warden Kilossa, 28 March 1924, vol. I: 1923-29, Game Regulations, 215/P.C./14/1, TNA.

²³ Report by District Veterinary Officer, April 1927 and Monthly Reports, 1928, 1926-29 Provincial Administration, 215/P.C./1/7, TNA.

²⁴ See Iliffe's analysis for all of Tanganyika, *A Modern History*, pp. 75-77, 163-167.

concentrated settlements were a way elders exploited conditions of uncertainty and vulnerability to reassert their authority over young men who had gained some autonomy and prestige as warriors or as traders to Sukuma. Yet the elders had few means available to force people into concentrated settlements against their will. In a situation of abundant land resources, people who disagreed with their leaders could simply leave and be assured of a welcome in any of the other neighboring settlements (albeit accepting the comparatively weaker position of a newcomer).

The threat of Maasai raiding and violence, asserted in oral narratives, stands as the most plausible explanation for the concentration of settlements. Yet the relationship with the Maasai and their threat to farming communities was more complicated than the simple enmity expressed by elders. Although the immediate threat of raids was most palpable, the larger threat posed by the Maasai was the loss of a way of life based on farming, hunting and herding inherited from the distant past.

Resistance and Accommodation to Maasai Hegemony

Beyond individual loss of life and property, the threat of Maasai raids represented the imposition of an entirely new economic system and ethnic map in the greater Rift Valley. As noted in Chapter 3, the Maasai succeeded in dominating this region by developing a specialized form of pastoralism that forced others into the specialized niches of farming or hunting. Western Serengeti peoples, having based their adaptation to this region on a combination of farming, hunting and herding skills, resisted the imposition of this hegemonic system controlled by the Maasai. As the Nyoberekera story told in Chapter 3 attests, the ultimate threat posed by raiding was that the Maasai would drive western Serengeti farmers out of areas now claimed by Maasai for dry season grazing. The immigration of Sonjo refugees to the western Serengeti as a result of Maasai raids most clearly demonstrates this process.

Although disease, famine and subsequent ecological collapse caused more loss of life and dislocation of populations, elders say that the reorganization of age-sets and the fortification of concentrated settlements was the result of Maasai raiding. I argued in Chapter 3 that the most intense period of raiding occurred after the disasters. The experience of these later raids was then projected back onto narratives of raids during the disasters to make sense of an unexplainable series of calamities. Identifying a known enemy to account for these troubles was much more acceptable than combating the intangible forces disease and drought. Many narratives, such as the Ishenyi story of leaving Nyeberekera told in Chapter 3, attribute both disease and drought to the medicines of the Maasai prophets.

In this section I show that because of both admiration and fear of the Maasai, western Serengeti people welcomed Sonjo refugees from Maasai raids for their valued experience in dealing with the Maasai. The impetus for reformulating age-sets in the western Serengeti may have come from the desire of young men to imitate the power of the Maasai *murrān*. The final shape given to age-set structure, however, was based on older generational principles, firmly under the control of elders.

Sonjo Refugees of the Disasters

Intense Maasai raiding on both sides of the Serengeti plains (particularly on the Sonjo side) drove refugees in both directions and resulted in the separation of these two communities. The long-term interaction of hill farmers living in the western Serengeti and Sonjo was detailed in Chapter 5. During the period of disasters western Serengeti settlements moved farther to the west and the potentially habitable hill sites between Sonjo and Ikoma were abandoned to the Maasai. This was the area that the British later designated as Serengeti National Park because it lacked permanent inhabitants.

Today the six Sonjo villages in the Loliondo District exist as islands of Bantu-speaking hill farmers surrounded by a sea of Maasai pastoralists. Each village situated on a hillside or mountain depends on springs to water irrigated fields on the valley floor below. The village leaders, known as *mwanamaji* ("those with water") control the allocation of water. Each village preserves the oral traditions of their origins and settlement separately, connected only by the epic cycle of stories about the prophet Khambageu. In the nineteenth century a complicated set of fortifications surrounded each village.²⁵ [See Figure 9-3: Sonjo Fortified Settlements.] The Sonjo practice Maasai-style linear age-sets and know nothing of generation-sets or cycling age-set names. However, a connection with the western Serengeti is suggested by the fact that the name of the first age-set which elders remember is Olnyamburete about eleven age-sets ago (like the western Serengeti generation-set name, Nyambureti).²⁶ Perhaps before the Maasai came the Sonjo did practice a generation-set system similar to the western Serengeti version. Today the Sonjo dress and outwardly look like Maasai, wearing red blankets over one shoulder and adorning themselves with beaded jewelry. Sonjo *muran* (warriors) always carry a long knife at their side. One elder told me that this gear was necessary for safe passage across Maasailand, as they would be indistinguishable from the Maasai, who are their enemies.

The Sonjo who remain in the Loliondo district have become assimilated into the Maasai system of hegemony. They raise only goats and sheep, hunt little, and mainly subsist on agricultural production of millet and beans. Sonjo is the name given to them by the colonial officers after the "sonjo bean." The Sonjo call themselves Bantemi after the *ntemi* scar. Scholars of Maasai history have shown how Sonjo could pass the ethnic boundaries of economy to "become

²⁵ See Gray, *The Sonjo* for one of the few ethnographies of Sonjo.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.



Figure 9-3: Sonjo Fortified Settlements, Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1995

Maasai" if they gained cattle, while those who lost their livestock became Ndorobo hunters. Both the Ndorobo and Sonjo now follow the ceremonial cycle of Maasai age-sets.²⁷ The strongest connection between Sonjo and the western Serengeti seems to date to the period of disasters. In my own interviews and in those of earlier ethnographers, Sonjo elders consistently asserted that the "Ikoma" (used generically for western Serengeti peoples) and the Sonjo once lived as neighbors or as one people, from "one womb."²⁸ Elders from the Sonjo village of Samonge told stories of a village called Tinaga to the north, located more on the plains, unlike the Sonjo villages of today. The eight villages (Yasi, Tinaga, Meje, Buri, Hajaro, Hume, Horane and Jema) in this area were collectively known as Masabha (of the north).²⁹ When the Maasai entered this area, they raided and burned the Masabha villages and destroyed their fields and granaries. Without a means of subsistence, the people of Tinaga dispersed. Some went to Ikoma and others moved, as Tinaga clan mates, into other Sonjo villages in the south. One elder from the Tinaga clan said that the Maasai and Lumbwa fought with the Masabha people over a period of many years until the Maasai took all their cattle and goats and destroyed their villages.³⁰ Elders from the village of Samonge claim that they can still see the graves, homestead foundations and grindstones at the site

²⁷ Alan H. Jacobs, "The Irrigation Agricultural Maasai of Pagasi: A Case of Maasai-Sonjo Acculturation," Dar es Salaam, Social Science Conference (January 2-5, 1968): 1-12; John L. Berntsen, "The Maasai and their Neighbors: Variables of Interaction," *African Economic History*, 2 (Fall 1976): 1-11.

²⁸ Henry A. Fosbrooke, "Sections of the Masai in Loliondo Area," typescript, 1953, CORY #259, EAF, UDSM; Gray, *The Sonjo*, pp. 11-15.

²⁹ Interviews with Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995 (Sonjo ♂); Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995 (Sonjo ♂).

³⁰ Interview with Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo ♂).

of Tinaga.³¹ The Ngoreme tell of ancestors who came from Masabha and also from Tinaga.³² One Ikoma version of the emergence story says that the first hunters came from Sonjo Tinaga following the wildebeest migration to get meat during a famine.³³ All of these testimonies indicate a western Serengeti connection with specific communities in Sonjo, those most directly in competition with the Maasai for pastoral resources.

The stories of the prophet Khambageu also tell of the connection between Sonjo and Ikoma. Some versions of the Khambageu story say that he came from the west in Ikoma and that people went there to propitiate his spirit until only a generation ago.³⁴ Some elders say that Khambageu came from the village of Tinaga where many of his miracles took place. He subsequently cursed Tinaga, leading to its destruction by the Maasai.³⁵ The Khambageu prophetic stories resemble the Tatoga miracle stories of their prophets. Given the more recent history of

³¹ Interviews with Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995; Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo *♂*). The Tinaga site was visited by Gray, *The Sonjo*, p. 13.

³² Interview with Nsaho Maro, Kenya, 14 September 1995 (Ngoreme *♂*). Philipo Haimati, handwritten notebook on Ngoreme history, which I saw on 14 September 1995, says that the Ngoreme came from Sonjo "Nyahaba."

³³ Interview with Mzee Taranka, Bugerera, 10 May 1995 (Ikoma *♂*).

³⁴ Interview with Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo *♂*).

³⁵ Gray, *The Sonjo*, pp. 11-12. Interviews with Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995; Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995 (Sonjo *♂*); Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo *♂*). F. G. Finch, "Hambageu, some additional notes on the God of the Wasonjo," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 47 and 48 (1957): 203-208; H. A. Fosbrooke, "Hambageu, the god of the Wasonjo," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 35 (1955): 38-43; E. Simenauer, "The Miraculous Birth of Hambageu, Hero-god of the Sonjo," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 38 (1955): 23-30.

Sonjo relations with the Maasai, the Sonjo may have developed their own prophetic institution in the nineteenth century to combat the power of the Maasai prophets.³⁶

Refugees not only moved from Sonjo to the western Serengeti but also in the other direction. Chapter 3 presented the story of the dispersal of Ishenyi people to Sonjo from Nyebekera. Ishenyi elders said that at the time they lived at Nyebekera they called themselves the Regata. In Sonjo today the older name for the village of Sale is Rhughata. An elder from Rhughata claimed their origins at Jalati and Ngrumega (perhaps a transliteration of the Rivers Mbalageti and Grumeti in western Serengeti) and that the praise names of the Rhugata clans names the place called Nyankerekera (perhaps a transliteration of the Ishenyi dispersal place Nyebekera). The original ancestors of Rhugata were hunters of the Sagati clan, a clan name also found in Ishenyi and Ikoma.³⁷ Oral traditions from Ikoma and Ngoreme also claim origins in the Sonjo village of Regata. Migrations seem to have taken place in both directions from communities that were found in areas later claimed by the Maasai.

Dating the destruction of Tinaga and the dispersal to Ikoma is difficult because elders want to assert the ancient roots of this connection. One elder from the Tinaga clan said that this happened in the time of his grandfather (C. 1880). Confirmed dates in Maasai history help to set the temporal parameters of these events. Although the Maasai may have been present in the western Serengeti since the eighteenth century, expansion based on a specialized form of pastoralism did not develop until the nineteenth century. With the advent of prophetic leadership at the end of the eighteenth century, the Maasai began a period of increased raiding and territorial expansion, forcing the victims of these raids to move or abandon pastoralism. The earliest victims

³⁶ See David M. Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson, eds., Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995).

³⁷ Interview with Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1995 (Sonjo *o*).

of this expansion, known in Maasai tradition as the pastoral Lumbwa, were forced to recoup their losses by raiding Bantu-speaking farmers with few livestock. Sonjo traditions often tell of raids by the Lumbwa rather than the Maasai. Between 1850 and 1890 the Purko-Kisongo under prophetic leadership completed their expansion into what is now south-central Tanzania. It was probably during this period that Maasai sections on the periphery of the central Purko-Kisongo cluster near Mt. Meru began seeking control over pastoral resources in the western Serengeti and Sonjo. Raiding increased dramatically to maintain a pastoral way of life after 1890 when the rinderpest panzootic destroyed Maasai herds.³⁸

Although the Sonjo immigrants were too few in number to change western Serengeti language or culture, western Serengeti people may have valued Sonjo immigrants for their knowledge of Maasai culture. This might account for the attribution of Sonjo as the place of origin and the home of first man or first woman. Although the age-set system adopted by western Serengeti people at this time was a local innovation, Sonjo refugees may have brought compelling experience with the warrior ethos and Maasai-type age-sets. They would have experienced raids earlier and more intensely and had closer contacts with the Maasai than western Serengeti people. If Sonjo knowledge provided the means for resisting Maasai raids then as western Serengeti people formulated new ethnic identities, they would have acknowledged the crucial role of Sonjo in their own emergence as a people. We might learn something about the value of these Sonjo immigrants by looking more closely at the ambivalent relationship between western Serengeti peoples and the Maasai.

³⁸ Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," pp. 112-143, 172, 224.

Relations with Maasai

Narratives of the disasters concerning the Maasai invariably picture them as the arch enemy, the "other" with whom no relationship of peace was possible. Western Serengeti people divide the peoples of the larger region into two opposed categories: Bisa (enemies) and Rema (farmers). The Maasai and sometimes the Asi hunter-gatherers were in the "enemy" category, as those who live in the wilderness (Nyika). This way of categorizing regional relationships does not agree with the way that Maasai scholars have interpreted mutually exclusive identities in reference to "differential access to resources" and economic specialization.³⁹ Western Serengeti people were reluctant to give up their agro-pastoral-hunting economy for a specialization in which they would become subordinate to Maasai pastoralists who controlled a system that defined ethnicity by economics, largely to the benefit of the Maasai.

The western Serengeti understanding of Tatoga as "fathers" defies the Maasai hegemonic categories of farmers, herders and hunters. Although the Tatoga were not "farmers" they were not considered to be "enemy" and cooperated with "farmers" during Maasai raids. If a Tatoga killed a Nata, Ikoma or Ishenyi it was just like killing another Tatoga, rituals of purification were performed and a fine paid to the family.⁴⁰ Many of the western Serengeti peoples considered the Tatoga as their spiritual or ritual "fathers." The Ikoma and Ishenyi peoples gave Tatoga prophets a prominent place in the most important rituals of "cooling the land," indicating an acknowledgment

³⁹ Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Interview with Gulumghera Gwiyea and Girihoida Masaona, Issenye, 28 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂).

of Tatoga as "first-comers" on the land.⁴¹ The western Serengeti farmers allied themselves with other pastoralists to resist the incursions of the Maasai.

The relationship of western Serengeti people to the Maasai manifested itself in ritualized form. The "farmers" of the western Serengeti, the Sonjo and the Tatoga pastoralists practiced an important ritual called the *aghaso*, to purify and reward young men who killed a lion, leopard or Maasai.⁴² The first man (*omwiti*) to hit the lion with his arrow or spear and the next two men following him (*omunoti*) received honor and became blood brothers. While still at the lion kill they cut out the heart of the beast, the small tip of which they fed to the killer who spat it out three times, ingesting the fourth bite. [See Figure 9-4: Maasai Relations.] The killers took the lion skin and the claws back as their trophy but they burnt the remainder of the animal corpse. They also took Maasai weapons and other things as trophies. As the group came into the village, they sang the songs of the *aghaso*. When the village heard these songs, the mother of the killer came out to greet them, throwing sand and smearing them with butter. The father of the killer gave his son a cow. The next morning the singing, dancing and meat feasting began and lasted for eight days or even a month during which time the killers went around and received gifts of livestock in each home.⁴³

⁴¹ Sutton cites linguistic and oral evidence that the Tatog-speaking peoples once occupied the Loita-Mara plains and across Serengeti to the Crater Highlands, being pushed out or absorbed by Maasai expansion. J.E.G. Sutton, "Becoming Maasailand," in *Being Maasai*, p. 48.

⁴² Interview with Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995 (Sonjo ♂). Extraordinarily similar practice by the Tatog Barabaig reported by G. McL. Wilson, "The Tatoga of Tanganyika (Part II)," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 34 (1953): 35-56, where any killing of cattle thieves or lions may be used to collect lots of cattle. He speculates the group most likely to engage in this activity are youngest sons without other outlets for status. Among the Barabaig the anointing of the killer with butter is a propitiation of the ancestors and the cattle given to him equivalent to blood compensation offered to a kinsmen.

⁴³ Among the Barabaig the killer "adorns himself with women's ornaments, which symbolize that he is like a woman who has given birth. Killing an enemy of the people and giving

The killers were dangerous and liminal characters—like a lion of the wilderness. During this time they went through rituals of purification: they shaved their heads and smeared them with the stomach contents of a sacrificed sheep and they could not eat or sleep with other people.⁴⁴ This ceremony explicitly categorized Maasai with the beasts of the wilderness. The symbolism here was not derogatory but of respect and admiration. The killer ingested the heart of the beast to internalize the qualities of courage and power. One elder said that the heart is the place of courage, the essence of the beast, by eating it one gains that courage. The bits of heart that they spat out were an offering to the ancestors, since they have given the strength for this feat. As in so many western Serengeti rituals, they brought the things of the wilderness within—the fire brought into the home by the hunter, the things of power brought from the wilderness to perform the rituals of enclosure.⁴⁵ Yet this was also a direct act of resistance to Maasai dominance. As one informant said, 'the Maasai was "boss" then and the *aghaso* proved our triumph over them'.⁴⁶ Western Serengeti people admired, accommodated and resisted the Maasai.

birth is symbolically equated. The killer of an enemy must observe a convalescence period (one month) for having given "birth," and is restricted from touching food or doing any work." Klima, *The Barabaig*, pp. 58–60. Western Serengeti peoples also allow women who are courageous in birth to dance the *aghaso* with the men. Interviews with Baginyi Mutani and Mayenye Nyabunga, Sanzate, 8 September 1995 (Ikizu ♀).

⁴⁴ Interviews with Zamberi Masambwe and Gisuge Chabwasi, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995 (Ikizu ♂); Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂); Merekwa Masunga and Giruchani Masanja, Mariwanda, 7 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂); Elfaresti Wambura Nyetonge, Kemegezi, 20 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Zabron Kisubundo Nyamamera and Makang'a Magigi, Bisarye, 9 November 1995 (Zanaki ♂); Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995 (Sonjo ♂).

⁴⁵ Related to the analysis of "other" in the Kramer, *Red Fez*, p. 2, Kramer shows how African representation of the European "other" in sculpture was used to define self; and Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, p. 342, Boddy demonstrates that the "zar" possession cult in Sudan fosters an "alien world at the heart of culture."

⁴⁶ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂).



Elia Masiyana Mchanake and Robi Nyekisokoro, descendants of the founders of Nguku Ngoreme, Saroti and Nyaboge (Matiti's daughter), Borenga, 21 September 1995



Zamberi Masambwe and Gisuge Chabwasi, reenacting the Aghaso, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995

In spite of this history of animosity toward the Maasai, evidence of interaction and cooperation also exists. The first raids remembered by elders began in the 1870s, while interaction and emulation of Maasai culture must have been ongoing much before this. An interdependent regional economy of pastoralists, farmers and hunter/gatherers was held together not only by force, but also by the glue of common cultural understandings and social interaction with frequent boundary crossing.⁴⁷ From as early as 1800 the Loitai Maasai expanded from the Rift Valley to the Loitai hills where they pushed the Siria Maasai up to the Mara River in Kuria and Ngoreme territory.⁴⁸ Maasai ancestors often appear in Ngoreme and Ikoma genealogies. Western Serengeti people still propitiate their Maasai ancestors using prescribed Maasai implements and cattle sacrifice.⁴⁹ One localized emergence story in Ngoreme capsulizes this interaction:

Saroti was Moasoi and left behind when athers moved on, at the hill of Giseemo. He built his house near the spring of Kiru and lived by himself for many years. Then one day he saw smoke coming from Nyibihori and went to see what it was. There he found a man named Matiti, his wife and their children. They become friends and built their houses near to each other. Matiti was a former and grew millet, he taught Saroti to farm. Saroti married Matiti's daughter, Nyabage, for one storage bin of grain during a time of hunger. She cut his hair and shaved his head to make him acceptable for marriage. They gave birth to Kitang'ita, Gagay, and Wondwe.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Galaty, "Maasai Expansion," p. 72.

⁴⁹ For Kuria Maasai clan ancestors also reported by Cory, "Land Tenure in Bukuria," pp. 71-72. See Raids by Masai, 1936, vol. I, Secretariat Files, 23384, TNA, on a scare of Maasai raid because a woman was carrying out one of these rituals on behalf of her Maasai ancestor in Sukuma, a young herd boy saw the proceedings and ran to alert everyone that a raid was in progress. Interviews with Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 May 1995 (Nata ♂); Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma ♂); Tetero Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata ♂); Mwita Magige, Mosongo, 9 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

⁵⁰ Interview with Elia Masiyana Mchanake (Ngoreme ♂) and Robi Nykisokoro (Ngoreme ♀), Borenga, 21 September, 1995. There are variations of this story, including that they met on a hunt and that Saroti ate porridge (*ugoli*). In some versions of this story Matiti is said to be an Iregi, the clan which left the Nyeberekeru dispersal center in the Ishenyi story. Saroti is sometimes said to be Maasai only in that he was a "vagabond, traitor or outcast" his origin was Gosi, from the

In this narrative the Maasai pastoralist takes refuge with a farming patron, marries his daughter and founds a new clan territory in Ngoreme, Nguku. [See Figure 9-4: Maasai Relations, p. 469.] This story illustrates the permeability of the ethnic and economic boundaries in the late nineteenth century. Nyaboge made Saroti fit to join the community by cutting his hair, presumably the long locks of a Maasai *murrán*, destroying the outward marks of his Maasai identity and removing him from the warrior grade.

The symbiotic relationship of the Maasai and the Ikoma, farthest to the east, was also significant. During the *rihaha* famine, or rinderpest of 1890, the Maasai came to "sell" their children in Ikoma for food. Many stayed and settled near Banagi hill, well into Ikoma territory and now part of Serengeti National Park. Ikoma clans adopted young Maasai men and married young Maasai women, establishing in-law relationships of long duration. When the Maasai began to recover and the "Hunger of the Feet" hit the farming peoples, the Ikoma went to the Maasai for help. The Maasai were raiding on the lake during this time and used their Ikoma friends as scouts who knew the land better. Even today western Serengeti people know the Ikoma as Maasai collaborators.⁵¹ A 1933 report from the Musoma District illustrates this close relationships:

... you must remember that the Waikoma are on very friendly terms with the Serengeti Masai. For many years the Masai have brought tails of wild animals for exchange with the Waikoma who sell them in Usukuma.... a Maasai can always rely on a bed and a meal when he visits Ikoma. No doubt many of them act as guides to raiding parties . . .

Shirati area. All accounts confirm that the spring at Kiru is a powerful *erisambwa* place. And all are both proud and embarrassed of this important Maasai ancestor. Interviews with Isaya Charo Wambura, Buchanchari, 22 September 1995 and Charwe Matiti, Nyeboko 22 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

⁵¹ Interviews with Mahewa Timanyi and Nyambureti Morumbe, Robanda, 27 May 1995 (Ikoma ♂); Machota Sabuni, Issenyec, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

*but it is quite useless to expect the Waikoma to abandon friendly relations which have survived the raids.*⁵²

Maasai dominance also resulted in the development of a common regional culture. Elders say the Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi practice resembles the Maasai in dance, ornamentation and songs.⁵³ Although western Serengeti youth did not use red ochre (a characteristic sign of the Maasai *muran*) in everyday ornamentation, young men would put it in their hair in special occasions--to dance, after circumcision or for cattle raids. When the White Fathers visited the Ngorome in 1904, they described young men wearing their hair in butter and ochre-smearred plaits as the Maasai.⁵⁴ At the dances held at the full-moon young people wore rows of brass or wire-wrapped anklets and bracelets, beaded headgear and ear ornaments. Mara peoples also pierce and elongate their earlobes, as did the Maasai. Just when they adopted this style cannot be deduced from the available evidence. People now think of it as "traditional."⁵⁵

The cultural patterns that seemed to imitate the Maasai were so widespread that the early explorers and colonial officers mistook western Serengeti people to be Maasai. German explorers'

⁵² Annual Report 1933, Musoma District, Annual Reports, Native Affairs Section, Lake Province, 215/924/2, TNA.

⁵³ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁵⁴ "Report of a Trip in 1904 from Bukumbi to Mwanza, Kome? Ukerewe, Kibara, Ikoma -- Mara Region, together with some stories," L. Bourget, Trip Diary, N.p. n.d., 1904, M-SRC54, Sukuma Archives, Bujora, Mwanza. Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma ♂).

⁵⁵ E. C. Baker, "Age-Grades in Musoma District, Tanganyika Territory," *Man* 27, 151 (1927): 223, reports that the Kuria abaNgibabe age set initiated in 1858-62 in Nyabasi first began piercing the tops of their ears for the insertion of small sticks as ornaments. It would be interesting to know if western Serengeti use of Maasai ornamentation differed slightly enough, as Klumpp and Kratz show for the Okiek, that it is a visual display of both submission and resistance to Maasai dominance, Donna Klumpp and Corinne Kratz, "Aesthetics, Expertise, and Ethnicity: Okiek and Maasai Perspectives on Personal Ornament," in *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 195-222. Unfortunately there are few of these ornaments left as they are not currently in use.

Baumann and Weiss both noted the similarity between these peoples and the Maasai in dress, ornamentation, ear piercing, use of snuff and weapons.⁵⁶ Present day Kuria peoples shown the photos taken by Weiss of Kuria in 1904 could not believe that these were Kuria ancestors and not Maasai.⁵⁷ [See Figures 5-3 and 10-2 for Weiss photographs.] The encyclopedist Schnee described all of the Bantu-speaking peoples of the Mara Region as possessing Maasai "blood" and similar in many cultural aspects.⁵⁸ Early German notes on the "tribes" of the western Serengeti categorize Ikoma and Nata as "lands of the Maasai."⁵⁹ The early map of native caravan routes from Wakefield shows the whole region inhabited by the Maasai "Lumbwa."⁶⁰

Whether the western Serengeti peoples also imitated the Maasai in cattle raiding is a controversial subject. Elders said that they prohibited cattle raiding of any kind in earlier generations. Those men whom they knew as thieves would not receive local hospitality and became like outcasts, without hope of finding a woman to marry. Many people told me that wealth gained from theft was transient wealth that the thief would squander and never use to build a homestead, the proscribed avenue for securing social respect.⁶¹ Elders lamented the break down in authority of seniors over juniors that led to cattle raiding by young men in the last century. Western Serengeti peoples are eager to distinguish themselves from the Kuria to the north and the

⁵⁶ Baumann, *Durch Masailand*, pp. 57, 196-99, 246; and Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme*, pp. 244-5.

⁵⁷ Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," p. 123.

⁵⁸ Schnee, *Deutsches Kolonial Lexikon*, pp. 121, 679, 680-81.

⁵⁹ Musoma District [Notes from Musoma District Books on local tribes and chieftains, in German [c.1912?]] Manuscript, CORY #348, EAF, UDSM.

⁶⁰ Wakefield, "Wakefield's Notes," pp. 303-339; and Wakefield, "Native Routes," pp. 742-747.

⁶¹ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

Maasai to the east for whom cattle raiding is a sign of manhood and a legitimate means for gaining wealth to marry. The elaborate rituals necessary for purifying a man who has killed anyone except a Maasai in battle demonstrate the absence of a warrior ethos.

It seems clear, however, that western Serengeti age-sets imitated Maasai-style raids and dressed up like Maasai to raid on the lake during the next generation of the Kihocha, Kong'ota and Kubhura (1900-1916). The lakes people, being afraid of Maasai, would not give chase to the raiders. Many stories testify that Maasai warriors made alliances with western Serengeti age-sets that corresponded to their own (see Chapter 10). The western Serengeti youth would allow Maasai to pass for raiding on the lake if the Maasai would give them some cattle on the return trip. These alliances with the Maasai were short-lived. One age-set would make an alliance that the following age-set would break.⁶²

Both admiration and fear of the Maasai led western Serengeti people to embrace Sonjo refugees who came with the experiences of living in closer proximity to the Maasai and in direct conflict with the Lumbwa over pastoral resources. Narrators may have given ancestors from Sonjo precedence in the emergence stories because of the vital role they played in teaching western Serengeti people how to cope with the Maasai threat.

The Imitation of Maasai Age-Sets?

Given these common cultural understandings and the admiration of Maasai, western Serengeti peoples might be expected to reconfigure their system of age-organization during this time of stress by imitating the Maasai, who had so successfully used age-set organization as a mechanism for expansion. Competition between Maasai age-set groups led to the advance of one group at the expense of the other. The combination of warrior villages, mass age-set ceremonies

⁶² Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996 (Ikoma σ).

and constraints by elders on marriage and livestock ownership encouraged raiding by the *murrar* and their expansion into new areas.⁶³ Age-set organization, as the Maasai practiced it, offered a way to gain access to a wider network of reciprocity by linking age-mates across a wide region.⁶⁴ As Galaty put it, age organization was a framework for "creating a potent force out of a widely dispersed population."⁶⁵ The Maasai system celebrated and gave a place of honor to the ethos of youthful prowess and aggression necessary for organizing conflict and its resolution. The new age system was clearly appealing to young men who admired Maasai *murrar*hood as way of gaining respect in their own communities dominated by elders.⁶⁶

In fact, many elders stated that their *saiga* system was "just like the Maasai." They said that their age-set names and times of initiation corresponded with the Maasai, who opened a new age-division every seven years.⁶⁷ The Ikoma waited to initiate a new *saiga* until the Maasai did their ceremony. Then the *saiga* ceremonies would move from east to west—Ikoma to Ishenyi to Nata. Maasai and Ikoma or Nata warriors of the same age-set would cooperate in raids or form alliances. The coordination of age-set rituals and naming from Maasailand to the lake is astonishing. Regionally coordinated age-sets were both a means for incorporation of strangers and a passport for safe travel and hospitality among age-mates. The ethos of age-set warriors also encouraged conflict between age-sets of different cycles similar to Maasai practice, thus

⁶³ Galaty, "Maasai Expansion," pp. 82-84.

⁶⁴ Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Galaty, "Maasai Expansion," p. 82.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

⁶⁷ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi σ).

reinforcing the boundaries of age-organization.⁶⁸ The word for individual circumcision sets that would be combined to make up the large age-set, *siriti*, is a Maasai loanword.⁶⁹

In reality however, the *saiga* age-set system that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century in response to disaster was clearly an original western Serengeti innovation. Its structure bears very little resemblance to the Maasai system, a straightforward linear age-set pattern, divided into the "right and left hands" without cycling names.⁷⁰ In the western Serengeti, Tatoga neighbors practiced a non-cycling generation system called *saigeida*, which suggests a more likely source for the Mara innovation than borrowing it from the Maasai.⁷¹ The use of cycling names and sets based on the principles of generation, with the outward trappings and ideology of age-sets, was an innovation that both respected the older values of the generation and recognized the need for unity and mobilization of young men.

Although elders described the *saiga* as a military device that for the first time grouped men of a similar age into organized units, little evidence exists to support claims that the territorial age-sets functioned as military regiments. When a raid took place all available and able men joined in the chase. The *yowe* or alarm call is an important institution even today in which one person sounds the alarm with a particular shout, which is relayed progressively from homestead to

⁶⁸ Galaty, "Maasai Expansion," p. 83.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80. The Maasai word for a local circumcision group *isiriti* is also used by western Serengeti peoples, *siriti*.

⁷⁰ Lamphear reported a similar change from a generation to age-sets among the Turkana, to create a more efficient system of military mobilization. Among the Turkana too, the Maasai system was not accepted wholecloth and many generational aspects of the original system survived. John Lamphear, "Aspects of 'Becoming Turkana': Interactions and Assimilation Between Maa- and Ateker-Speakers," in *Being Maasai: Identity and Ethnicity in East Africa*, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 94-95.

⁷¹ *Saigeida* is the name used among Tatoga informants in the Mara region and is also reported for the Barabaig Tatog by Wilson, "The Tatoga of Tanganyika (Part II)," p. 42.

homestead until all are alerted. If someone failed to answer the *yowe*, no one would help him when raiders stole his cattle and he was subject to serious fines. The leader of the age-set was a man of peace rather than war who hung back during a battle and was responsible for keeping peace among the young men.⁷² Military leadership under a powerful and unifying prophet never developed here as it did among the Maasai, Nandi and Turkana.⁷³

The western Serengeti *saiga* did engage in some activities that emphasized their comradeship and equality, as do Maasai age-regiments, but never as armed encampments mobilized for aggression. Age-mates might call a *risaga*, or work party, for work on the farm or in building. The Nata practice of *n'gombe ya haki* (cow of the young woman) is highly reminiscent of Maasai *murrani* eating meat out in the wilderness. Here the *saiga* in power would capture a young woman of their age-set whom her father could only redeem with a cow for the *saiga* to eat together. When one of their age-mates died the *saiga* demanded a cow from the family as their due. Yet they more commonly shared meat in inter-generational groups with the chest meat going to the *saiga* and other cuts going to each of the other generations, rather than the *saiga* itself eating the entire cow.⁷⁴ That women, as wives, continued to be present at, and crucial to, the important *saiga* ceremonies provides further evidence that the age-set system met both the concern of the older generational system with the fertility of the land and the concern for the mobilization of young men.

⁷² See Chapter 8 for description of age- and generation-set leaders.

⁷³ See Lamphear, "Aspects of Becoming Turkana", p. 95-97; Bob J. Walter, *Territorial Expansion of the Nandi of Kenya, 1500-1905* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970).

⁷⁴ Interview with Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995 (Nata ♂); Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

The organization of young men into age-sets and the ethos of warrior prowess also facilitated collective hunting and gathering activities in a response to the disasters. Elders describe the dangerous journey of age-sets into the wilderness to gather arrow poison or to hunt.⁷⁵ They traded the products of the wilderness to Sukuma in exchange for food. The large-scale commercialized hunting that flourished in the period of recovery after the disasters began as means for survival during the disasters. In the context of reduced livestock herds and the failure of crops due to drought, young men contributed to the domestic economy by collective hunting, gathering and trading trips.

Any change in social organization and settlement resulted from a struggle between individuals representing different and conflicting interests. Some have argued that the Maasai age-system supported the gerontocratic power of senior men over juniors in their control over access to women.⁷⁶ Others have seen the adoption of age-set organization as a displacement of elders' centralizing authority by young men gaining power in military activity.⁷⁷ In the western Serengeti the new age-cycle system offered young men increased autonomy from the constant supervision of their fathers and new channels for gaining respect and authority. Nevertheless, it reinforced the power of elders by widening their sphere of control, and, during this period anyway, did not ultimately allow the youth to realize their aspirations of autonomy.

In times of heightened insecurity, East African women often became more vulnerable as the objects of slave raiders or captive wives, and thus more dependent on the protection of men.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Paul Spencer, "Becoming Maasai, Being in Time," p. 141.

⁷⁷ Lamphear, "Aspects of 'Becoming Turkana,'" p.94.

⁷⁸ See Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slave and Women: Life Stories from East and Central Africa* (New York: L. Barber Press, 1993).

The emphasis on an ethos of male military strength included women who were courageous in birth but not in a central role.⁷⁹ Women were important as objects of fertility and reproduction in a time when survival was at stake, but this did not necessarily enhance their position in the community. During this time when men were increasingly mobile and boundary definition became more important, women were increasingly confined to, and consequently came to represent, the bounded, enclosed home.⁸⁰ A situation in which leaving the boundaries of home was dangerous increasingly restricted women's movements. Elders of both sexes said that women seldom left their home area except if escorted by men. I found no evidence, as in Kuria or Kikuyu, of women as traders during this period of insecurity.⁸¹ Although the move of sons away from their fathers' territory may have allowed women to settle nearer to their natal kin, it may equally have deprived them of their mother-in-law as an ally among strangers. The changes of this period do not seem to be in the interests of women, although it may have given them the opportunity to gain closer control over the day-to-day management of local community relations, while men focused their minds outside the community.

Age-set Territories: The Bounded Space of *Saiga*

The most dramatic social change brought about by the transformation of age-set structure was the territorialization of age-sets. Up to this time, western Serengeti people organized their settlements around the idiom of kinship and defined territories as clan land. With the advent of age-set territories, the lineage principle was not negated but rather used in a different way. Now

⁷⁹ Interviews with Baginyi Mutani and Mayenye Nyabunga, Sanzate, 8 September 1995 (Ikizu ♀). Women who have been courageous in birth are allowed to dance in the *aghaso* for lion killers, this is also noted for Tatoga.

⁸⁰ See Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, pp. 39, 109, the village and interior space represented as female.

⁸¹ Tobisson, *Family Dynamics*, p. 89; Hay, "Local Trade and Ethnicity," pp. 7-12.

lineages became the means for linking three territorial age-sets into a cycle which defined the ethnic groups of Nata, Ikoma or Ishenyi.

What made this reorganization of age-sets so important for the transformation of social identity was that it corresponded to a different way of organizing space. The core spatial images in these stories of nineteenth century transformation are those of enclosure and boundary formation similar to that of the rituals to "cool the land" described in the last chapter. Age-sets rather than clans became the basis for organizing settlements into enclosed territories. In a situation of extreme societal stress, communities sought to protect themselves by emphasizing the older concepts of enclosure and boundaries. Yet they had to enclose new kinds of units to assure survival. With the disintegration of the regional system of economic interdependence with Asi hunters and Tatoga herders, clan territories were too small to ensure economic viability. In addition lineage-based communities were far too exclusive in a situation that demanded regional networks of security and exchange. Similarly, Peter Rigby reports for the Gogo in central Tanzania that, "it only requires a drought or famine to cause the complete disintegration of the old agnatic groups in terms of residence."⁸² The ritual enclosure of the age-set territory provided both a larger-scale community that unified lineage-based clans and made connections with age-sets region wide.

The most important effect of the territorial move to age-set settlement was to cut across the ties of lineage and clan. People could now find within each *saiga* territory all of the clans and lineages that had previously lived in separate settlements. Lineage ceased to be the most important idiom for residential social organization. Juhani Koponen describes the common experience across German East Africa of a slow movement away from lineage-based settlements in stages, ending in

⁸² Rigby, *Cattle and Kinship*, p. 148.

the dispersal of fortified settlements in the colonial period. This led not only to the eventual dispersion of settlements but also to the formation of settlements on other principles besides lineage-based descent.⁸³ David W. Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo's study of fortified settlements in western Kenya brings into question the earlier assumption of lineage-based settlements by showing that their inhabitants were related by strategic alliances.⁸⁴

The Development of Age-set Territories

Another way to understand these larger processes is that lineage was now used as the linkage points for expanding the scope of affiliation to wider ethnic groupings, based on settlement in age-cycle territories, rather than organizing individual settlements. According to the testimony of elders, the primary response to raids was to territorialize age-sets. Yet elders described these changes as a defense mechanism for the survival of a lineage rather than as offensive age-regiments equipped for battle. In order for a man not to lose all of his sons in one raid he divided them out among the three territorially based age-set cycles.⁸⁵ He initiated a younger son into a different age-cycle than his older brother, rather than waiting another sixteen years for the next initiation to come around in his home territory. This allowed each son to enter his *saiga* with his own age-cohort, when he was most fit for battle.

Many elders confirmed that the *saiga* system was not a response to raids but to the increased need for wider and more secure networks of reciprocity. A father dispersed his sons among each of the age-cycle territories so that the family would always have a place of refuge and expanded sources of information. Other elders said that the purpose of dividing out your sons to

⁸³ Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, pp. 650-652.

⁸⁴ Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*, pp. 12-15.

⁸⁵ Interviews with Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995 (Ishenyi^o); Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995 (Ngoreme^o).

the various territories was to maintain peace within the "tribe" by keeping the age-sets from fighting each other.⁶⁶

Division into age-cycle territories was a response to adversity by spreading out risks, as insurance against bad times. Because drought tended to be localized, crops might fail in one area while neighboring areas enjoyed an abundant harvest. Those who planted on the black cotton soils of the plains would harvest well in a drier season, while those on the sandy soils of the hills might lose their crop. Elders described the territorial *saiga* divisions in Nata as containing different ecologies and subsistence strategies—Busaai in the hills as farmers and herders, Bongirate on the plains as herders and hunters, Borumarancha in the bush as hunters and farmers.⁶⁷ The age-cycle territories allowed for the reformulation of an interdependent economy of survival that the events of the disasters had destroyed.

In earlier times, western Serengeti farmers who lived in hill settlements, relied on Asi hunters in the woodlands and Tatoga herders on the grasslands as their insurance against bad times. However, as the Maasai gained dominance in the region, the Asi increasingly entered into client relations with the Maasai and moved further east toward what is now Loliondo.⁶⁸ The Tatoga herders came under more pressure than the farmers from Maasai raids since they were in direct competition with the Maasai for pastoral resources. The disasters also significantly reshaped

⁶⁶ Interviews with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi *o'*); Mwita Magige, Mosongo, 9 September 1995 (Ngoreme *o'*).

⁶⁷ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 3 March 1995 (Nata *o'*).

⁶⁸ Geographical Section, *A Handbook of German East Africa*, pp. 98-99, state that "during the great migration of the Masai, the Wandorobbo were either driven out or forced to submit." They differentiate between Ndorobo that speak a Maasai language and those in the Serengeti who speak a different language for which the "Washashi in Ikoma" act as interpreters. This implies a longterm relationship between Ikoma and these hunter/gatherers who had only recently become clients of the Maasai.

Tatoga historical consciousness. One Tatoga elder divided his list of generations into those of the founding prophets and those beginning with the "great hunger." In the Ngorongoro Crater the Maasai defeated the Bajuta Tatoga and took possession of the Crater around mid-century. Tatoga elders tell stories of how the great prophet Saigilo warned them three times to leave the region until the Maasai, famine and disease soundly defeated them and they finally followed the prophet south to Nyamwezi. This must have happened just prior to the colonial period since the Germans killed Saigilo's son Mahusa in Hanang' among the Barabaig Tatoga.⁸⁹ Without significant populations of either Asi hunters or Tatoga herders during the disasters, the less mobile farmers were left to work out a new system of economic survival on their own.

The Development of Larger Scale Territorial Identities

When lineage ceased to be the basis for settlement, *saiga*, or age-organization became the dominant form of social organization. Many settlements of this period included both Nata and Ishenyi of the same *saiga*. When western Serengeti people returned from Sukuma after the famine Ishenyi and Nata of the Busaai cycle settled at Nagusi, while Sibora was a settlement of the Bongirate from all ethnic groups. The Germans assigned separate "tribal" chiefs to age-cycle territories in both Ngoreme and Ishenyi that carried over into the British period. Some elders assert that people were more loyal to age-cycle than to "tribe," getting along better and living nearer to people of the same age-cycle than to others of their own ethnic group in other age-cycles.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Interviews with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995; Gilumughera Gwiyeya and Girihoia Masaona, Issenye, 28 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂); Marunde Godi, Manawa, 24 February 1996 (Isamajega ♂). For a popular written account recommended to me by Tatoga elders, see Institute for Swahili Research, *Zamani Mpaka Siku*, pp. 44-46.

⁹⁰ Explicitly stated in interview with Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

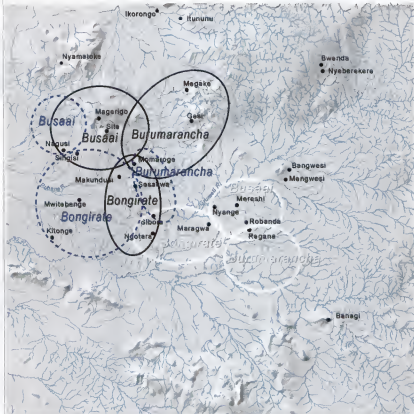
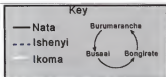
Placing the age-set territories on a map shows this overlapping of ethnic groups by age-cycle. [See Figure 9-5: Map of Age-set Cycles]. Nata, Ishenyi, and to a lesser extent Ikoma, share parts of the same age-cycle territories. Shall we then conclude that the separation of the age-cycles into "tribes" was only an innovation of the colonial period? If people lived together as one *saiga* before the colonial period perhaps they had no sense of ethnic identity. However, evidence supports the supposition that a sense of ethnicity was developing as the unity of Nata Busaai, Bongirate and Borumarancha as opposed to Ishenyi Busaai, Bongirate and Borumarancha out of this reformulation of age-sets into territories.

Informants described this change as "a father dividing out his sons." Their use of the descent idiom is crucial to my interpretation of this process. If a man had "sons" in other territories, he would still be responsible for participating in the rituals of their initiation and *saiga* ceremonies outside his home settlement, *ekyaro*. One important definition of social identity is those who do ritual together. If the previous ritual community had been the local lineage-based community, then the *saiga* system would have expanded the ritual community to all three age-cycle territories, by requiring "fathers" to participate in the rituals of their "sons" in other territories. The multiple relationships of many fathers and their sons became the glue that held together these separate territories as one emerging ethnic group.

Saiga could not replace the primary relationships of lineage and clan that were tied up with issues of marriage, property and inheritance.⁹¹ Many elders described the *saiga* as a "club" of young men for the display of their pride, with little influence on the issues of daily life. If families still worked out their property relations through the patrilineage then sons would still be responsible to "fathers" in other territories. The division of "sons" into different territories was thus a way of

⁹¹ See Baxter and Almagor, *Age, Generation and Time*, pp. 9-10.

Age-Cycle Territories (Saiga) c.1870 - 1895 The Generation of Disasters



Graphics by

Peter Shetter
Dove Creek Information Services
IDRISI, Adobe Photoshop and Macromedia Freehand

Scale

30 km

Figure 9-5: Map of Age-Set Cycles

expanding the influence of fathers. For example, "sons" in Bongirate would not raid their "brothers" in Busaai, and they would be responsible for feeding their "fathers" in Borumarancha.

Yet how did separate Nata or Ishenyi or Ikoma age-cycles develop? One can imagine the scene described by elders when these new age-set "associations," offering a more powerful form of cooperation and pride for young men, began to recruit throughout the area rather than in their own lineage-based lands. Young men ready for initiation may have asked their fathers to allow them to go there and join the new fraternity, participate in the excitement of *murr*ahood. Fathers, beleaguered by crop loss, disease, raids and loss of children may have seen the benefits of tapping into other networks and sent their precious remaining sons away, gambling on their survival. If the sons wanted to join the Ngirate association, forming in various places of the region in the same year, they would have chosen the one nearest and most accessible to their homes. This in turn would have facilitated tighter associations between people of previously separate and only loosely connected settlements within the area. Over time these multiple connections of lineage-based relationship would have knit together these territories into the enclosed space of ethnicity.

Neighboring settlements that began to associate with each other by their participation in the same *saiga* groups defined their boundaries by physical features of the land—rivers, hills, impenetrable wilderness or open plains. Thus the Ikoma, Nata and Ngoreme age-sets used the older definition of territorial boundaries in terms of the division between civilization and wilderness to form new kinds of units. People could reach each of the age-cycle territories of one ethnic group within a day's walk, without crossing open areas of wilderness, fording rivers, or crossing mountains. Age-cycle territories were limited in size depending on the ability of fathers to attend the rituals of their sons. We can envision the united age-cycle territories of Nata, Ikoma and the former Ishenyi at Nyigoti as separate islands of hills in a sea of open plains and woodlands. Early German maps identify the extensive wilderness between Nata and Ngoreme as the wilderness of the

Ndorobo hunters. This ecological boundary helps to explain the larger dialectical language differences between Ngoreme and other South Mara languages.⁹² After the Ishenyi returned from Sukuma, they settled among the Nata, in territories of their own age-set cycle, receiving their welcome as age-mates. Yet the Ishenyi maintained a sense of their own identity as refugees from Nyeberekera and carved out their own age-cycle territories. They continued to do their rituals separately although living near their Nata age-mates.

As the age-sets began settling together, the age-cycle names took on the locational prefix - "bu," thus producing Busaai, Bongirate, Borumarancha. Because the age-set, rather than the lineage, was now territorially based, it had to take over responsibility for maintenance of the relationship to the land, just as the generation-sets had done before. The *saiga* territories rather than the lineage-based *hamate* now became known as the *ekyaro*, or the "land," carrying the sense of ritual control over the land. During this period people still closely identified the lineage with a particular cluster of homesteads within the *ekyaro*, perhaps now represented by a fortified settlement.⁹³ Yet for the first time people also began to identify the united age-set cycle territories with the *ekyaro* or the "land." A sense of larger-scale ethnicity began to emerge out of the *saiga* settlements of the late nineteenth century.

Ethnic identity developed as the age-set began to take responsibility for maintaining a ritual relationship with the land in the larger territory of the three cycling age-sets. As an Ishenyi elder described it, those in their *saiga* were responsible for the health of the land in all three of the age-cycle territories within their own ethnic group. It was up to the *abachama* (age-set leaders) to

⁹² Refer to dialect chaining map in Chapter 4. See Chapter 8 for more indepth discussion of ecological boundaries.

⁹³ Many elders in the eastern areas refer to the *saiga* cycle as the *ekyaro*. In particular the explicit testimony of Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

perform the rituals for protection of the land from raids or disease, to spread the medicine of rainmaking and to consult a prophet when necessary. In the same way that the *rikora* or generation-set carried out these rituals for the *ekyaro* of the lineage or clan-based *hamate*, the *saiga* now began to perform them for all three age-cycles that made up the emerging ethnic group, or the *ekyaro*.⁵⁴ The "rule" of the *saiga* has more meaning as ritual responsibility for the health of the land and its people than for war. The role of the *saiga* was to protect the community but that more often involved taking up the medicines for "cooling the land" rather than taking up the weapons of war.⁵⁵ The ability of the *saiga* to "encircle the land" in ritual protection constrained the spatial limits of the emerging ethnic territory.

According to Frederick Barth, ethnicity serves to monitor access to critical resources. This observation explains the formation of *saiga* territories grouped into ethnic units. *Saiga* territories ensured permanent access to a wider range of resources than was previously possible. The disasters threatened the survival of those who were isolated.⁵⁶ That western Serengeti people used the idiom of age-sets to accomplish this is not surprising, given the cultural dominance and admiration of the Maasai during this period. *Saiga* territories were a way of widening support and protection as an assurance against hunger, a means of reasserting ritual control over the land and gaining access to resources, including information crucial to survival in times of crisis. It linked a variety of diverse settlements into larger territorial groupings by spreading out the members of any one lineage, while maintaining their responsibilities to each other. Because of the extent and

⁵⁴ Interview with Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 September 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

⁵⁵ Interview with Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂) says this most explicitly as the "rule" or *utawala*, in Kiswahili, of the *saiga* being their responsibility for the *uganga*, or healing, needed for the land.

⁵⁶ Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, pp. 18-19.

severity of the disasters people had to begin looking beyond their settlements and closely defined "land" (*ekyaro*) for security. The networks of patronage and prophecy that previously existed between individual settlements were not enough to ensure survival. The only sure method of gaining support over a wider region was to construct dense networks of relationship held together by the loyalty of "sons" who could not betray their "fathers." Western Serengeti people seamlessly expanded the concept of *ekyaro* from the lineage-based settlement to include the ethnic territory in the late nineteenth century.

Because western Serengeti people formed a sense of ethnicity within the cradle of age organization, they provided it from its inception with regional ties that transcended ethnic identity. Age-set identity facilitated all kinds of regional interaction and trade only realized by the sons of this "generation of disasters." I have called theirs "the generation of opportunity," although raiding and famine actually increased. This generation was able to make opportunity out of disaster by using these newly formed regional networks to their advantage.

The sense of ethnicity that evolved out of the space of age-cycle territories was quite different either from colonial ideas about "tribe" or present-day definitions of ethnicity. The map of age-cycles grouped into ethnic units is still a long way from the colonial "tribal" map shown in Chapter 2. Yet it was these units, conceived on a very different basis, that the colonial experience molded into "tribes" and which continue to have meaning today. These older ideas about ethnicity, connected to the spreading of risk and the ritual health of the land, are still current a century later.

Continuities in Strategies for Coping with Disaster

Western Serengeti peoples developed strategies for coping with the disasters which included diversifying and spreading out their resources. Narrators express this strategy through the idiom of a father dividing out his sons to different age-set territories so that the lineage would survive the disasters. A colonial story of drought and famine in Ikoma, Ishenyi and Nata illustrates

the continuity of coping strategies in the western Serengeti. In 1934 the District Officer of Musoma reported the bad behavior of the chiefs of Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi, who had refused to lift a hand to alleviate famine conditions in their chiefdoms despite continual agitation from Musoma since 1931. Not only had these chiefs failed to report famine conditions and to initiate the district level cassava planting campaign but they had actively opposed and disobeyed the District authorities who came to carry out famine relief. Chief Sarota wrote to the office to ask for eleusine millet seeds when the colonial officers had ordered him to plant cassava and sweet potatoes. The chiefs even resisted road improvement schemes in which the government would pay labor in food. To prevent the recurrence of food shortages the authorities fined the chiefs for their neglect.⁹⁷

In fact, this famine occurred as a localized drought when other areas in the Musoma District experienced good harvests. The Ikoma area was recovering from locust and drought a few years earlier. Other chiefs, especially the "modernizing" Chief Makongoro of neighboring Ikizu, had responded to the cassava planting campaigns and had a plentiful supply of food. Nata, Ishenyi and Ikoma peoples had already established extensive ties of reciprocity in Ikizu that would have allowed them to find food through ties of friendship and patronage (*kohema*). When the government offered free grain in Musoma for those who came and got it, the District Officer reported that people "prefer to barter with their livestock for grain from neighboring chiefdoms" rather than come the distance to Musoma. The only solution to the famine that the chiefs offered was that the District should supply sacks of food for them to distribute. Yet people resisted increasing the patronage of the chief and the District Officer by this method and preferred their own more personally controlled relationships of reciprocity. All of the reports noted that the officers in charge detected little anxiety about food in these chiefdoms. People seemed to be

⁹⁷ A. Sillery, Acting D.O., Musoma District, to P.C., Lake Province, 22 February 1934, Native Authorities, Musoma District, 1934, Lake Province Files, 215/1027, TNA.

finding their own ways of coping, outside the authority of chiefs. The experience of deeply resented cattle quarantines during the rinderpest epizootic of the late twenties undoubtedly heightened resistance to government solutions.⁹⁸ This was also the time when Magoto left Nata for Ikizu with his large and diverse following of people.⁹⁹

Although the District Officer attributed cassava planting resistance to "laziness," one might better connect it to basic patterns of the household economy developed during the generation of disasters. The report stated that young men refused to plant cassava because, "the old custom of the women to the field and the men to the chase still holds sway in Ikoma." People increasingly relied on the plentiful wild game for meat during the hunger--"the youth spend all their time in hunting, spreading sleeping sickness, which threatens the very existence of the tribe."¹⁰⁰ Although farming was clearly the occupation of both men and women, the disasters of the last century encouraged the increasing mobility of men outside homes and fields. Men traveled to neighboring areas for food, gathered arrow poison and hunted in the wilderness, and took extensive trade journeys to Sukuma. Both the large numbers of goats, sheep and cattle reported for the district and the game products of the hunt demonstrate that plentiful resources were available for regional trade.

Although the conclusions of the colonial officers were based on the assumption of isolated and economically self-sufficient communities, people were obviously spreading their risks over a

⁹⁸ District Veterinary Officer, Monthly Report for June 1927, July 1927, 1926-29, Provincial Administration, Lake Province, 215/P.C./1/7, TNA.

⁹⁹ See Chapter 7 for story of Magoto.

¹⁰⁰ From District Officer, Musoma, C. McMahon, to Provincial Commissioner, Lake Province, 27 July 1933 (p. 266) and District Officer, Musoma to Provincial Commissioner, Lake Province, 21 Oct 1933, Shortage of Foodstuffs, Famine Relief, 1932-33, Lake Province Files 13252, TNA.

larger regional economy. As the District Reports attest, planting cassava meant restricting young men to their homesteads and work in the fields. In a situation of limited domestic labor, keeping young men involved in regional interactions rather than putting all their hopes for survival in the fields at home may have been more prudent. While the colonial administration interpreted the Ikomu drought as an endemic semi-famine condition of inadequate rainfall, people had designed local economic strategies to cope with life in a marginal land.¹⁰¹

Peoples of the western Serengeti responded to adversity in the late nineteenth century by using the principle of spreading their risks—literally spreading out their sons. They employed this same principle in the colonial years and continue to use it today. This is also a difficult time economically. People look back to the time of their fathers when livestock herds measured in the hundreds or even thousands. Today men are lucky to measure their herds in the tens. Fortunes rise and fall and yet the sense of increasing poverty is unmistakable. Once again homestead heads see their children as the means by which they can overcome these problems.

My host in Nata had three daughters and one son. His 14-year-old daughter was going to school in Kibara, near the lake, and living with his sister who was married to a school teacher there. His 12-year-old daughter was going to school near Mwanza and staying with the son of an adopted "sister-in-law." His 8-year-old daughter was staying nearby in Mbiso with a sister to go to school and he recently sent off his five-year-old son to Mwanza to live with another sister and begin school. Other brothers in his family used various means to get education for their children or set them up in business through extensive networks of political patronage, friendship and church affiliation. The "age-set associations" that attract youth today, both men and women, are boarding

¹⁰¹ Various letters and reports from District Office, Musoma, to Provincial Officer, Lake Province, Shortage of Foodstuffs, Famine Relief, 1932-33, Lake Province Files 13252, TNA.

schools spread throughout the nation. The memories of the "generation of disasters" are still useful in the coping strategies necessary to survive in a marginal land and in times of stress.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how people responded to the onset of a series of widespread disasters by drawing on generative principles of social organization from the past. The need for protection in the face of danger encouraged people to emphasize the core spatial images of boundary formation and encirclement. Yet the pathways of clan knowledge and the connections of patronage between settlements were also necessary for seeking refuge in times of trouble. Because of their contact with the Maasai, both in raiding and in peaceful exchange, western Serengeti people began to form age-sets on the basis of the previous pattern of generation-sets, to mobilize young men for raiding. The change in age-sets brought about far reaching changes in the way that people calculated time and in the way that they organized settlements. The discontinuities were so abrupt that the history of self-conscious ethnic groups begins with the period of disasters.

As the older economic system of interaction between farmers, herders and hunters fell apart in this era, farming communities found ways of reconstituting this system within the expanded scope of age-cycle territories. Each age-cycle territory was located in an area of different ecological and economic possibilities. By combining three of these territories into an ethnic group, fathers were able to spread out their sons, and their risks, among diverse communities. Given the uncertainty of the times, settlements were no longer organized by lineage or clan; a family's survival depended upon spreading out rather than concentrating. The regional networks of affiliation provided by common age-sets gradually replaced clan networks as devices for crossing social boundaries. The next chapter shows how the ethnic identities constituted by the ritual unification of age-set cycle territories became "tribes" in the early colonial period.

CHAPTER TEN
THE GENERATION OF OPPORTUNITY (C. 1895-1920):
CHANGING FORMS OF ETHNICITY

The period after the rinderpest panzootic and the great "Famine of the Feet" was a period of recovery in which western Serengeti people not only survived the disasters but prospered. They prospered by enlarging the scale and intensity of activities in which they had previously engaged. Collective hunting groups that developed during the famine years to harvest wildebeest tails or arrow poison for trade in Sukuma transformed hunting into a commercialized activity during the "generation of opportunity." Through this trade young men rapidly accumulated cattle wealth on a scale previously unknown in the region. Age-set groups mobilized for collective action began to raid on the lakeshore by imitating Maasai warriors and gained additional cattle wealth. Increased wealth led to the emergence of a new kind of wealthy man.

The last chapter ended with the formation among the easternmost groups of Nata, Ishenyi, Ikoma and Ngoreme of age-set cycle territories that began developing into a larger scale ethnic identity as a result of the need for enclosure and boundary formation during the disasters. Western Serengeti people turned territories defined by age-set cycle, clan or the rule of a rainmaker "chief" into ethnic groups that could be defined as "tribal." Ethnicity took a peculiar course here because western Serengeti people formulated their notion of ethnicity based on preexisting ideas about a relationship to the land through the ancestors, the need for periodic healing of the land and the people through egalitarian rituals.

Yet these territories were not enclosed and people defined their emerging ethnic identities in relation to others with whom they were in close daily contact through raid, trade and settlement.

They used various kinds of social identities, such as age-set, kinship, and eldership titles, inherited from the past in their relationship with others to cross ethnic boundaries. The prosperity of a new kind of wealthy man depended upon the extension of these other kinds of identities into regional ties of friendship, patronage and alliance. Western Serengeti people developed ethnic identity as the regional context necessary for forming lateral networks that bridged ethnic boundaries. Paradoxically, it was in crossing boundaries that people defined the boundaries themselves. Identities of difference developed as people came into close working relationship, rather than in isolation.

Through the deployment of these ethnic bridges people gained access to the resources of knowledge and power controlled by other ethnic groups such as the Maasai, the Sukuma and the Germans. Western Serengeti people came into increasing conflict with the Maasai, not only because the Maasai needed to raid in order to restock after the rinderpest panzootic, but also because, as western Serengeti people gained livestock, they moved down onto the plains and into direct competition with the Maasai for pastoral resources. They made alliances and also fought with the Maasai in order to become pastoralists. The local concept of chiefship that developed in response to the German call for "chiefs," was based on linkage between territories. Western Serengeti people understood power and knowledge within a field of multiple and divergent sources that could be tapped by making these connections rather than within a unitary hierarchical structure of domination or subordination. This understanding drew on the older notion of clans as resource pathways at a time when clan pathways were no longer functional. Ethnic identity coexisted with and depended upon multiple and situational social identities that crosscut ethnicity.

This analysis shows that western Serengeti ethnicity was not a creation of the colonial state but internally generated in a particular historical context. The inter-ethnic context of relationships with Maasai, Sukuma and Germans defined ethnic boundaries through the close and

intimate contacts of friendship, fictive kinship, alliances and trade that crossed those boundaries. Recovery from the disasters through raiding, hunting and trading set in motion a process of the accumulation of wealth on a scale unknown in this region which had consequences for social transformation. The internal creation of wealth intensified the process of ethnic formation as wealthy men began to use the ethnic group as their base of support.

Ethnic Formation

In spite of its ubiquitous, tenacious contemporary presence and theoretical importance in scholarship today, historians often assume rather than problematize the concept of ethnicity. What we often take for granted to be universal about ethnicity are those attributes that are historically constructed in the context of the nation-state, international communication and industrial-capitalism. Barth's work on ethnicity is foundational for understanding the ethnic group in terms of its interactions with others and in a particular historical context rather than as an isolated unit. Others have taken this a step further to posit that ethnicity is only possible in the case of intense inter-ethnic interaction and political relations of competition over scarce resources. Ethnicity is particularly used to describe relations of inequality within a single political unit such as the colonial territory or the nation state. Although relations of difference existed in the precolonial past, without a state or larger system of political and economic difference, speaking of ethnic groups at all is problematic.¹ Yet the events of the late precolonial and early colonial period provided the conditions for just such a system of interaction.

Recent historical scholarship in Africa interprets "tribalism" or ethnicity as a creation of colonial administrators in search of logical units for indirect rule and elite national collaborators

¹ Barth, Ethnic Groups; R. Cohen, "Ethnicity," pp. 379-403; Brakette F. Williams, "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain," Annual Review of Anthropology 18 (1989): 401-444; Anya Peterson Royce, Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

for broadening political support. This view draws on the insights of Hobsbawm and Ranger in The Invention of Tradition, Anderson in Imagined Communities, and, more particularly for Africa, Vail's collection of essays, The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa. All of these works see ethnicity (or nationalism) as historical construct rather than biological fact.² For Africanists, going beyond the stereotypical view of precolonial societies as isolated and bounded "tribes," forever enmeshed in primordial conflict, is a necessary step. On the other hand, as Ranger pointed out in his self-critique of The Invention of Tradition, seeing the creation of ethnicity as a product of colonialism again made ordinary Africans the passive pawns of powerful outside forces. He called for a reconsideration of ways in which local people "filled" those colonial ethnic "boxes," once defined, with contested meanings and content in the process of local struggle.³

Western Serengeti Forms of Ethnicity

Western Serengeti ethnicity reflects both the historical context in which it developed and the historical roots out of which it developed. Small-scale units, closely corresponding to the older notion of the *ekyaro* as the bounded territory responsible for maintaining the health of the land, survived in spite of attempts by colonial officers to create Paramount Chiefs and Federations of "tribes." Yet the need for ethnic units resulted from the acceleration of interaction with others in the period of recovery from the disasters. The process of ethnic formation was, in turn, intensified by the accumulation of wealth in cattle on a scale unknown before in this region.

² Hobsbawm and Ranger, The Invention of Tradition; Anderson, Imagined Communities; Vail, The Creation of Tribalism; See also Justin Willis, "The Makings of a Tribe: Bondel Identities and Histories," Journal of African History, 33 (1992): 191-208; and John Lonsdale, "When Did the Gusii (or Any Other Group) Become a 'Tribe,'" Kenya Historical Review 5, 1 (1977): 123-133.

³ Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited," pp. 62-111. For another treatment of the role of ordinary people in defining the contested meaning of ethnic identity see also Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa (Athens, Ohio, 1992).

Few models that exist in the literature for understanding the formation of precolonial ethnic identity can be applied to the western Serengeti.⁴ Examples of ethnicity as a product of early state formation or trade diaspora communities abound.⁵ The western Serengeti, however, is an example of a stateless society, even a chiefless society, influenced by diverse cultural traditions and little formalized trade. Ethnicity emerged here in a fluid context of multiple identities and affiliations as micro-"tribes" with shifting and overlapping boundaries. Spear and Waller interpret the precolonial formation of Maasai ethnicity as a process of differentiation according to economic specialization—Maasai pastoralists in distinction to Bantu-speaking farmers and Okiak-speaking hunter-gatherers.⁶ Western Serengeti peoples, however, resisted assimilation into a Maasai world view. Although they did divide the world between "farmers" and "others" (enemies), they did not define themselves (farmers) as a unified group and continued to include Tatog pastoralists as "fathers" rather than as "others."

In the context of the larger pan-ethnic identities (Maasai, Sukuma, Luo) of the region, many have argued against the separate existence of these smaller groups and for a pan-Mara ethnicity.⁷ Yet, in spite of profound regional sociocultural similarity, a larger sense of "Mara"

⁴ See Greene, *Gender, Ethnicity*, pp. 12-15, for an argument that precolonial ethnicity did exist and was not the invention of missionaries and colonial officers along with their elite collaborators. She also demonstrates how changing forms of ethnicity were related to gender.

⁵ John Wright and Caroline Hamilton, "The Making of the Amalala: Ethnicity, Ideology and Relations of Subordination in a Precolonial Context," *South African Historical Journal*, 22, (November 1990): 3-23; Newbury, *Kings and Clans*; Robert Launay, *Trade without Traders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Toyin Falola, "From Hospitality to Hostility: Ibadan and Strangers, 1830-1904," *Journal of African History*, 26 (1985): 51-68.

⁶ Spear and Waller, "Introduction," *Being Maasai*, pp. 1-18.

⁷ Mekacha, *The Sociolinguistic Impact*, p. 56, makes this point linguistically. Nyerere appealed to the unity of South and North Mara peoples in a published letter home while studying in Edinburgh, "Ibadu siku moja hatutakuwa tena Wakurya au Wasimbiti wa Tarime na Wajita au Wazanaki wa Musoma bali WA-MARA wa Wilaya ya MARA tukisema Ki-Mara." [maybe one

ethnicity has not developed and Mara peoples continue to insist on the localized ethnic group. These smaller ethnic units, identified on the map by the earliest explorers in the region in the 1890s, served as the basis for the formalization of ethnicity in the next century.⁸ Even in the face of colonial ideas about proper "tribes," the ethnic groups of the Mara Region held onto these small-scale identities because of the primary meaning they attached to the intimate ritual relationship between land and people to ensure health and fertility.⁹

Each ethnic group in the western Serengeti developed an ethnic identity in a different way according to their particular historical experience. The easternmost groups of Nata, Ishenyi, and Ikoma developed their ethnicity around the space of age-set cycle territories. These three small ethnic groups correspond most closely to the old "clan" *ekyaro* territories in size and composition. Although the British united these three groups in the Ikoma Federation, a sense of united identity never developed. As for the other Mara ethnic groups, Ngoroeme age-cycle territories remained fairly autonomous into the colonial era, with a sense of being "Ngoroeme" formed within ecological boundaries and in contrast to the Maasai. The Ikizu united autonomous clan territories (*hamate*) around the growing power of the rainmaker *mtemi* from the Kwaya clan of Kanadi. In a similar

day we will not again be the Kuria or the Simbiti of Tarime or the Jita or the Zanaki of Musoma, but rather the Mara People of the District of Mara, speaking the Mara language.] *Mara Gazeti*, vol. 1 (June 1950), Native Chiefs, Musoma, 1949-50, Secretariat Files 29626, TNA. Kuria scholars have often included western Serengeti peoples as a "sub-tribe" of the Kuria. In the popular press all of Mara Region today is considered "Kuria," although strongly resisted by South Mara peoples. For an analysis of Mara Region as one ethnic group in spite of their insistence otherwise, see Anacleto, "Serengeti," pp. 23-24.

⁸ Prem-Lieutenant Werther, "Übersichtskarte der Expedition des Prem.-Lieutenant Werther in Deutsch-Ostafrika, 1892-1893," (Berlin 1894). "Ikoma" Karte von Deutsch-Ostafrika (Berlin 1910). Hauptmann Schlobach and Col. Delme-Radeliffe, "Die deutsch-englische Grenze zwischen dem 30. Längengrad und dem Djipe-See." Map 1907, GM 149, TNA.

⁹ The relationship was conceived of as between the land and the generation in "power" rather than between the land and the chief or king as has been described by African historians: Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, pp. 69-93; and Packard, *Chiefship and Cosmology*, pp. 1-54.

process the autonomous clan territories of Zanaki united around the rainmaker *mwami* in Busegwe.

The sense of ethnicity in each case depended upon a ritual unity in relation to the land. The generation-set or the age-set rituals of encircling the land solidified the sense of bounded group identity that was developing as a result of the stresses of the era of disasters. For the first time people extended this ritual unity in relation to the land beyond the boundaries of the clan *ekyaro* to the united clan territories of the age-set cycle or the walk of the generation-set. These relatively larger-scale ethnic territories allowed families to maximize the opportunities and minimize the risks for economic prosperity within their localities. People marked the boundaries of these enclosed ethnic territories by physical features of the land, beyond which lay the untamed wilderness.

This sense of ethnic identity, as a people ritually related to the land, developed within a regional context of inter-ethnic relations. In the era of recovery the need for lateral networks was increasingly important and western Serengeti people used ethnicity to facilitate these regional relationships rather than to form exclusive units. As John Lonsdale described this process for the Kikuyu, "wealth, personal reputation and social insurance came from bridging ethnicity; a narrow ethnic loyalty could invite destruction."¹⁰ The ethnicity of a bounded territorial unit only made sense within a larger regional system of ethnicities across whose boundaries people constantly negotiated access to the important social resources that ensured their prosperity.

Ethnicity created the larger regional context within which many other kinds of identities of affiliation could function. To gain access to the resources and power represented in other ethnic groups people identified points of linkage across those boundaries. Various rituals to formalize these links through oaths that bound people together as kin proliferated during this era. Through

¹⁰ John Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought," in *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity*, eds. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 329.

these oaths western Serengeti people made practical alliances with age-mates throughout the region for raiding, settlement and hospitality. The Ishenyi found land on which to settle in Nata by appealing to their age-mates and formalizing the relationship through oathing ceremonies. Ikoma and Ngoreme youth made alliances through oaths or marriage with Maasai age-mates to gain wealth from cattle raids. Men formed linkages to Sukuma based on individual friendships, often sealed by oaths or marriage, that developed into trade partnerships and cattle trusteeship. Wealthy men formed associations of titled elders that crossed ethnic boundaries. Ethnic groups across the western Serengeti put forth men with powerful medicines to serve as points of linkage to the German medicines of power. In each of these cases people deployed multiple kinds of social identities to gain access to the resources of knowledge and power controlled by others.

The "generation of opportunity" brought diverse peoples into closer contact with each other than they had previously experienced. While these people sought ways to develop relationships in spite of differences, they also began to define themselves in distinction to each other. John Iliffe aptly summarized this process throughout what was soon to become Tanganyika: "As cultures mingled, so, paradoxically, 'tribes' became more distinct."¹¹ Ethnic identities formed not in isolation but as people bumped up against each other in the close contact of neighbors, allies and trading partners.

This inter-ethnic context was not one of absolute inequality and hierarchical hegemony. The hegemonic power of the Maasai in the Rift Valley was offset by the power of the Sukuma over coastal trade in the region. Even the perception of German power embodied in their medicines was offset by the prophetic power of the Tatoga. Western Serengeti people did not see themselves as subordinate to any of these hegemonic powers but rather as seeking points of contact through

¹¹ Iliffe, *A Modern History*, p. 80.

which this power might be incorporated into an already eclectic base of knowledge inherited from the past.

Ethnic identity developed largely to the benefit of an emerging group of wealthy men who based their new cattle wealth on strong lateral networks throughout the region. Paradoxically, the men who most frequently crossed ethnic boundaries, did the most to solidify ethnic boundaries. The "big men" of the early colonial years built their reputations as ethnic representatives and defenders of ethnic "tradition" in the form of an expanded set of eldership titles.

Ishenyi Settlement in Nata Territory and the Development of Ethnic Identity

The process of ethnic formation within the context of inter-ethnic contact is illustrated by the example of "becoming Ishenyi" within Nata territory. When western Serengeti people moved back home from Sukuma after the famine in approximately 1895, they built their homesteads on land controlled by the age-set rather than the clan, often in inter-ethnic settlements. The Ishenyi were not able to go back to their pre-disaster home at Nyigoti because of Maasai incursions and appealed to Nata age-set members for land on which to build. Yet they did not assimilate and become Nata but rather developed a sense of ethnic identity that eventually led to the establishment of their own territory. A Nata elder describes the process of Ishenyi settlement in Nata [See Figure 10-1: Narrators of the "Generation of Opportunity," p. 512]:

Romara: *So when the Ishenyi were constricted out in Nyeberekeru (by the Maasai) they ran to the Nata, who were people with compassion and who received them.*

Jan: *When they received them what place did they give the Ishenyi to settle?*

Romara: *They gave them land in each age-set cycle (saiga). The Ishenyi first built at Nyigati.*

Jan: *Which age-set?*

Romara: *Those in their age-set (saiga) at that time were the abakihacha. The saiga of the abakihacha, they all built at Nyigoti, first, after leaving Nyaberekeru. Then after they were quiet awhile they began to disperse among the Nata age-set cycles. The Ishenyi Rumarancha followed the Nata Rumarancha. The Ishenyi Ngirate followed the Nata Ngirate. The Ishenyi Saai followed the Nata Saai. They built together as neighbors, right together. For example there at Nagusi, the place they now call Nyeberekeru, that place was given to the Saai of Ishenyi. That was because it was the*

territory of the Nata Saai. Then the Ishenyi Ngirate settled at Makondusi with the Nata Ngirate. They were given the land on the banks of the Rubana River, at Sasakwa, up to Ng'otera. At that time the Ishenyi Rumarancha were here at the Rubana River near to the old river crossing. They built at Mumaruuga. So they built like this, according to age-set, but now it has already become a mixture of people. Now you cannot say anything about a saiga. We were all mixed up.

Jan: So did they begin to call themselves Nata?

Romara: No, they were still just Ishenyi, but now they themselves do not settle by saiga anymore, either, they are all mixed up. Even we Nata we do not build each saiga separately anymore because of development. We have become a confused people.¹²

This testimony, which laments the demise of orderly settlement by age-set, finds no conflict in the two territorially based identities of ethnicity and age-set existing side by side. "They were still just Ishenyi" although they lived within the age-set territories of their Nata age-mates. This elder identifies their sense of Ishenyi-ness with a common history at Nyeberekera where the Maasai scattered them to the four corners. Yet those who became Ishenyi are those who settled among their age-set peers in Nata. The Ishenyi must continue to propitiate the spirits of the ancestors who act as guardians of the land, albeit now through the intermediary of a Tatoga prophet, since they destroyed their own prophet (see Chapter 3). A landed lineage-based identity still connected them to particular places on the landscape and so defined them as a separate people although in other contexts Ishenyi claimed equality with Nata age-mates.

This landed lineage or clan-based identity, as the foundation for ethnic feeling, emerges in the context of a conflict between Nata and Ishenyi that broke out after they had settled as neighbors. The youth killed people on each side, resulting in a polluted relationship, called *ekishomba*. Without a ritual cleansing of this polluted state Ishenyi and Nata people could not eat together nor marry. So the Nata and Ishenyi reconciled with each other by conducting an oathing ceremony to make them brothers. However, they did not perform this oath of reconciliation between Ishenyi and Nata as ethnic groups, but rather between the Moriho clan of Nata and the

¹² Interview with Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

Sagiti and Bene Omugendi clans of Ishenyi. The Gaikwe clan of Nata and the Rogoro and Bene O'Kinyonyi clans of Ishenyi made another oath. This happened during the time of the abaKihocha (c. 1900) of the Saai cycle in Nagusi.

These clans performed various oathing ceremonies to formalize the link between them. Through the oaths the Ishenyi and Nata elders formed links on the basis of age-set and kin identity. Yet it was the same oaths that bound them which also defined them as separate peoples. People who already acknowledged each other as kin or age-mates did not have to undergo these ritualized unions. When I asked one elder whether he had taken an oath of blood brotherhood with someone of his own ethnic group he said, "what would be the point of that, we are already joined?" In other places the refugees from Nyeberekera did not develop a separate identity but were assimilated into other ethnic groups as clans or lineages. In the context of inter-ethnic conflict, however, the Ishenyi formed a separate ethnic identity through their ritual definition in these oathing ceremonies. It was the Saai territory, where these oathing ceremonies took place, that became what is now known as Ishenyi "tribal" land. The other age-set territories have remained Nata territory.

The Ishenyi and Nata elders performed a number of oaths to bring an end to the enmity between clans. A symbolic mother on each side sealed the oath by nursing the other's baby.¹³ They also performed a ritual of jumping over a series of seven spears and sticks and the ritual in which the assembled people wore strips of hide cut from a sacrificed animal on their fingers. The elders cut the longest strip in half as representatives of each side held the ends to make them blood brothers. After the oathing ceremony of reconciliation the descendants of those involved could not fight with nor steal from each other.¹⁴

¹³ The Nata baby was Magoto Mossi, and his mother was, Mnyengere Nyawagamba.

¹⁴ Interviews with Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂); Tetere Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata ♂); Mikael Magessa Sarota, Issenye, 25 August 1995

The oathing ceremony draws on the same ritual symbols as that of the generation-set walk that unifies and encloses the people on the land. Just as the generation-set rituals to heal the land unify the clans, here the ritual unifies the clans of two ethnic groups to live peacefully as brothers in one age-set territory. The oathing ceremony concerned clans rather than ethnic groups because matters of property, and thus human life, still rested in corporate lineage-based groups. An Ikoma elder describes the state of *ekishomba* between two kingroups, specifically the matrikin, as a dangerous relationship that must be cleansed ritually in this way:

A state of pollution, ekishomba, exists if there is a murder. It affects both of the "houses," of the one who is murdered and the murderer—that is their mother's kin. So even if two brothers of different fathers were involved, it would not affect their father's side at all. The mother's kin from both sides must do the ceremony of kwibiserani angibo to get rid of the blood between them so that they can eat together again. The side of the murderer is fined seven cows and seven goats and one sheep to be killed as sacrifice. A young girl is taken from one side and a young boy from the other and they are put under a fresh skin together (as if in the act of intercourse). The elders mix flour, beer, milk and leaves in a basket and sprinkle (kumusa) this over all those present including the children as a blessing.¹⁵

Another elder added that in the ritual the children also feed each other porridge by crossing their arms over each other.¹⁶

Nata perform the ceremony of nursing each other's babies to seal a friendship between two families. When a woman nurses a non-kin child, members of the two families become "milk brothers" and have the same obligations to each other as real kin. Nata and Ishenyi clan elders chose this ceremony for the reconciliation because milk brotherhood would apply to everyone, not just the children whom they nursed, while a blood brotherhood ceremony only joins two people and

(Ishenyi ♂); Mang'oga Machunchuriani, Mbiso, 24 March 1995 (Nata ♂); Jackson Benedicto Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

¹⁵ Interview with Mabenga Nyahega and Machaba Nyahega, Mbiso, 1 September 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

¹⁶ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 4 October 1995 (Nata ♂).

their immediate families. Elders perform the ceremony of jumping over sticks when the youth from two different age-sets fight each other. In this ceremony the youth jump over the long bamboo containers that the elders use to store their beer straws and yellow fruits of the bush, seven of each (which is a bad number). The elder put a curse on those who would break the oath.¹⁷

The Ishenyi example shows how western Serengeti people used multiple forms of social identity to bridge the gap between ethnic groups to live in peace as neighbors. Elders appealed to the youth on the basis of their common age-set, the ritual unity of the strips of hide worn by each clan and the curse of elders over juniors. Clans united with each other across ethnic boundaries as "milk brothers" by cleansing the ritual pollution of murder between them. Without finding this common basis, neighbors could not eat with each other nor marry each other, destroying the basis for the everyday alliances of common residence.

The Ishenyi formed their sense of a separate ethnic identity in relationship to the Nata. Each of these linkages deployed in the rituals of reconciliation created ethnic boundaries even as it crossed them. By creating bridges between ethnic groups these other forms of social identity distinguished the ethnic groups as separate entities. Although the Ishenyi homeland of Nyaberekera and the place identified as the Nata origin site are located within sight of each other and their experiences of the disasters were similar, living side by side at Nagusi encouraged them to emphasize separate histories and traditions. Elders formulated ethnic histories as they sought to distinguish themselves from others.

Ethnic identities formed the larger context in which western Serengeti people interacted on a regional basis not only with each other but with Maasai and Sukuma. While the Ishenyi needed to bridge ethnicity to find a place to settle, western Serengeti peoples sought points of contact with

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the Maasai and Sukuma to gain access to wealth. In a process that lent itself to asserting their difference, ethnic groups were able to find the grounds for cooperation.

Recovery from the Disasters and the Larger Context of Ethnicity

The process of ethnic formation is evident in the recovery from disasters as people used relationships with others to create wealth, conserved within the ethnic unit. The accumulation of wealth set in motion a process that intensified ethnicity. During the "generation of opportunities" social identities of all kinds were in a dynamic state of flux. Western Serengeti people questioned, negotiated and reconfigured all kinds of social identities to find ways of meeting their needs.

After the great "Famine of the Feet" in 1894, the western Serengeti began a slow but steady period of recovery. People moved back from Sukuma and other places where they had taken refuge to return to a place where they had a connection to the land. Presumably others stayed in Sukuma or Ukerewe or on the coast, depending on the terms of their relief. The relationships formed in Sukuma and Ukerewe became the basis for economic recovery through the trade of forest products. During this period, raiding increased because the Maasai were recovering from the rinderpest and the survival of their way of life depended upon the acquisition of new stock. Western Serengeti people formed their ethnic identities in this wider context of inter-ethnic relationships with Sukuma, Ukerewe, Lakes people and the Maasai, all under the impending shadow of colonial conquest.

Maasai Raiding

Missionaries and German colonial officers just entering the region in the beginning of the twentieth century identified Maasai raiding as the most significant obstacle to the establishment of a productive colony. The White Fathers reported in 1902 that all along the lake people lived in constant fear of Maasai raids from the plains. As late as 1911 the White Fathers were still

recruiting most of their believers from among the victims of Maasai raids.¹⁸ In 1902 the Germans established Fort Ikoma on the western edge of the Serengeti plain (and on the boundary of Nata and Ikoma territory) specifically to act as a barrier to Maasai raids. They situated this fort on a hill with a view east to the plains.

Ngoreme oral tradition preserves a particularly full account of Maasai raids. The location of Ngoreme made them vulnerable to raids from the Siria Maasai across the Kenya border. Although Ngoreme had reorganized their age-sets into five age-set cycles during the disasters, each of these age-set territories was relatively autonomous. The result was that animosity, rather than cooperation, was more often the rule between the territories. Philipo Haimati's written history of Ngoreme records twenty well-known conflicts between the Maasai and various Ngoreme territories, some of which he records as the "wars of the Mairabe generation" (c. 1870-1895).¹⁹ He describes conflicts in which Ngoreme youth got help from the Maasai to fight other Ngoreme territories and where Maasai took refuge in Ngoreme. As an Ngoreme writer of a "tribal" history, Philipo laments the lack of unity shown by the age-sets [See Figure 10-1: Narrators of the "Generation of Opportunity," p. 512]:

They fought each other, clan against clan, and each clan had its own village . . . At that time the Ngoreme did not assist each other in battle, one age-set fought and the others would watch without helping. That is why the Maasai won so often, because their age-sets worked together. [. . .]

Over in Maasailand there was a time when the Maasai also fought each other—the Aburugo clan and the Wantorostriani clan. The Aburugo had many great warriors.

¹⁸ Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), "Nyegina (Notre-Dame de Consolation)," *Rapports Annuels* 1911-1912, p. 392; Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), *Chronique Trimestrielle de la Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique* (Pères Blancs) 24me Année, No. 94, Avril 1902, p. 94.

¹⁹ Philipo claims that these battles took place between 1700 and 1970. Haimati and Houle, "Mila na Matendo." But in an interview he mentions the "wars of the Mairabe" in connection with the Maasai falling into the hole at Kimeri. Interview with Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

Every time they beat the Wontorosirioni and took their cattle. So the Wontorosirioni planned to take revenge by destroying their villoge while the warriors were out roiding the Kurio. When the Aburugo left the Wontorosirioni socked the villoge, killing elders, women and children, taking all their cattle and burning their homes. Afterwards they were ofroid that when the warriors of Aburugo come home they would take on even worse revenge. So out of that fear they took all their cattle and ran to Ngoreme.

The Wontorosirioni come to Ikorongo where the Ngoreme welcomed them. They asked for help from the Ngoreme warriors when the Aburugo come after them. Nevertheless, the Aburugo did not do anything for many years. The Wontorosirani asked to make an oath of friendship with the Ngoreme so that the Ngoreme would not betray them when the Aburugo come to take revenge. The Ngoreme agreed. Because the Ngoreme are farmers they brought a hoe handle and the Moosoi brought a cow to the oathing ceremony. The cow was killing by opening it with the hoe handle and everyone ate the meat as the oath of friendship. [. . .]

When the Aburugo finally took revenge ten years later the Wontorosirioni were living all over Ngoreme. They had learned the language and customs of the Ngoreme . . . The Aburugo come and asked the Ngoreme to agree to let them take the cattle of the Wontorosiriani without interfering. The Ngoreme agreed not to fight them and they took on oath together. Then the Ngoreme remembered their oath to aid the Wontorosirioni. So they told the Aburugo that they could not honor their promise. At this time the Ngoreme had settled for opot, so those outside Gitore did not know that the Aburugo had come to start a bottle. The Aburugo were successful in capturing the Wontorosirioni cattle and took many people captive. Many Ngoreme were also killed in the bottle. When the other Ngoreme warriors heard that the Aburugo had socked Gitore they turned on the Wontorosirioni, who were living throughout Ngoreme, and killed them, taking their cattle. Some Wontorosirioni were able to hide and run back to Moosollond. Later the Aburugo and the Wontorosiroini united to take revenge on Ngoreme for those they had killed. [. . .]

In all these bottles the Ngoreme were not united. They were divided by clan and lineage and did not help each other. When one would fight, the other would sit by without helping. Because of that the Ngoreme were roided by many Moosoi, who would kill elderly people, women and children. Finally the Ngoreme united and overcame their divisions. They colled all the oge-sets together and made a plan to ambush the Moosoi together to bring an end to these roids. [. . .] On that day more than 6,000 warriors come out, followed by 3,000 more people running behind them. [. . .] 146 Ngoreme were killed and 5,000 Moosoi. From then on the wars between the Moosoi and the Ngoreme were finished. [. . .]

The Moosoi asked for peace with Ngoreme. To show their intent they brought Moosoi girls to be married in Ngoreme to mix the blood of Ngoreme and Moosoi so that a lasting relationship of friends could be established. The Moosoi said they had given up roiding the Ngoreme, they would visit the Ngoreme as friends and the Ngoreme could visit them as friends in Moosollond. Then the Moosoi went home and left the girls in Ngoreme. Yet after they left the Ngoreme began to fear that the Moosoi were tricking them. They were ofroid that they girls had been left as spies and would run home to take news to the Moosoi when the time was right for a roid. They cut the leg tendons of the

*girls so they could not run. When the Maasai heard about this, they came in at night, stole the girls and took them home.*²⁰

This narrative aptly demonstrates the frequent crossing of boundaries between Maasai and western Serengeti peoples during this period. Maasai lived among the Ngoreme, made agreements with them, married Ngoreme daughters, gave their daughters in marriage to the Ngoreme, and, in other stories, acted as herdsmen for the Ngoreme. The Ngoreme found ways of bridging ethnicity through the same kind of oathing ceremonies described for the Ishenyi and Nata which make different clans like kin.

These people from different age-cycle and clan territories, however, clearly formed a sense of being "Ngoreme" in reference to the Maasai. Although Haimati's longer narrative celebrates the military might of Ngoreme age-sets as the equals of the Maasai *muran*, he notes that "it was not Ngoreme custom to raid other lands." What made them all Ngoreme was that they were different from the Maasai. Those Maasai who had settled among them and "learned the language and customs of the Ngoreme" still had the option of going back to Maasailand and reintegrating as Maasai.

Through these inter-ethnic contacts the Ngoreme defined their ethnic identity. The oathing ceremony between the Maasai and the Ngoreme described in this text represents the distinguishing feature of each side, as herders (cattle) and farmers (hoe). Both this text and the Ishenyi story demonstrate the dynamic nature of these identities. In either case the Maasai could have, and some probably did, assimilate and "become Ngoreme," while the Ishenyi could just as easily have, and some probably did, "become Nata." Yet it is the regional structure of ethnicity that allowed both the assimilation across boundaries and the bridging of those boundaries to gain access to certain resources. The Ngoreme formed alliances with the Maasai to gain cattle wealth. These alliances

²⁰ Haimati and Houle, "Mila na Matendo."



Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995



Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995

Figure 10-1: Narrators of “the Generation of Opportunity”

allowed western Serengeti youth to become cattle raiders themselves and to build up their own herds of livestock.

The older literature on ethnic conflict in Africa portrays these battles as an inevitable outcome of "tribal" difference.²¹ All across East Africa warfare was particularly intense in the late nineteenth century. J. M. Weatherby, writing about western Kenya, describes it as a time when, "a complicated movement of tribes" led to "a confusion of warfare."²² Although the literature has portrayed the Maasai "delight in, and propensity for war,"²³ in fact the most intense conflicts occurred after Maasai hegemony broke down during the rinderpest panzootic.²⁴ As the Ngorome text attests, raids and warfare were just as likely between clans of one ethnic group as between ethnic groups.

The cause of the raids lay in a conflict over resources rather than in ethnic difference. The Maasai need to recover stock after the rinderpest, coupled with the dramatic growth in western Serengeti herds led to this increase in raiding. Barth's model of ethnic conflict predicts that when two populations coexist in economically interdependent relationship, a change in one will affect the

²¹ For example, Were writes of the Luyia of western Kenya that, "by the middle of the nineteenth century the ancestors of the main communities had firmly established themselves in the country and therefore became either uneasy or indifferent neighbors since they had separate origins. As the population increased there would be the usual need for expansion, and, in view of the settled state of the country, this meant that a neighbor would have to be fought and, if possible, dispossessed." G. S. Were, *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), p. 131.

²² J. M. Weatherby, "Nineteenth Century Wars in Western Kenya," *Azania* 2 (1967): 133.

²³ D. A. Low, "The Northern Interior 1840-84," in *History of East Africa*, eds. Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 301.

²⁴ J. E. G. Sutton, "Some Reflections on the Early History of Western Kenya," in *Hadith* 2 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1970), p. 24.

entire system, leading to conflict.²⁵ In this case, as the Ngoreme agriculturalists living in the hills gained large herds of livestock and began moving out onto the plains, they came into direct competition with the Maasai for the same pastoral resources. The conflict was not between pastoralists and agriculturalists as much as between pastoralists and agriculturalists who were becoming pastoralists.

Philipo's text seems to indicate that the Ngoreme only began to identify themselves as a united group as a result of the Maasai raids, not as the cause of the raids. They "became Ngoreme" when they united to defeat the Maasai, where "5,000 Maasai" were killed in one battle. In Philipo's account the Maasai fell into "the hole of Kimeri" in the bush as they ran from the Ngoreme army. Kimeri was a *erisambwa* site of the Ngoreme Tabori lineage. The ancestral spirit of Kimeri cried out when the Maasai fell in, "Uuuuuwiiiiii, what can remove these corpses so that my children might sleep." Then the corpses were all flung into the air and out of the hole.²⁶ The ancestral spirits, as "guardians of the land" appear to bless this decisive moment of ethnic formation. The conflict itself led to the distinction of Ngoreme as a separate ethnic block from the Maasai, as opposed to a number of different agricultural clan territories coexisting in interdependent ecological niches with different pastoral clans.

Other testimonies of raiding during this period show that western Serengeti people had moved to a pastoralist economy to the extent that they began raiding on the lakeshore. Although Maasai continued to raid western Serengeti people, they expanded their range during this period to include the shores of Lake Victoria. Some lakeshore peoples had prospered in the last decades due

²⁵ Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 20-21.

²⁶ Haimati and Houle, "Mila na Matendo." Interview with Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995 (Ngoreme σ).

to the caravan trade and the thriving Lake Victoria trade driven from Buganda.²⁷ The great "Famine of the Feet" did not affect the lakeshores as it did the interior, and lakes people profited from selling grain and "buying" people.²⁸ As a result the livestock populations on the lakeshore were at an all time high and presented a perfect raiding target for Maasai and western Serengeti youth recovering from the drought. The lakeshore people were totally unprepared for armed conflict. The functional age- and generation-sets that these communities might have used to mobilize young men had lapsed into disuse. Even by their own account, the only defense against raids available to lakes people was to run and hide. This account by a lakeshore Ruri elder conveys their sense of vulnerability:

Our people would sound the alarm when a Maasai raiding party came, but they mostly just ran for cover and let the Maasai steal. At that time they built stone forts, obhotingo, around the houses. Others just ran to the lake and took boats to the rocks offshore. The Maasai would not follow into the water. People also erected concealed ladders in the rocky out-croppings found along the coastline. Many people could stay in these rock hideouts, called njego.²⁹

The easy lakeshore target for raids attracted not only Maasai but also western Serengeti youth, now mobilized in age-sets that celebrated the warrior ethos and determined to make a name for themselves. Those raiding parties that lakeshore people identified as Maasai may often have been their own neighbors to the east. Although most people do not like to admit to this history of raiding, many elders agree that western Serengeti age-sets began raiding for cattle on the lake dressed as Maasai beginning in this "generation of opportunity." Nata elders said that the

²⁷ For the lakeshore trade and prosperity see, Cohen, *Towards a Reconstructed Past*, pp. 2-3; and Cohen, "Food Production and Food Exchange," pp. 1-18.

²⁸ Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, pp. 106, 116, 127.

²⁹ Interview with Daudi Katama Maseme and Samueli Buguna Katamaa, Bwai, 11 November 1995 (Ruri σ').

abaKong'ota (C. 1908) were the first to break the traditional prohibition against raiding.³⁰

Ngoreme elders report a much earlier date for raiding, during the period of the disasters itself.³¹

Many young men began to gain their own wealth independently of their father's inheritance through raiding.

The "generation of opportunity" seems to be one of incredible dynamism in terms of social identity, in contrast to the "generation of disasters" when things fell apart and the people responded through encirclement and boundary formation. Just when ethnic identity was forming in different ways in different places, it was crosscut and underlaid by an increasing number of other identities, usually formalized by an oath. One of the most often told tales from this period of raiding in Nata, Ikoma and Ishenyi, "the battle of Ndabaka," aptly illustrates this process. [See Figure 10-1: Narrators of the "Generation of Opportunity," p. 512 and Figure 10-2: Kuria Warriors with Shields, 1904.]

Mayani: At the time that they left Sukuma to come home from the "Hunger of the Feet" they did not move all at once but in stages, they built at Hantachega. That was where they fought the war with the Maasai, the Battle of Ndabaka.

Romara: The Nata were there but also a mixture of many other tribes. Nata, Ikoma and Sukuma built together at Hantachega. So many were killed there – the War of Hantachega. The Maasai would pass there when they went to raid for cattle along the lake, in Buringa. Yet when the Maasai got to Hantachega they saw that these people had built right in their path. So they went to the village of Hantachega. At that time it was mostly Ikoma, of the Saiga of the Kubhura, they were called the Romore. The Nata living there were of the same saiga from the Borumarancha age-set cycle. The Maasai were of the same age-set, with the same name of Romore. So they talked together. The Maasai said, "we want to go west, to the lake, to raid cattle, we are the Romore, let us pass and do not get in our way." The Ikoma agreed and made an oath (kula ring'a) with them and the Maasai went on their way to the lake.

Nevertheless, after they left there was much talk about it and others disagreed with the oath. The Nata and Sukuma who were there said that they should fight the Maasai instead of letting them pass to gain glory. They suggested that the age-set should go to see a prophet to find out if they could defeat the Maasai. So the Romore

³⁰ Interview with Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂).

³¹ Interview with Ali Maro Wambura, Masinki, 30 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

youth went to see the Tatoga prophet Gorigo. The elders told the youth that they should not fight because they had made an oath. The prophet slaughtered a lamb and cooked it for them, then he cooked a small bit of porridge. He also put a small bit of milk in a horn. He told the gathered youth that they should eat the food and finish it all. They ate but they could not finish the food. The prophet told them to eat but they could not finish it. So the prophet told them that they should not fight the Maasai because if they could not finish the food they could not finish the battle. So the youth went home. While they were still on the road they began to talk again saying, "is it really true that we are not able to win the war?" Others said, "no we could win, did not the prophet say we should fight?" So when they got back to the village, they told everyone that the prophet had told them to fight.

From that day on they prepared for the battle by sounding the alarm call to all corners, from Sukumo all the way up here to Nato. They waited two days and still the Maasai did not return. On the third day they said, "if the Maasai do not come today we will go home." On that very day they looked to the west and saw many forms on the horizon. When the Maasai looked to the east, they also saw many forms on the horizon. So the Maasai sent a young man ahead to find out what was going on. The age-set of Hantochego told the Maasai messenger, "we do not have any more words, we are ready for war." They sent the message to tell the Maasai that they wanted war. The Maasai discussed it among themselves. They offered to leave some cattle, but the Romore age-set refused. So the Maasai made a fire and the smoke went straight up, they said, "well, the medicine says that we will win, let us fight then." The farmers, all made a line that reached from the Mbalogeti river to the plains. The Maasai made a line that reached across the Mbalogeti River. On that plain they began a fierce battle. The Maasai pushed back the line in the middle. So many were killed. They went on fighting until everyone was mixed up on the battle field. The Maasai fought with spears and the Ikoma with bows and arrows. The farmers were defeated. So many were killed that day.³²

Ndabaka is located in what is now the western Corridor of the Serengeti National Park, near to the Ndabaka gate outside Bunda. Tatoga elders say that they also fought in the war of Ndabaka alongside the farmers.³³ Ndabaka is a Tatoga word meaning, "plain of tears," named after this event. This battle is also named after a vine with white flowers that were blooming at the

³² Interview with Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

³³ Interviews with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂); Marunde Godi, Mayera Magondora, Juana Masanja, Manawa, 24 February 1996 (Isimajega ♂).

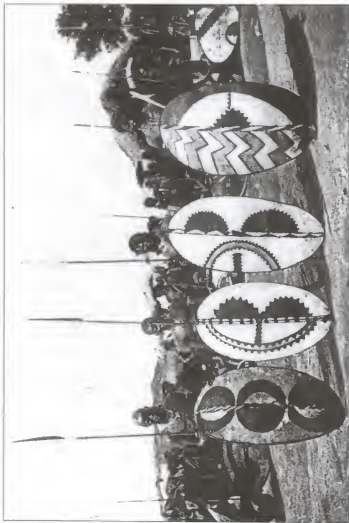


Figure 10-2: Kuria Warriors, 1904 [Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin: Carl Marschner, 1910), p. 289]

time, called *amabohi*, because the vines tripped the youth as they ran from the battlefield and the Maasai speared them.³⁴

This story conveys the sense that social identities of many kinds were all very much in flux, questioned and negotiated by various groups for their own purposes. The story of the "battle of Ndabaka" is set at a temporary settlement site of various peoples returning home from Sukuma, where they took refuge during the famine. The village of Hantachegea was located on the borderland between Sukuma and Mara, where all ethnic groups settled together as age-mates. The Romore age-set extended the unity of age-mates to Maasai *murran* as they passed by to raid on the lakeshore. The age-set bond was thus used not only to unite the age-set cycles in one locality into an ethnic territory but also to form useful friendships and connections between ethnic groups. People were coming up with all kinds of new alliances by manipulating the possible relationships that they could claim. The youth consulted the Tatoga prophet as a way of gaining access to another source of power that they could mobilize in this conflict, but in the end ignored his advice. The age-set at Hantachegea formed its own identity both in alliance with the Maasai, and finally in opposition.

The Maasai and the Ikoma age-sets sealed their alliance with an oath. Although this is the second example of broken oaths with Maasai (see story above of the Ngoreme oath with the Maasai Wantorosiriani clan), western Serengeti people took these oaths seriously. This oath was apparently sealed by exchanging the thongs of their sandals. Other versions of the battle narrative say that the Maasai defeated the farmers because they broke the oath.³⁵ In this narrative the elders

³⁴ Interview with Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma *o*).

³⁵ Interview with Mang'oha Machunchuriani, Mbiso, 24 March 1995 (Nata *o*).

counseled the youth not to fight because they had taken an oath. In fact, elders often tell this story to remind youth of the consequences of breaking an oath.

The devastating loss of life on both sides at Ndabaka might also imply that ethnic boundaries were created by these conflicts. After clans from both sides spilled such a great amount of blood, the individual rituals to restore the relationship, described in the Ishenyi account, could never all be performed, nor all the fines paid. An ethnic identity in distinction to the Maasai developed as a result of these interactions, both the alliance of the oath and the ensuing conflict. The Ikoma, Nata and Sukuma age-set broke their alliance of an oath between age-mates because they hoped to gain more by defeating them in battle. The farmers were now livestock owners in competition with the Maasai. Western Serengeti people also gained livestock from trade in Sukuma and built relations with Sukuma people within this regional system of difference and alliance.

The Sukuma Trade and Commercialized Hunting

The relationship of western Serengeti people to the Sukuma not only gave them refuge in times of hunger but introduced them to a commercialized economy and provided the means for the accumulation of wealth which led to further social transformations. The demand for forest products in Sukuma led to the commercialization of hunting in the western Serengeti on a scale unknown up to this time. Young men traded primarily wildebeest tails in return for livestock and gained wealth over which their father's had no control. Because no professional class of traders or system of markets developed, trade depended on the establishment of individual friendships across ethnic boundaries.

Western Serengeti people defined their own ethnic identity in relation to the Sukuma, first as clients of Sukuma patrons and later as trading partners. A direct outcome of the "Famine of the Feet" was the acceleration of interactions with Sukuma. Those who stayed in Sukuma for a year

or two made friendships there and began to realize the potential for trade. After they reestablished their homes in the western Serengeti, these men soon returned to Sukuma for trade (*orutani* or regional trade). The German explorer Baumann reported seeing a "worn path" in Ikoma which "was the trader's trail to Sukuma."³⁶

The significant increase in trade with the Sukuma, along with cattle raiding, resulted in a quick recovery from the disasters and a boom in cattle wealth during the "generation of opportunity." Elders across ethnic groups agree that the first *saiga* to fully exploit the Sukuma trade were the Kihocha (c. 1900).³⁷ The most important items traded by people of the western Serengeti were products of the wilderness--wildebeest and other wild animal tails, cured wild animal skins, ostrich feathers and shells for beads, lion manes and arrow poison. The Sukuma especially sought wildebeest tails for their own rituals. They used wildebeest tails as the base around which they wrapped thin copper wire to produce bracelets and anklets called *budodi*. Both Sukuma and Tatoga prized these ornaments for their dance costumes, in which they wore fifty or more at a time. Sukuma healers, prophets and dance associations made extensive use of black wildebeest tail flywhisks in their rituals. The Sukuma sought western Serengeti arrow poison for their own hunting, as well as for protection against Maasai raids that had also increased at the time in Sukuma.³⁸

In the "generation of opportunity" elephant and rhino hunting associations called Sarabarondo broke the traditional prohibitions against killing elephants to harvest them commercially. One Ikoma elder said that the first to break the prohibition were the Maase age-set

³⁶ Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 59.

³⁷ Interview with Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August (Ishenyi σ).

³⁸ Interview with Yohana Kitena Nyitanga, Makondusi, 1 May 1995 (Nata σ).

(C. 1884), and to a greater extent the Kong'ota (C. 1908).³⁹ People still remember the praise songs of the men who killed elephants. The Sarabarondo traded the tusks on to Sukuma and eventually into the coastal caravan networks. "Big men" in the western Serengeti never monopolized the ivory trade to gain political authority as elsewhere in what became Tanganyika.⁴⁰ Other elders related that the wealth of the Sarabarondo from the trade of tusks amounted to nothing since it was not used to build up homesteads.⁴¹ Locally, people only used ivory as ornamental armbands, *chashabashi*, the sign of an eldership rank. They also obtained ivory from Asi hunters who brought tusks to trade for grain.⁴²

Elders say that elephant hunting was traditionally forbidden because elephants are like people—the females have breasts and they bury their dead. If a hunter killed an elephant, he performed a complete funeral and period of mourning with a false grave for the elephant. An Ikoma elder told me the story of the Tatoga prophet Masuche who turned his wife, Nyabhoke, along with her house, into an elephant when she would not cook for him. When elephant hunters returned home, they sang a song that said they were bringing back Masuche's wife.⁴³ Other elders said that the prohibition was entirely a product of the danger of killing an elephant with a poisoned arrow. They claimed that once hunters obtained guns no one cared about the prohibition.

³⁹ Interview with Mabenga Nyahega and Machaba Nyahega, Mbiso, 1 September 1995 (Ikoma *o*).

⁴⁰ See Iliffe, *A Modern History*, pp. 40-87. In Sukuma one tusk had to be given to the *Ntemi*, Itandala, "A History of the Babinza," p. 218.

⁴¹ The most important interviews on elephant hunting were: Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995. Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995. Mabenga Nyahega, Bugerera, 5 September 1995.

⁴² Interview with Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma *o*).

⁴³ Interview with Mabenga Nyahega, Bugerera, 5 September 1995 (Ikoma *o*).

The trade to Sukuma changed hunting from a subsistence to a commercial activity. Men formed hunting groups and set out to harvest as many animals as possible in a short time to take to Sukuma to trade. They would spend most of the dry season in permanent hunting camps out of which they would range to hunt. At the beginning of this century when the trade in wildebeest tails to Sukuma flourished as a means for recovering from famine, the use of pits and snares increased, and also the size of organized hunting parties. Before this there would have been no reason to kill more wildebeest than the hunter needed for meat, yet colonial officers reported seeing carcasses without tails left to rot.⁴⁴

The commercialized hunting economy was at its peak when the British began to take an interest in the potential of the Serengeti for the recreation of white hunters. The colonial government considered western Serengeti hunting methods cruel and barbaric (snares, pits and poisoned arrows) and never condoned the commercial harvest of wilderness products, except by white trophy hunters.⁴⁵ While the colonial government was willing to accept local men hunting the occasional animal that ate their crops to provide extra meat for the family, they were categorically unable to accept or understand a trade or ritual economy based on hunting products.

Commercialized hunting did not fit with their image of "primitive" society based on hand-to-mouth subsistence. Although the colonial officials tolerated the "Ndorobo" because hunting was

⁴⁴ This would contradict the assumption that Africans naturally respected and lived in balance with nature. For a similar argument against an idealized African environmentalism see Harms, *Games Against Nature*.

⁴⁵ Compare the lists of confiscated hunting trophies in 1929 of the local parties—28 wildebeest tails, 9 beards, 4 zebra tails, 4 rhino skulls and a large number of giraffe tails for party of over 60 men. F.D. Arundell, Game Ranger, Banagi Hill, 30 June 1929, vol. 1: Game Regulations, 215/P.C./14/1, TNA. And that of a party of professional Italian hunters and their three clients from Nairobi—6 rhino skulls, including a baby and upwards of 80 trophies, including 3 lions and 24 tails, from Acting P.C. Mwanza to Director of Game Preservation, 11 March 1929, vol. I: 1923-29 Game Regulations, 215/P.C./14/1, TNA.

their "tradition" it seemed outrageous that these "farmers" should be taking to "the chase."⁴⁶ Yet more to the point, the hunt allowed western Serengeti men to avoid labor migration and the cultivation of cash crops. The Game Warden's comments on western Serengeti hunting reflect both these concerns of the colonial government and also provide a picture of the extent of commercialized hunting:

... native operations cover the entire game country ... the population that is ostensibly agricultural make it [hunting] far much of the year their prime work ... Things are at such a pitch and the natives are so generally implicated and in league that convictions will act as no deterrent, no real control will be obtained until there is someone resident in the area ... [It is] a rich country and should be developed ... still to have in our midst picturesque primitive man (and his revolting cruelties) but it is neither in accordance with the spirit of the times nor with the urgent needs of the Territory and the Empire that appreciable sections of the population and such strapping fellows as Mr. Klein shows in his photographs should be devoting their attention to the chase instead of playing their part in the development of this very rich country ... The Mwanza cattle-owners are not greatly implicated in the lawlessness and idleness of the area. They live comfortably in compact blacks and are now taking up cotton growing. It is only when the people who now hug the woods for the sake of hunting are induced to settle and grow economic crops, and making money to buy cattle, that they also will be anchored and become useful members of the community.⁴⁷

Hunting was not a regressive, remnant of a disappearing "stone-age" way of life depicted in this quotation, but rather the most commercialized aspect of the western Serengeti economy, providing trade goods that bought cattle and prosperity in the early colonial years.⁴⁸ Hunting products became the first commodities used by western Serengeti people as they entered the

⁴⁶ A.M.D. Turnbull, Senior Commissioner, Mwanza to Director, Game Preservation, Kilossa, 2 July 1924, vol.1: 1923-29 Game Regulations, 215/P.C./14/1, TNA.

⁴⁷ Game Warden, Kilossa, to HSC to the Government, DSM, 26 February 1924, Vol. 1: 1923-1929, Game Regulations, 215/P.C./14/1, TNA.

⁴⁸ On the critique of hunters as "remnants" see Kratz, "Are the Okiek," pp. 355-56; Kenny, "Mirror in the Forest," pp. 481-484; Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of The Kalahari* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1989); and Richard Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Raven Press, 1985). Fosbrooke uses the term "stone-age" in his analysis of contemporary hunter/gatherers. Fosbrooke, "A Stone Age Tribe in Tanganyika," 3-8.

capitalist world economy more than a hundred years ago. They entered this economy, however, through products, such as wildebeest tails, that were used regionally and internally, rather than internationally as in the case of ivory.

Western Serengeti peoples took these products of the wilderness to Sukuma to trade for cattle, sheep and goats and also iron, tobacco and salt. The Rongo of Geita in Sukuma provided most of the raw iron needed in the region, brought in as trade hoes called *omosika*. [See Figure 6-1: Blacksmiths and the Tools, in Chapter 6 for photo of the trade hoe.] In Ikizu the trade hoe became the common currency for bridewealth.⁴⁹ Turi smiths of Ikizu reworked them into knives, arrow tips and other farming implements. Although some alkaline deposits in the region provided an inferior salt, western Serengeti people coveted the fine salt available in Sukuma from Lake Eyasi. During this period tobacco from Sukuma became the requisite gift of a suitor on his first visit to his future father-in-law or of an initiate to learn the secrets of eldership titles.⁵⁰

The stories of *obutani*, or long distance trade to Sukuma constitute an entertaining genre of oral narratives. Young men formed small groups to make the three-day trip of hard walking to Sukuma. On the way home they walked more slowly driving the livestock procured through trade. Men also organized trade trips to other communities within what is now the Mara Region for other products. The Ikizu, more removed from access to the wilderness products, traded gourds used for hauling water, shaking milk to make ghee or storing flour, in Sukuma. They took as many as fifty

⁴⁹ Interview with Zamberi Masambwe and Gisuge Chabwasi, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

⁵⁰ Interview with Makongoro Nyamwitweka and Nyawagamba Magoto, Rubana, 4 April 1996 (Nata ♂). Anacleto Odhiambo, "Kijiji cha Butiama: Mila na Desturi Zinzohusiana na Mahari na Ndoa: Tarafa ya Makongoro, Wilaya ya Musoma. Mara 26 March 1979," Utafiti na Mipango/Utamaduni, Dar es Salaam, UTV/M 13/22, Mara Region Office of Culture, Musoma.

gourds tied together at a time as far as Geita by foot.⁵¹ Men prohibited women from making trade trips except in times of hunger because of the danger that women might be captured as "slaves." Men armed themselves to guard against raids on these trips.

Since neither markets nor a class of professional traders existed in the western Serengeti, trade depended upon personal links of friendship.⁵² When a man arrived with his goods in Sukuma he needed a secure place to sleep, eat and keep his goods. He made these arrangements with a previously established friend who would help him to find buyers for his goods and sellers for the things he needed. His friend acted as an intermediary in a strange culture where people spoke a different language. In return, the trader left some of his goods with his friend and invited him to visit in return. The host visited his friend on another occasion and brought his own things to trade, expecting the same hospitality. A man relied on the hospitality of his wife to maintain his friendships. Men guarded their friendships more closely than kin relations because they were voluntary. The word "to exchange goods," *kokeráni*, and the word "to greet," *kokérani*, in Nata are the same except for the accent. This might indicate a play on words that shows the close connection between friendship and trade.⁵³ A friend was someone with whom a man exchanged things and thus established a relationship of reciprocity, rather than someone with whom he shared intimate thoughts.

Because the trading system depended upon these relationships, men often secured these friendships ritually through an oath. The most common way was through the ritual of "blood

⁵¹ Interview with Zamberi Masambwe and Gisuge Chabwasi, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995 (Ikizu σ).

⁵² A similar trading system described for western Kenya, Hay, "Local Trade and Ethnicity," p. 7.

⁵³ Cultural Vocabulary, Nyamaganda Magoto, 1995.

brotherhood.⁵⁴ In distinction to the oathing ceremonies of friendship described for the Ishenyi and the Nata, this ritual (*kubarisi aring'o, gutorono*) seals the relationship between individuals and affects only their immediate families. In the ritual an elder cuts the fingers of each party, puts the blood of each onto a bit of porridge and feeds it to each party. The two are then lifelong friends (*omwisani wa sarogo, omwisani bo maguta*). A friend cannot kill, harm or steal from his friend, he cannot take his friend's wife or betray his interests in any arrangements he makes and he must always look out for his friend's advantage.⁵⁴ These friendships were also often used as the basis for cattle trusteeship.⁵⁵ If this trust was broken, the blood brothers must perform a ritual of purification such as that described above for murder.

Men most often formed these types of formal friendships with people outside their ethnic group. A Ngorome elder said that many men of his father's generation had blood brothers in Sukuma.⁵⁶ Other elders said that, although formalizing the friendship with a Sukuma man was rare, these friendships were honest even without such arrangements. Men also secured their trade relationships by marrying their daughters to their friends and forming a relationship of in-laws. The use of marriage to cement relationships between trading partners is common across East Africa.⁵⁷ One elder compares these two forms of trade relations with the Sukuma:

When they were in Sukumo they were like servants of the Sukuma in order to get food. They would go look for a rich household and ask for help. They trod in Sukumo before the famine, bringing toils and skins. So they had connections and friends through this. They did not have blood friendships with Sukumo because the Sukumo were not circumcised. They did not make oaths with the Sukuma because they were like children -

⁵⁴ Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 4 October 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁵⁵ Interview with Efaristi Bosongo Gikaro, Masinki, 30 September 1995 (Ngorome ♂).

⁵⁶ Interview with Maro Mchari Maricha, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995 (Ngorome ♂).

⁵⁷ For western Kenya see Hay, "Local Trade," p. 9; Were, *A History of the Abaluyia*, p. 126.

*- but they did have lasting friendships. The Sukuma were honest and married their women. The Sukuma would come to Ishenyi to sell tobacco to the same friends. So when hunger came many people went to these Sukuma friends for help, mostly in Dutwa and Kanadi and Ntugu, which are the first places you come to in Sukuma. If your daughter married a Sukuma man you brought home cattle. If you were lucky you could learn some Sukuma medicines there, but they did not have nyangi, eldership titles like we did. Many men married Sukuma wives there.*⁵⁸

This narrative illustrates the many kinds of social relationships and identities negotiated in the pursuit of trade in Sukuma--kinship, patron-client, friendship, circumcised/uncircumcised, in-law, ritual speciality and ethnic relations. Long distance trade friendships led to a heightened sense of ethnic identity. The regional context of ethnic identities allowed men to form friendships and in-law relations with others. The strong lateral relationships that crosscut ethnicity were only possible within common regional understandings of ethnic identity. Through these cross-ethnic links western Serengeti people gained access to Maasai pastoral resources and Sukuma trade wealth.

The Emergence of New Wealth

As a result of increased raiding, commercialized hunting and trade to Sukuma, western Serengeti men, particularly younger men, began to amass wealth quickly in the first decades of the twentieth century. The emergence of this new wealth, not tied to the generational authority of fathers, led to other important social transformations. This new group of "big men" secured their reputations within an ethnic group identity but were absolutely dependent on strong lateral relations across the region to maintain their wealth. The emergence of cattle wealth further enhanced and intensified the development of ethnic identity.

The creation of large-scale wealth also affected other kinds of social relationships. Wealthy men moved away from concentrated settlements to find pastoral resources for their cattle.

⁵⁸ Interview with Mashaury Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

Their movement, however, was also symbolic of the movement of wealthy men away from the constraints of community relationships and control. "Big men" created a new system of eldership titles that served to consolidate their ethnic ties and to extend lateral relations with "big men" in other ethnic groups. Differentiation by wealth did not become class differentiation, however, because the community found ways of using the system of eldership titles to pull wealthy men back into reciprocal relationship with the community and to share their wealth.

The New Cattle Wealth

Young men built up their own wealth to invest in cattle, apart from that of their fathers, through the *orutani* trip to Sukuma, which became another important mark of manhood in the early colonial years. In later years this impulse would send young men into the colonial migrant labor force when they were building up their own wealth. Young men in the "generation of opportunity" hunted and traded for about five years and then came home to farm and build up a homestead to begin the climb in status as a "big man" in the community. Elders said that it was only during the age-sets of the *abaKubhura* (C. 1916) and the *abaKinaho* (C. 1924) that men gained significant cattle wealth.⁵⁹ Ngoreme elders testified that men of the Gini generation-set (C. 1900) acquired cattle wealth by selling grain when others experienced famine.⁶⁰ While this generation began to number their cattle in the hundreds and even thousands, during the previous generation of the *Mairabe* a wealthy man had 10-30 head of cattle.⁶¹ This new wealth was a significant departure

⁵⁹ Interviews with Surati Wambura, Morotonga, 13 July 1995 (Ikoma ♀); Mang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995 (Ishenyi ♂).

⁶⁰ Interviews with Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Efaristi Bosongo Gikaro, Masinki, 30 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

⁶¹ Interview with Mwitwa Magige, Mosongo, 9 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

for western Serengeti peoples who had kept few livestock, mostly sheep and goats, before the disasters.⁶²

Increased cattle wealth immediately resulted in a rise in bridewealth during the early colonial years.⁶³ While the "generation of settlement" and the "generation of disasters" paid bridewealth as a token gift of wild animal skins (*topi*), iron hoes and bracelets (*sesera*), food and tobacco to the bride's father, the "generation of opportunity" paid it exclusively in livestock after protracted negotiations with the bride's family. A Ngoreme elder compared a typical bridewealth of 2-3 cows at the time of his grandfather to the bridewealth of 20-26 cows at the time of his father or the bridewealth of forty cows in his own youth (a figure that is now back to 3-10 cows).⁶⁴ As women increasingly represented cattle wealth their independent authority and status in the homestead and community declined.⁶⁵

Another more gradual effect of the new cattle wealth was a decrease in the authority of elders over juniors within a lineage. Young men now had the ability to marry and establish their own homesteads without their father's help. One elder lamented that the men of that generation got intoxicated with their own wealth and ceased to respect their elders.⁶⁶ This common trend across East Africa occurred much earlier in areas such as Nyamwezi where the caravan trade allowed

⁶² Interview with Jackson Mang'oha, Mbiso, 13 May 1995 (Nata ♂).

⁶³ See Anacleto, "Pastoralism and Development"; Barthazar Aloys Rwezaura, Traditional Family Law and Change in Tanzania: A Study of the Kuria Social System (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985), for colonial disputes over bridewealth.

⁶⁴ Interviews with Philipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Charwe Matiti, Nyeboko, 22 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂).

⁶⁵ Anacleto, "Pastoralism and Development," p. 71.

⁶⁶ Interview with Zamberi Manyeni and Gutu Manyeni Nyabwango, Sanzate, 15 June 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

young men an avenue for gaining individual wealth. This new class of wealthy men turned their economic power into political authority based more on personal achievement and individual loyalty than on kinship and ritual authority as it had been in the past.⁶⁷

A New Kind of Dispersed Settlement

One of the most far-ranging effects of the new cattle wealth of the "generation of opportunity" was settlement dispersal. People gradually abandoned the stone forts and fortified settlements and built homesteads spread out across the countryside.⁶⁸ Dispersal brought an end to age-set territories and people began to regroup according to clan rather than age-set. British Officer E. C. Baker described the move back to dispersed clan settlements in the early colonial records, "the Waikoma have apparently decided to reorganize themselves on a clan basis instead of according to Segi and this is all to the good."⁶⁹

One major reason for the dispersal from concentrated settlements was that wealthy men with many cattle had to be located with more access to the grasslands and removed from others who would compete for pastures. This era saw farmers move down from the hills and out onto the plains for the first time. The large colonial settlements of Sibora and Mugeta are examples of inter-ethnic plains settlements with large cattle populations. The introduction of the ox-plow also allowed farmers to exploit the thick clay soils of the plains. In the early colonial years wealthy men began the trend toward dispersion of settlements beyond pre-disaster norms. They sought to distance themselves socially and also physically from the authority of kingroups in more compact settlements. Juhani Koponen's study of the German colonial regime demonstrates that one cause of

⁶⁷ Andrew Roberts, "The Nyamwezi," in *Tanzania Before 1900*, ed. Andrew Roberts, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), p. 129, "Introduction," p. xv.

⁶⁸ For Kuria see Prazak, "Cultural Expressions," p. 51.

⁶⁹ Native Court of Ikoma, p. 57, Musoma Sub-District, 1916-1927, MDB, TNA.

settlement dispersal across the colony was the weakening of former political authority, in this case the power of the elders to control juniors.⁷⁰

Another reason that wealthy men led the movement away from concentrated settlements was to avoid colonial, as well as community, control. Koponen's study shows that the pattern of settlement dispersal was common across the German colony as a way of resisting colonial control. This was surely a factor for hunters who did not wish the colonial officers or the chiefs to observe their wilderness harvest. Many dispersed homesteads sprang up on the peripheries in direct proximity to the hunting areas. The colonial record also demonstrates that people actively avoided taxes and labor conscription by moving outside the chief's most accessible domain. The British, faulting German policy for the dispersal of settlements, reported a "tendency before the war, owing to oppression by German askaris [soldiers], for natives to break away from larger villages and establish small family villages in the bush . . . also to evade the demands of the combatants during the war, [they] moved into Game Reserves, near elephant watering holes"⁷¹

The emerging class of "big men" was a product of the early colonial years. They often found their authority challenged by that of the colonial regime, which also tried to coopt them in the politics of indirect rule. They moved away from concentrated settlements both to gain the physical resources necessary to care for their livestock and the autonomy necessary to exercise their new found authority.

⁷⁰ Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, pp. 649-653; Cory, "Land Tenure in Bukuria," p. 71; Huber, *Marriage and Family*, p. 16.

⁷¹ C.F.M. Swynnerton, Game Warden to HCS, DSM, 6 August 1923, Native Settlement in Game Reserves, 7227, TNA.

A New Kind of Big Man: Gishageta

Although "big men" as patrons who "fed" their people seems to be an old institution in this region, the "big men" of "the generation of opportunity" represent a new kind of patronage. As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, the title of *mwami* or "rich person" was not gendered and was more often connected with the distribution of prophetic rather than material wealth. The new kind of "big man," called an *omunibi*, was a man whose wealth lay in cattle. These men operated out of an ethnic base to spread lateral relations of patronage on which their wealth depended across the region. The principle of reciprocity was still the basis for converting wealth into social relationships.⁷²

Women participated and benefitted only indirectly from the rise of a new kind of "big man." Those who amassed cattle wealth were almost exclusively men because women could not raid, trade or hunt and therefore had no means of gaining large livestock herds. The only women with cattle wealth were *abasimbe*, or independent women, who inherited it from their fathers and managed the herd well. With the growth of cattle wealth other forms of wealth were devalued. Women became the product rather than the producers of wealth.

During the era of ethnic formation the frequency and density of cross-ethnic ties increased, largely because "big men" had to develop widespread lateral relationships throughout the region to maintain their position. Cattle disease had already destroyed the herds in the late nineteenth century and smaller epidemics continued to threaten the livestock. In addition, with the increase in raiding a large herd presented a tempting target for youthful entrepreneurs. A man with thousands of cattle could not risk keeping his entire herd in one area, nor could he secure pasture and water for that many cattle at one place. He had to develop mutually beneficial relationships with people

⁷² For an analysis of reciprocity in the form of "gift relations" transformed into commodity relations in Rwanda see Taylor, *Milk, Honey and Money*, pp. 5-7.

who would keep his cattle in other areas. The practice of cattle trusteeship (*kuwekeshi*, *kusagari chatugo*) took on a new prominence during this era. Poor people recovering from the famine found the means to regain control over their homesteads through the loan of cattle from a wealthy man. In addition the "big man" had to gain the respect and trust of the local youth who would recover his stock in the case of a raid, through age-set networks. [See Figure 10-3: A New Generation of Wealthy men, p. 536.]

For a variety of reasons, then, "big men" became much more likely to concentrate on the wide inclusive relations of patronage, friendship and age-mates rather than narrow exclusive relations of lineage or clan. Although "big men" began defining themselves in ethnic terms, their relationships had to be inter-ethnic to maintain their wealth. The following narrative describes one of the famous "big men" of this era, Gishageta. Although he was Tatoga, his lateral networks reached across the region to farmers of all ethnic groups. This testimony also describes how these "big men" translated economic power into political and religious power [See Figure 5-5: Two Versions of the Story of Masuche's *Bao*, p. 240 for a photo of Gishageta's descendants.].

My father, Gishageta, was a big man, a prophet and a healer. People from all over—all tribes came to ask him for help. There were other prophets of course but Gishageta was wealthy, the wealthiest man in the area. He was a big man because of his wealth in livestock. He had 8,000 cows and 10,000 goats and sheep. He fed everyone in the area up to Ikizu with his wealth. Someone would come and ask and he would give them even fifty cows to take care of for him. The veterinary officer knew his brand and saw it in Ikama, Ikizu, and Ngoreme at Kaonga. He brought Gishageta to court for moving cattle around all over when there was a quarantine for rinderpest and you were not allowed to move cattle. Yet Gishageta said, "those cattle have been there for years and I have not moved them, I take care of those people and give them all the help they need." They arrested Gishageta but he won the case in court.

He would leave the cattle with relatives or people with problems who wanted a milk cow. He might give someone ten cows, then they would get the milk and the meat, if it died. Nevertheless, they could not butcher it without asking a special favor of Gishageta. They also needed to ask if they wanted to sell his cattle. The big man got nothing out of the deal. He just helped others. He could come anytime to get his cows or sell them if he wanted. Gishageta did not just put his cattle with kin but mostly with friends from all tribes, Ngareme, Ikizu, Nata, Ikama, Ishenyi—anyone he felt like he could trust. It was not like it is now when you cannot trust anyone.

Gishageta refused to be the chief of Ishenyi. The white officer came to him and said, "I am going to make you the chief of this district to lead it." The British had already chased Makongaro in Ikizu and Rotigenga in Nata and all the others. Nevertheless, Gishageta refused to be made chief. He said, "I have another chiefship, of prophecy, for all the tribes. All of them respect me as their prophet and chief. Yet I also have another gift and that is of wealth, which my God gave me. So as far as this chiefship, I will look after it myself. I will appoint another chief for you and that is my friend, who I know will be able to lead properly."

So he chased a Tatoga named Kitaki. Kitaki also refused saying, "If the prophet refuses and pushes it on me so that the foreigners will come and take me, I do not want it." Gishageta named another one of his friends who was also a relative, named Marina, but he also refused. Finally he named another of his friends, called Sarata, who was an Ishenyi. He became the chief and that is why this area became known as Issenye. They did not want a Tatoga chief only, but just one for the whole area. This was the time when I was a young child.

Individual people came to Gishageta as a prophet for help, especially for problems of fertility. He would spit on the woman. He did not dig herbal medicines, he only used spit and a rope. He would tie her with a skin rope, they would twist and braid it from a cow that died itself or that was smothered, not one that was cut. The rope stayed on her for 3-4 months and she got pregnant. In the dry season or when there was a draught, they would come to Gishageta's, even if it were the dry time. He would get a black sheep and would smother it in the wilderness and they would eat it together, all the people. Then they would cut its hide into strips and everyone would put a strip on their finger, on the right hand like a ring. That day it would rain.⁷³

A nephew of Gishageta, who is still relatively wealthy, told me this story. While the events of this story take place in the early British period, this kind of new "big man" developed during the German period.

Beyond their widespread networks of regional patronage, the wealthy man needed to secure respect and authority at home, in his local community. He was absolutely dependent on the community to prevent livestock theft and on the youth to chase the thieves if a raid occurred. "Big men" secured both the goodwill and the fear of the community through their development of a system of eldership titles or life stages known as *nyangi* into an institutional outlet for their

⁷³ Interviews with Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995 (Tatoga ♂).



Efaristi Bosongo Gikaro in front of his cattle corral, Masinki, 30 September 1995



Marimo Nyamakena (center with glasses) with his wives and children, Sanzate, 10 June 1995

Figure 10-3: A New Generation of Wealthy Men

authority. No one could tell me the origin of the word *nyangi*, but it seems more than coincidental that the generation-set coming into power at this time was the Nyangi (C. 1915).

The New Eldership Ranks: *Nyangi*

Wealthy men consolidated their ethnic power and formed bridges to wealthy men in other ethnic groups by the elaboration of a new system of eldership titles. They transformed the institution of eldership titles from one of communal life-stage transition to one of personal status. At the same time the community used this system of eldership titles to force "big men" to share their wealth. To get the ethnic support needed to keep large herds of livestock, wealthy men had to enter into reciprocal relationships maintained by "feeding" the people. Class differentiation did not develop from the accumulation of wealth because keeping a wealthy man's position of respect demanded the redistribution of his wealth. These wealthy men did not define their interests as a group in opposition to the interests of others in their community nor were they, in most cases, able to pass on this wealth in substantial form to their heirs. They continued to live in the same neighborhoods, attend the same social functions and display little more material goods than poorer people in the community.⁷⁴

Nyangi refers to the celebration of a series of life stages performed by the individual, both men and women, within an ethnic group. Each ethnic group has a different set of stages that they celebrate but most include: circumcision (*asaro*), setting up a homestead (*titinyo, borano*), having a first child, the circumcision of a first child (*egise*) and having a first grandchild (*ekirangani*).

⁷⁴ E. P. Thompson defines the process of class formation in this way, "class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs." E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 9.

The celebration of these events seems to be of deep time depth in the region. All ethnic groups throughout the Mara Region perform these ceremonies for the major life passages.⁷⁵

Everyone must perform the first life passages of circumcision, acquiring a homestead, having a first child and becoming an elder. The symbol of eldership throughout the region is the black wildebeest or cow tail flywhisk (*eghise*). Men obtained this when they circumcised their first daughter, signaling their status as elders who enter negotiations of bridewealth. Most elders carried the black tail on ceremonial occasions or when they went to drink beer. Those who performed these ceremonies were initiates and had to be taught the secret knowledge accessible only to those who have reached this stage in life. The performance of each *nyangi* required a large feast that the whole community would attend to eat meat and drink beer. Fathers arranged for the *nyangi* of circumcision, setting up a homestead, and the birth of the first child for their own children. An Ikizu elder said,

⁷⁵ The partial *nyangi* lists for each ethnic group are as follows. Ishenyi--Msanga (birth of first child), Ebinyenyi (first teeth), Richawa, Asaro and Moroko (circumcision), Titinyo, Egishe - Ngaruki (black tail eldership), Interviews with Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995; Morigo Mhombobo Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 October 1995. Ikoma--Rigamba Rina (naming), Gotusi (for women when child weaned), Asaro, Atitinyo, Ekiriri Atato or Ekiriratero, Egesubero (for women), Ekirara Nyumba (men), Aguho, Egishe (black tail eldership with circumcision of first daughter, the white tail is automatic when your son takes the black tail), Interviews with Surati Wambura, Morotonga, 13 July 1995; Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995. Nata--Asaro, Etitinyo, Amaka Nyangi, Aguho, Egise, Morokingi, Ekirang'ani, Egisikero, Omoroseke, Omongibo, Omurara, Interviews with Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 May 1995; Yohana Kitena, . Ngoreme--Esaro, Borano, Kukerera, Isuba, Risancho - Ekise, Interviews with Mwita Magige, Masongo, 9 September 1995; Francis Sabayi Maro, Masinki, 6 October 1995; Njaga Nyasame and Nyabori Marwa, Kengesi, 14 September 1995. Ikizu--Amatwe (piercing ears), Esaro (circumcision, Rosarangi), Titinyo or Borano, Isubo (woman's first child), Ekise - Ehimbo (men get black tail and women a walking stick), Amarungweta or Magiha (guards for top elders), Esega (knows ritual for women's first child), Kibage (knows ritual for circumcision), Kegoro (for girls ritual), Murungweta, Kirang'ani (wear iron bracelets), Kirundu (advisor to the generation-set), Nebwe (white tail advisor), Mhimaye (ivory armbands, white tail), Mchiero (two white tails), Interviews with Maarimo Nyamakena and Katani Magori Nyabunga, Sanzate, 6 October 1995; Samweli M. Kiramanzera, Kurasanda, 3 August 1995; Ikota Mwisagija, Kiyarata Mzumari, Kihumbo, 5 July 1995.

In the past if you did not do the required nyangi or did not do them for your children you would be called a likunene (polluted thing) and would be separated and shunned from others until you did them.⁷⁶

However, the peoples of the western Serengeti have greatly elaborated the celebration of these basic life passages found throughout the larger region, into a system of eldership titles attainable only by the wealthiest men. I argue that this elaboration came about in the period of recovery after the disasters in response to the new cattle wealth. Through new eldership titles wealthy men were forced to redistribute their wealth. Many people told me that the *nyangi* system was about poor people trying to find a way to get rich people to feed them. The few oral traditions about the origins of *nyangi* associate them with the period of disasters and its aftermath. Here is the Nata story of Kikong'oti:

At that time there was a great famine and the people dispersed and went to Sukuma (Kreti). As the Nata went they all passed by the place where this Nata, who was like first man, an Asi, named Kikong'oti lived, on a little hill. As they passed he warned them not to forget Nata and not to all die in a foreign land. He was concerned that they would forget the things of Nata. So he showed them the Nata nyangi. There was a big mragawa tree in front of his house. When people passed by he would ask them to come and then he would show them the nyangi so that they would not be finished off in Sukuma. He would take the fruit of that tree and cut it into four parts, and with each part [as the symbolic feast] he would initiate them into one of the nyangi secrets. Then they went west and when they returned they came from the south, from a place called Getongi. ... So they came back to Nata and found that Kikangati had gotten very old. He was the beginning of the Nata nyangi. Those that have cattle, if the cow dies, they do not want to eat by themselves. Those who farm and harvest lots of millet, they wander why their neighbors do not come and visit them. So they make a big pot of beer. The different nyangi grew around the names of different pots of beer.⁷⁷

In one elder's version of the Kikong'oti story he speculated that the reason that the *nyangi* started was that people were looking for a way to get fed by wealthy men and wealthy men were

⁷⁶ Interview with Kiyarata Mzumari, Mariwanda, 8 July 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

⁷⁷ Interview with Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 May 1995, Mbiso (Nata ♂) this man holds one of the highest *nyangi* titles in Nata, Omongibo.

looking for a way to enjoy themselves and pass the time after the harvest.⁷⁸ When we went to visit the site of Kikong'oti a woman who lived near to the hill said that people sometimes saw a big billy goat, believed to be the *erisambwa* of Kikong'oti who mounts other goats but disappears before he can be caught. When people tried to build a beer club at the hill of Kikong'oti an unexplained fire destroyed it. So the site remains abandoned and the graves of Kikong'oti and his wife are kept clean by his lineage.⁷⁹

An Ikizu elder responded this way when I asked him how the *nyangi* originated:

How did they start? This was something they created in a time of hunger, or because of hunger. The poor man figured out a way to get some food to take to his children. In the past the nyangi were not such huge feasts. The huge nyangi began during the colonial times. Just from people looking for a meal—and to be a big man. The big man from each lineage "door." The one who does the nyangi first is the big man even if his brother is older.⁸⁰

Both the Ikizu elder's testimony and the Kikong'oti story directly connect the *nyangi* to famine, going to Sukuma, and the early colonial years. It was during this period that wealthy men seem to have transformed the institution of eldership titles from an institution designed to mark the communal transition of its members from one stage of life to another into one of individual rank and status. Some other peoples of the Mara Region, such as the Kuria in North Mara and the Lakes people, have preserved the earlier meaning of *nyangi* where a group of elders performs their eldership ceremonies together.⁸¹ In the western Serengeti eldership titles marked individual achievement.

⁷⁸ Interview with Jackson Mang'oha, Mbiso, 13 May 1995 (Nata ♂)

⁷⁹ Interview with Nyawagamba Magoto, Kikongoti, 2 April 1996 (Nata ♂).

⁸⁰ Interview with Zamberi Masambwa, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

⁸¹ Ruel, "Religion and Society," pp. 298-300. Interview with Daudi Katama Maseme and Samueli Buguna Katama, Bwai, 11 November 1995 (Ruri ♂).

The Nata and Ikizu performed particularly expensive *nyangi* and people throughout the region acknowledged that the medicine (*masubho*) taught to initiates was extraordinarily powerful. The Ikizu have the strongest relationship and nearest proximity to Sukuma. Some versions of the Kikong'oti story suggest that refugees returning to their homes after the famine incorporated into *nyangi* practice medicines learned in Sukuma. As a result of the experiences of famine patronage and trade, the Sukuma had a reputation in the western Serengeti as people with powerful medicine and dangerous witchcraft.⁸² Incorporating the medicines of Sukuma secret societies may have been understood as a way for men to gain access to the source of Sukuma wealth. Whether some medicines, *masubho*, had origins in Sukuma or not, each ethnic group now considers them as the property of the particular ethnically based *nyangi* associations. A Nata colleague said that the Ishenyi, Ikoma, and Ngoreme took their *nyangi* rituals from Nata and Ikizu.⁸³

After a man took the eldership title of the black tail an elaborate series of titles were open to him by choice if he had the means to finance the required feasts. The most expensive *nyangi* was not the highest rank but the middle one, called the *aguho* among the Nata. The reason given for this high price was to test how serious the man was about rising in the ranks. If he passed this test the rest of the ranks were relatively easy. The financial requirements of the *nyangi* are far beyond the means of most men today, leading to its near extinction. One of the three remaining Nata men of the *omongibo* rank today explained the performance of his own *aguho nyangi* [See Figure 10-4: Stories of the *Nyangi*.]:

Two days before the nyangi was to begin, the nyangi elders came to check and see if every requirement had been met. I had to show them sixty goats, . . . cows, 1,000 sides of dried wild meat called ebimoro, a basket of peanuts, a basket of sesame, a large

⁸² See descriptions of Sukuma secret societies that may have been one model for this elaboration, Hans Cory, "Sukuma Secret Societies," 1938, CORY #191, EAF, UDSM.

⁸³ Interview with Nyawagamba Magoto, Kemgesi, 6 October 1995 (Nata ♂).

storage bin filled with millet, five large sacks of corn and three sacks of haps for making beer, a large drum of water that must never be empty, and butter enough for everyone to coat their bodies before the dancing began. I also had to build shelters, orotaro, around my house for everyone to eat and sleep under. A fence was made to surround the homestead with a ritual gate at the entrance. The elders checked all these things, counting each of the 1,000 sides of dried meat and checking to make sure that there were no tears or holes in the pieces. If they found a flaw that piece was counted as one with another piece. The elders then set the beer and went home to sleep, dividing among themselves the dried meat. The next day they come back to share the beer made especially for them, before the nyangi got started.

The aguho nyangi officially began with the kindling of the fire in my wife's house. That night there was beer, singing and dancing. No man can be initiated into a nyangi without his wife or wives also being initiated into the women's nyangi. The next day the elders took me into the house and showed me the masubho, medicines or initiation secrets that they each knew. Each man had his own particular speciality, although initiates learn all of them. The masubho specialities sometimes tend to follow particular clans. After this, my wife was initiated into the women's masubho. The aguho lasts for eight days . . . If an initiate tells someone who is not initiated the secrets of the masubho he will suffer the natural consequences of breaking an oath and take sick or die. If the initiate does not learn all the masubho during his initiation he can go to his fellow members at anytime and give them some tobacco to teach it to him. On the last days of the aguho mostly family members remain and they drink the final round of beer. When the nyangi elders leave each of their wives carried home a kersaline tin (20 liters) of millet from the storehouse. Each day of the nyangi many goats are slaughtered, not only to feed those who stay there but also for the families of those elders at home. The youngest wife of each elder takes some meat home to her children each day and returns to the nyangi.

If a man begins a nyangi and then somehow runs short of food or beer he brings on himself a terrible curse. That is why the elders check the supplies before the feast begins. A couple of men in recent memory failed to complete the requirements and have since lost their minds. Thus in order to rise in these ranks you must have considerable resources at hand. Only those who have the means are able to do it, but anyone can attempt it. One can get help from his friends and relatives but they will only help and the bulk of the resources is his to provide.⁸⁴

In Nata another set of eldership ranks existed, by invitation only, consisting of a rank of men holding four Morokingi titles, two Mongibo titles and one Morara title. Similar ranks existed among the Ikizu with different names as well as ranks for conducting rituals like circumcision. The highest ranking elders carried a white tail that is the sign of a man with dangerous medicines. The *masubho* or medicine that the top elders learn was strong enough to kill and only those who

⁸⁴ Interview with Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 May 1995 (Nata ♂).



Warioba Mabusi, Ikizu White-Tail Elder carries the white tail and leather satchel, and wears the ivory armband of his rank, Kilinero, 16 August 1995



Gabuso Shoka, Nata Eldership Title of Omongibo, Mbiso, 30 May 1995

Figure 10-4: Stories of the *Nyangi*

would put the good of the community first could be initiated. The top *nyangi* elders discussed the case together before making a decision to use their medicines. They used their medicines to identify thieves, punish criminals or enforce local custom. People feared these ranks of elders and no one wanted to incur their wrath.

The mark of a leader was someone who fed people and in order to take the eldership ranks a man must feed the community. Hundreds of people at a time attended the *nyangi* ceremonies that lasted up to eight days. Some titles, *amaka*, required simply dividing out meat that the people took home to cook and eat. One man said that *nyangi* were created so that people could eat at the rich man's house. Eldership titles forced the "big man" to distribute his wealth to the poor. The same elder said that the *masubho* were only later added to give the men incentive to take the titles.⁸⁵ To be a big man, to gain respect in the community one must feed people. To rise in the ranks a man must have wives, children and grandchildren as a sign of his wealth.

A man with enormous herds of cattle to protect had no better means for securing community support and respect than the *nyangi*. People not only respected titled elders because they distributed food but also feared them because of the medicines that they learned when they took the titles. Titled elders did not have a formal leadership position in the community but the people consulted them on community matters and few dared to disobey them. Among the Ikizu the highest ranking *nyangi* had more formal leadership status, while among the Ikoma little differentiation existed past the black tail elders that most could attain. People feared the top eldership titles of the Ngoreme and looked to them for advice when community problems arose.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Interview with Nyawagamba Magoto and Kinanda Sigara, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata σ , Ikizu σ).

⁸⁶ Interview with Elfaresti Wambura Nyetonge, Kengesi, 29 September 1995 (Ishenyi σ).

One educated man predicted that if the colonial system had not interfered, the *nyangi* elders would have developed into a hierarchical authority.⁸⁷

Each set of eldership titles was ethnically based. The *nyangi* ceremonies created an ethnic community by attendance at these feasts. Few other rituals, besides the walk of the generation-set encompassed the whole ethnic community. People continued to perform most rituals within the local clan-based community or the homestead. *Nyangi* thus became an important mechanism for the ritual creation of ethnic unity during the early colonial years. Titled elders celebrated ethnicity in events which highlighted their individual achievement. *Nyangi* leaders in Nata could not settle outside the boundaries of the ethnic territory and elders understood the secrets of the *nyangi* as the heart of what it was to "be Nata."⁸⁸ Elder's explanations of *nyangi* always included how *nyangi* practice differed in their ethnic group from others. Titled elders became the guardians of "tradition" as they used their medicines on those who transgressed ethnic law.

The ethnic basis of each *nyangi* practice, however, depended upon cross-ethnic ties. Just as the patronage ties of wealthy men, the eldership titles also crosscut ethnic boundaries. The Ikizu and the Nata share eldership titles and eldership secrets and can attend each other's ceremonies. The Ikoma Mwanicha clan shares eldership titles with the Nata Mwanicha clan. The Ngoreme, Ikoma and Ishenyi share some *nyangi* and can attend each other's ceremonies. Some Nata women attend the Ikoma women's *nyangi* ceremonies.⁸⁹ The "big men" of the *nyangi* used these titles to

⁸⁷ Interview with Dr. Rugatiri Mekacha, Dar es Salaam, 24 May 1996 (Nata σ).

⁸⁸ Interview with Jackson Benedicto Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995 (Nata σ).

⁸⁹ Interviews with Mwita Magige, Mosongo, 9 September 1995 (Ngoreme σ); Morigo Mchombocho Nyarobi, 28 October 1995 (Ishenyi σ); Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma σ).

maintain their regional links while building their authority as ethnic group leaders. The attendance of Ikizu elders at a Nata *nyangi* accentuated rather than lessened their ethnic difference.

The story of the Tirina River flood is a popular story that illustrates the cross-ethnic nature of the *nyangi*. Many elders who tell this story use it as an explanation of how the Nata and Ikizu people, who are essentially one, were separated. It is an origin story of sorts that describes the separation of a people into two ethnic identities as a result of physical boundaries, while maintaining their essential unity through the symbolic passing of "tobacco" between "big men" of the *nyangi* on each side.

The Nata always had good relations with Ikizu. They were neighbors when we lived at the Sanchate and Tirina Rivers. The Ikizu lived on the other side of the river. Then one day the Tirina River flooded. The Nata elders had sent messengers to invite the Ikizu to attend a nyangi ceremony and the Ikizu had sent messengers from their side to invite the Nata to their nyangi ceremony. The messengers each carried bundles of tobacco for the elders on the other side as a confirmation of the invitation. When they reached the Tirina River and found that it was in flood they could not cross. Each messenger threw his bundle of tobacco across the river to be taken to the elders on the other side as an invitation. They told each other, "you go do your ceremony and we will do ours but we are still one." This was during an age-set of lang, lang aga.²⁰

The new "big men" of the "generation of opportunity" established the wide regional networks necessary to maintain their wealth from the position of a localized ethnic identity. Ethnic identity allowed freedom from the constraints of lineage and clan authority while still providing local support. The emerging class differences of wealthy men created the context in which ethnicity flourished. Without their self-interest in promoting the ethnic system other competing forms of social identity, such as age-set, may have taken precedence. Wealthy men created an

²⁰ Interview with Mahiti Kwirow, Mchang'oro, 19 January 1996 (Nata ♂). Mzee Mahiti is a *nyangi* Omongibo for Nata. This story was told to me numerous times, always in the context of Ikizu and Nata unity and common origins. Other versions by Jackson Benedicto Mang'oha Maginga, Mbiso, 18 March 1995 (Nata ♂); Tetero Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata ♂); Mang'oha Morigo, Bugerera, 24 June 1995 (Nata ♂); Riyang'ang'ara Nyang'urara, Sarawe, 20 July 1995 (Ikizu ♂).

ethnic ritual community around their individual achievements and became the principal narrators of an ethnic history.⁹¹

Colonial Rule and Changing Forms of Social Identity

The sense of ethnicity as the regional context in which wealthy men built up their authority was well in place when the Germans entered the scene at the turn of the century. Yet it was a context in which the long-range effects of colonial power on the coast had preceded their physical presence. A colonial regime that required ethnic groups to rule further solidified ethnicity. Ethnic territories were the units most easily identified by the Germans within a field of multiple and diverse forms of social identity, existing in a state of flux and dynamic interaction during this era. One of the first acts of the Germans in this region was to identify chiefs, and the "tribes" over which they ruled. In each ethnic, age-set or clan territory people sent out a man representing a different kind of authority to the Germans as their chief. The choices of local people for their first chiefs indicate how they understood the ethnic unit in relation to other forms of social identity and how the Germans fit into those understandings.

Western Serengeti people consistently chose as their "chiefs" men who based their authority not on the exclusive bounded space of the ethnic or clan territory, but rather on the extensive lateral networks of prophets, eldership *nyangi* titles or age-sets. Because they built their sense of ethnicity in relation to others across the region, those who represented the ethnic group were those with the broadest contacts. Through these leaders people sought a relationship with the Germans that can be classified neither as resistance nor accommodation.⁹² Western Serengeti

⁹¹ Many of the elders recommended to me as good informants on history were titled elders.

⁹² For a critique of the resistance paradigm see, Sherry Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26, 1 (1995): 173-193; and Michael F. Brown, "On Resisting Resistance," *American Anthropologist*, 98, 4 (1996): 729-749.

people saw the Germans as another set of powerful ethnic people whose resources local people could tap for their own uses by establishing relationships that linked them together. In the case of the Maasai and the Sukuma they had already used common age-sets and friendships to become powerful raiders and traders themselves. The dilemma of western Serengeti people who first confronted the Germans was to identify the most effective link across ethnic boundaries to German power and knowledge.

Colonial Chiefs as Cross-Ethnic Bridges

The first remembered encounter with the Germans was the event of choosing colonial chiefs. Thus far no chiefs nor centralized authority existed. This was a crucial moment because it would determine the nature of chiefly authority and also the social units over which a chief would rule. Although the Germans established a military post in Mwanza, at the southern end of Lake Victoria by 1891, they did not attempt to assert control over the area to the north, known as Ushashi, until after 1900.⁹³ At that time the Germans established military posts, first at Schirati on the Kenya border to check the immigration of Luo people from the north and, second, in the east at Fort Ikoma, to bring an end to Maasai raiding.⁹⁴

⁹³ For a history of the development of Mwanza as a colonial base see, Laird Revis Jones, "The District Town and the Articulation of Colonial Rule: The Case of Mwanza, Tanzania, 1890-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1992).

⁹⁴ For an overview of the German presence in this region see, Ralph Austen, Northwest Tanzania under German and British Rule: Colonial Policy and Tribal Politics 1889-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); and Theodor Gunzert, "Memoirs of a German D.C. in Mwanza 1907-1916, Extracts from the Memoirs of Theodor Gunzert, trans. Joyce Hutchinson, ed. Ralph Austen, Tanzania Notes and Records, 66 (December 1966): 171-179. For accounts of some of the few expatriates living in the area during these years see, Carl Jungblut, Vierzig Jahre Afrika, 1900-1940 (Berlin-Friedenau: Spiegel Verlag Paul Lipka, 1941) who owned a plantation in Majita; and Anne Luck, Charles Stokes in Africa (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), Stokes was a CMS missionary (arrived 1879) who quit (1886) and became a caravan operator, living in Ukerewe and Mwanza.

Each of the original chiefs chosen in what are now five different ethnic groups represented very different social bases of authority. Their choice reflected the particular ways in which each group had struggled with the challenges of famine, war, disease and ecological collapse in the quarter century just before the Germans arrived. In Nata the chosen chief was the highest ranking elder in the system of eldership titles, borrowed, in part, from Sukuma and Ikizu where Nata people sought refuge during the disasters. The chosen Ikoma chief was a prophet from the Tatoga pastoralists because their medicines had saved the Ikoma from famine and infertility when their own prophet cursed them. The Ngoreme and Ishenyi chiefs were leaders of age-set territories developed during the era of Maasai raiding when they reconfigured clan-based settlements into age-set territories as a defensive measure. The Ikizu choice of a rainmaker as chief also related to the period of disasters when a rainmaker clan from Sukuma created a consolidated and centralized Ikizu.

Each of these chiefs also represented a powerful bridge across ethnic boundaries. The titled elders of Nata shared their initiation secrets of medicines with Ikizu and some Ikoma elders. The powerful medicine of a titled elder gave him respect in the local community out of which his regional ties of patronage extended through cattle clientship. The Ikoma chose a Tatoga prophet as their chief because he also represented inter-ethnic ties of authority throughout the region. The age-set leaders of Ngoreme and Ishenyi based their authority on their ability to appeal to age-mates across the region to form alliances against or with the Maasai.

When the Germans went from Schirati to build Fort Ikoma, their most immediate need was to establish relations with local people through an intermediary whom they could control and who could provide them with conscripted labor and food. In the oral traditions about this period the overwhelming image of the Germans is as those who captured people. The job of the new chief would be to demand their labor. One example of an Ikoma testimony demonstrates this fear:

Mahewa: *When the Germans came they took captives and people were afraid of them. My father had only two sons, me and my elder brother. He hid us in the bush and told us not to make any noise so that the Germans would think that there was no one at the homestead and pass by without taking captives. While we were hiding, my elder brother started a game of sticks to pass the time. Yet the sticks would make noise when they slapped down. I got hit in the eye and cried out. My father came to scold us and said that he was hiding us so that the white men would not get us, and here we were playing.*

Jan: *What did they want the captives for?*

Samuel: *Ta da wark at the fart.*

Wilson: *They took people as porters to carry their loads.*

Samuel: *In the year that the English beat the Germans in the war, as they were leaving the Germans rounded up captives to carry their loads. They wanted young men and took them by force to carry their loads. Many ran away.⁹⁵*

This testimony makes it clear that western Serengeti people recognized the oppressive nature of the colonial encounter and took action to counter it at an early stage. The imagery here is that of hiding, running, or retreating. Yet there seems to be more to this image than simple resistance by subterfuge. The same image of "hiding" appears in the story of how the first Nata chief was chosen:

At that time people ruled themselves. Then one day they were surprised to see a white man, a German, who had come from Mwanza. He came with Sukuma, Takama and Kahama soldiers. This was at the time when my grandfather was still a young boy. They made their camp at Makandusi, in the bush that is called Mungaraba. The Nata people all came to see and they cleared a spot inside the bush where they could watch what was going on but not be seen. The German was armed with guns and set up his tents so that he could find and install the Sultan. Yet the Nata people remained hidden in the bush. The German sent his soldier to summon them. He called them in the language of the Sukuma. Still, they were afraid and refused to come out for the second time.

The German told them to bring out their leader. Among the Nata was an elder named Kibage who was the big man among them. He was a prophet and had the medicine bundle of war. He dreamed about things that would later take place. The Nata people told him to go and meet the German, but he was afraid and refused. So the white man got mad and said that if their leader did not come he would attack them. One young man named Megassa volunteered to go. "I will go so that you all can stay in peace." He had compassion on his people. So he went to the German.

When he approached the white man, he was given a stool and a baak. The soldier asked his name. He said, "Megassa Nyora Sesera." The German measured his feet, length and width. He gave Megassa baats, a kanzu, and a tarabush hat (fez).

⁹⁵ Interview with Mahewa Timanyi, Nyambureti Morumbe, Robanda, 27 May 1995 (Ikoma ♂).

Megassa took off his leather clothing. Then he went back into the bush to his people but they ran away in fear. He called them and said, "It is only me." So they came and listened to his explanation. They saw that the book looked like a soft sheepskin. When they saw the pen writing, they called it wanag'ora ng'ora [that which scribbles]. The white man slept there that night and left the next day. He went to Nyabuta where he began building Fort Ikoma.

After four days he sent one of his soldiers to the new Sultan Megassa who lived near the Rubana River at Tarime. He was told to send young men to work on building the fort. They were sent to work near to the Orangi River, at a place where there are lots of ebenturu trees, which are very heavy. They cut these and carried them to the fort.⁹⁶

Here the spatial image that represents the Nata interaction with the Germans is that of hiding in the bush. Yet this time they are there to watch and observe, to be able to understand the power of this stranger. They decided whom to send hidden from the German gaze. Rather than being a strategy only of fear, as the narrator portrays it, it seems also to be taken from a position of strength. Because no preexisting chiefs existed, the Nata retained their autonomy to choose whom they would send out and thus determine the terms of the colonial encounter.

The first choice of the Nata was a prophet who kept the medicine of protection during war. When he refused, they agreed to send a young man who volunteered to go out to save them from destruction. In many versions, elders said Megassa was a person of no particular authority when he became chief. According to other knowledgeable elders he held the highest rank in the eldership titles and was the spokesperson for his age-set.⁹⁷ Like the prophet, both positions would have had powerful medicines associated with them.

⁹⁶ Interview with Mohero Mogoye, Bugerera, 25 March 1995 (Nata ♂), member of the chief's family.

⁹⁷ Although the testimonies are ambiguous I have come down on the side of those who claim that Megasa was a man of authority because it is consistent with the choices of chiefs in other places and by weighing the sources of knowledge and political interests of the various informants. It is possible that Megasa only took these titles *after* becoming chief and this would be consistent with stories elsewhere in Tanzania of slaves being put forth as chiefs. However, it seems that the knowledge of what the Germans had done in other places, like Sukuma, Zanaki and Ikizu, would have forced the Nata to take the request for a chief seriously.

Nata people seem to imply with these choices that they needed men with powerful medicines based on wide regional networks to link them to the power of the Germans. They assumed that the power of the Germans was embodied in their own medicines and prophets. One Kuria elder told me that the Germans killed a Nyabasi prophet because he refused to come when summoned. German prophecy had warned them against this powerful rival.⁹⁸ In most of the stories of making German chiefs throughout the region the symbolic items of the fez, kanzu, boots, pen, flag and book in the investiture of chiefly office play a central role. Another version of the Nata story, told by Nyamaganda Magoto, shows that they understood these items locally as "medicines" which were the embodiment of German authority.

This is how Megasa became chief. The Germans came and pitched camp in Nata. They called a meeting of all the people, but no one came. They did it three times, but still no one came. They said they wanted our leader to come. Kiboge was the prophet who kept a medicine bundle with medicine for war and authority. Nevertheless, he was afraid to go meet the Germans. Finally the Germans said they would defeat us unless we sent our leader. So Megasa said he would go rather than have everyone killed. He was a nobody. When he went out the German sat him down and dressed him in a kanzu, with a round red hat and shoes. He was made a Sultan. When he went back to the people they were all scared of the medicine that he had gotten from the Germans, he possessed authority. The other institutions of authority in the community continued to function except the relationship with the colonial authorities. Neither Megasa nor Rotigenga, his son, would interfere with them. The chief's job was seen mainly as collecting taxes and labor conscription. All else was under traditional authority.⁹⁹

The titled elder with his own medicines served as the local link to this new source of authority by receiving the powerful medicines of the Germans. Almost certainly the Nata had heard of the power of the Germans before they arrived. The Germans had recently severely punished their neighbors to the east, the Ikizu and Zanaki. The German army burned and pillaged

⁹⁸ Interview with Sira Masiyora and Philemon Mbota, Nyerero, 17 November 1995 (Kuria σ).

⁹⁹ Interview with Nyamaganda Magotto, Bugerera, 4 March 1995 (Nata σ).

villages who refused to obey.¹⁰⁰ When Nata people went to Sukuma during the famine to seek refuge they had encountered the caravan trade and observed the rule of the Germans through Sukuma chiefs. The symbolic meaning of waiting and watching from the bush implies that the Nata were much less naive about colonial power than other statements in the text imply. They chose men who possessed the embodied power of medicines because they would be the ones able to deal with the medicines of the Germans.

Because the Germans had neither common age-sets, clans, lineages nor oath-taking ceremonies of ritual friendship, the Nata sought to bridge the ethnic boundaries between them by incorporating German medicines into specific existing nodes of knowledge, rather than to resist it or to subordinate themselves to it. Just as prophets had access to their power through ancestors that represented a whole system of clan knowledge throughout the region, the Nata concealed in the bushes had to figure out how to attach one of their people to the Germans in a way that would give them access to another set of networks. In the two versions told above Megassa gives himself up to the task as a sacrifice for his people, the assumption being that he will in some way gain a new identity through their medicines. This interpretation makes sense of the story in which the Nata describe the succession to Chief Megassa after his death.

After Megassa died, the Nata had to choose his successor, who would then be appointed by the Germans. The people decided to put up Rotigenga because he was not a son born to Megassa but was bought during the time of hunger. He was a Simbitt. They were afraid to put up a son from the house because the white man might take the son to his home. So they threw out Rotigenga, who was still just a child when he came to Nata. His parents were going to Sukuma to get food. During this hunger people ate leather and insects. Among the other children of Megassa, Matinde was a girl from Kuria and Mohere was a youth from Ngorome. They were just like children of the house.

¹⁰⁰ A German report states of the Zanaki, "Relying on the inaccessibility of the country, they long resisted the German rule. The Protectorate troops, after numerous expeditions, finally subdued them in 1905." Geographical Section, *A Handbook of German East Africa*, pp. 96.

*Rotigenga had already married when he was made chief. Because he was not native born, he was made chief. Now we know that this was foolishness.*¹⁰¹

This story expresses the assumption that by becoming chief Rotigenga would take on the identity, the spirit, of the colonial authority. Because of this, the Germans had the right to take the chief home with them if they choose. In both cases the Nata sent out one who was powerful and yet expendable. The chiefs would remain attached to their old networks of power but their new connection to German medicines would make additional demands on their lives. This is reminiscent of the ways in which spirit mediums throughout the Lakes region were consecrated to a spirit in its service.¹⁰² By initiation into these medicines, the German ancestral spirit embodied therein would exert its own control.

Western Serengeti people perceived that local medicines were as strong as German medicine—not in competition as much as coexisting within a field of multiple and diverse powers. Nata elders said that when the Germans began to build their fort they first chose a site at Sang'ang'a hill, which is a place of powerful medicine vested in the medicine bundle of Manterera, the keeper of bees. Every day the Germans would work on building the fort and set guards to it at night but every morning the structure was found in rubble. So the Germans moved to Nyabuta.¹⁰³ The Germans could have their fort but not in this place of power.

Western Serengeti people did not understand power as emanating from a single source, within hierarchical structures. Each ethnic group had their own kind of power to which others could gain access by forming linkages across ethnic boundaries. The Ikoma chose a Tatoga prophet as their chief not because they were subordinate to the Tatoga but because these

¹⁰¹ Interview with Mohera Mogoye, Bugerera, 31 March 1995 (Nata ♂).

¹⁰² Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 429.

¹⁰³ Keneti Mahembora, Sang'ang'a, 17 February 1996 (Nata ♂).

efficacious medicines from other sources would augment their own kind of power in the compositional process of acquiring knowledge. Western Serengeti people seem to have perceived the colonial encounter as a means to incorporate new medicines, new associations of knowledge, into the ethnic unit. The first Ikoma chief was a pastoral Tatoga prophet named Gambariko, who was succeeded by his son Kichaguchi. Ikoma elders said that the Germans killed Kichaguchi because he refused to be their chief and follow their commands.¹⁰⁴ After Kichaguchi the Ikoma elected one of their own as chief, the spokesperson for the age-set in power at the time, Rokini, who possessed either the medicine of rain or the medicine of healing the land. Colonialism was not a form of domination to be resisted but a resource to be tapped. The Ikoma chose a Tatoga prophet, and later an age-set leader, as their chief because he would be best able to make the link with German power necessary for coming to terms with this new authority.

In Ngoreme the *mchama* of the age-set was designated as chief. Rather than claiming a pan-Ngoreme identity, they insisted on chiefs for each of the age-set territories. Defining the unit over which a chief would rule and the kind of authority he would represent maintained local autonomy. Given the flexible and situational nature of social identity at this time local people defined the "tribal" unit in different ways in different places. Yet here as well, the leader of the age-set had strong lateral links to age-set members in other ethnic territories. He based his authority, in part, on his ability to make alliances with other age-set territories to fight the Maasai or trade for surplus food. The Ishenyi also began the colonial era with three separate chiefs for each age-set cycle territory.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," Sheet No. 8-9, MDB.

¹⁰⁵ Interviews with Judge Frederick Mochogu Munyera, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995 (Ngoreme ♂); Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi ♂). It is also clear from numerous other interviews and the colonial record that Ngoreme and Ishenyi were organized according to age-set territory, it is less clear that in every case the leader of the age-set was chosen

The chiefship was a contested title because people increasingly saw the value in the cross-ethnic linkages that it provided with the Germans. The Germans, unwittingly or not, affirmed local assumptions about how power was constituted by becoming central actors in contests over the legitimacy of local medicines. Although not exactly a chief, the rainmaker in Ikizu held an important position of authority. In a competition for this position, Mwaninyama went to the Germans in Mwanza and claimed that he was the rightful ruler of Ikizu, usurped by Matutu. So the Germans came to Ikizu to settle the matter.¹⁰⁶ They made a camp at Sarawe and called both rainmakers. Matutu appeared wearing a black sheepskin and had a goat and a gourd of honey in his hand, the symbols of his medicine. The Germans staged a test to see who was the real rainmaker and ruler of Ikizu. Each man had four days to make rain. Mwaninyama failed but when Matutu's turn came it rained so hard that the German camp was washed away. The Germans made Matutu chief and took him to Schirati where he got the medicines of his office — a coat, a kanzu, a hat and a flag. When he got home those who opposed him said that he could not make rain wearing white clothes since all rainmakers wore black skins, the color of the fertile earth. The opposition grew so strong that Matutu had to run away. At least at this stage, the Germans failed to control local medicines.¹⁰⁷

As western Serengeti people began to experience the reality of chiefly rule, they realized that the expected benefits of association with German medicines had not materialized. Rather, the chiefs had become tyrants and oppressors themselves. When the Germans left during World War I

due to the confusion surround the term "muchama" — was this the leader of the age-set or the man who acted as the agent of the age-set prophet? See discussion of the "chama" in Chapter 8.

¹⁰⁶ Sebastian Muraza Marwa, Mashujaa wa Tanzania: Mtemi Makongoro wa Ikizu, Historia ya Mtemi Makongoro na Kabila Jake la Waikizu, Mwaka 1894 Hadi 1958 (Peramiho, Tanzania: Benedictine Publications Ndanda, 1988).

¹⁰⁷ Matutu was eventually reinstated by the Germans and ruled until 1926.

the people overthrew all of the German appointed chiefs except one. Those who overthrew the chiefs and reasserted their own power represented the current generation-set of elders, identified by the colonial regime as the "Bagini." The generation-set was responsible for maintaining the health of the land by ritually walking over it every eight years and encircling it with the medicine of protection. While the medicines of the prophets were individual and eclectic, based on lateral networks across the region, the medicines of the generation-set were integrally tied to the relationship between the people and the land, effected by enclosure and unity.

Soon after the Germans left, another large scale famine and a series of epidemics brought renewed suffering.¹⁰⁸ The medicine of the chiefs had not proved powerful enough and the elders had to reassert the older medicines of the land. In this scenario the chiefs represented a form of individualistic power that is distributive and incorporative, while the generation-set reasserted an alternate communal power in which medicines encircle and enclose the land for protection. The actors seen from this perspective were not resisters and collaborators but those with distributive medicine and those with encircling medicine. In the past both kinds of medicine had to be balanced. Colonial power upset this balance, resulting in a lack of health.

Once the British reestablished control their first act was to reinstate the chiefs who were overthrown in the inter-war years. They suppressed the generation-set elders on charges of witchcraft and replaced them with headmen, who were the direct agents of the chiefs and "akidas"

¹⁰⁸ See James Ellison, "Making 'the Nyakyusa': Cultural Translation and Cultural Identity in Colonial Tanganyika" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, forthcoming) for an analysis of the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919, "Chapter 4: 'Lake Nyasa and Even the Mountains Shook, Although Our Houses Didn't Fall': Hunter and Transition in a Colonized World, 1913-1925." Prazak, "Cultural Expressions," p. 53, reports 5000 deaths in the western Kenya District of South Kavirondo during the influenza epidemic of 1918.

(government clerks).¹⁰⁹ It is only at this point, when power became centralized and unitary rather than multiple and diverse, that we can properly speak about resistance and collaboration. The chiefs were no longer links between ethnic groups to gain critical resources but rungs in a ladder of authority emanating from the colonial office.

The Consequences of Colonialism

The sense of ethnicity created during the early colonial years was particular to the history of this region. Small scale ethnicity developed because people connected group identity to a relationship with the land and the medicines of protection to enclose those boundaries. Yet the ethnicity of the western Serengeti was never exclusive and formed in relation to other ethnicities within a regional system crosscut by many other kinds of social identities. Western Serengeti people formed their sense of ethnic identity in a situation of intense interaction with people who were different. As they found common identities to bridge these differences, they defined the ethnic boundaries that separated them. Ethnic identity also developed out of a situation in which wealthy men used ethnicity as the base from which they extended lateral networks of patronage across ethnic boundaries.

The Germans stepped into this situation in which social identities of all kinds were in a state of flux. Western Serengeti people used their understanding of ethnicity to forge bridges to the Germans and gain access to their power. In the end, the colonial process subverted their dynamic sense of ethnicity into an exclusive "tribalism" in which other social identities were increasingly diminished, along with their power to crosscut ethnic boundaries. The Germans expected

¹⁰⁹ Baker, "System of Government, Extracts from a report by R.S.W. Malcolm," MDB. "Major Coote took the part of the Chiefs and in an attempt to improve the administration in 1919 the Bagini were suppressed." General Meeting at Musoma. 2-6-1919.

completely enclosed and sealed ethnic boundaries that, in western Serengeti terms, could only lead to death (see Chapter 8).

Western Serengeti people maintained some local autonomy by creating micro-ethnicities that had deep cultural meaning. The fact that they refused amalgamation into a pan-Mara ethnic identity demonstrates their ability to resist colonial hegemony. The ethnic groups of western Serengeti are not colonial creations. They are instead locally meaningful units forged on the basis of long term generative principles, in response to the sweeping changes of the late nineteenth century. Although chiefs were notoriously corrupt and lacking in local respect, the "tribal" units did and still do have emotional appeal as the landscapes of the past through which a people know themselves.

Western Serengeti people, however, have paid dearly for this autonomy by foregoing the political clout of larger scale ethnicity, such as their neighbors enjoy. The Sukuma and Maasai gained significant land concessions at the expense of western Serengeti peoples during the negotiations over the Serengeti National Park boundaries, simply because the Sukuma and Maasai could mobilize ethnic politics in the colonial office. Without a common name or common ethnic identity the Ishenyi, Ikoma, Ngoreme, Nata and Ikizu had no public image around which to rally support.¹¹⁰ Even though the former President Julius Nyerere comes from the Mara Region, this has not translated into national political power because the Mara Region does not speak in one ethnic voice.

This deep analysis of western Serengeti oral traditions demonstrates that the particular form taken by ethnicity in this region resulted from a long history of cross cultural interaction and

¹¹⁰ I hope to more fully develop this argument in a future article but the evidence is found in the archival files concerning the Serengeti National Park, National Game Parks, 215/350/vol. 1-4, TNA.

the interplay of multiple and situational social identities. The ability of western Serengeti peoples to respond creatively and successfully to disaster and colonial control shows the adaptability and flexibility of this regional system of multiple and contingent identities in which any one form of authority could be countered by others and any one means of creating prosperous communities could be replaced by others. Although women found their autonomy restricted as a result of the late nineteenth century changes, they were able to draw on these long term generative principles to find ways of resisting. Men were also able to maintain some autonomy from colonial rule by choosing the terms on which they would accept the imposition of a chief.

The kind of dynamic and open ethnicity based in small scale, locally meaningful units created by western Serengeti people is structurally and functionally different from other kinds of ethnicities even within Tanzania. Deep historical experiences have determined why the Luo, for example, developed a "nation" while the Ikoma developed a "community" out of a similarly heterogeneous mix of people and cultural elements. Perhaps Mara peoples will have to forge a common identity in order to compete on the political market. The ethnicity of the western Serengeti may be again transformed in a new post-independence political climate but it will not gradually fade away as national identity takes precedence unless people are physically removed from the landscapes of their past.

Conclusion

The landscapes of memory, manifested in oral tradition, exist in the mind, but also in the physical contours of the land. Each hill and river, each rock outcropping and spring holds a story. The memories of the people who walk over this land have created and recreated the landscape many times over the past millennium. Each new layer does not erase the old but overlays it with new meaning. The path of first man the hunter leading to the house of first woman the farmer can still be seen in the ecologies of woodlands, hills and grasslands. The sacred places of the ancestors

who guard the land are still left to grow wild, marked by the growing pile of stones on their graves. The lawless wilderness boundaries still enclose the cultivated space of a unified people. Even if the elders cease to tell the stories of the past, the landscape holds these memories, through the ancestors who still enliven it.

It is the memory of a people habituated to the land, however, that keeps these landscapes of memory alive. These memories rest in people's bodily practice, their daily routines and their household spaces. The past identities of generation-set remain in the way people greet each other each day or divide the meat at a wedding. The circular paths of women around the village exchanging food and news and the linear paths of men outside the village conducting business in town or going to drink beer represent the autonomous gendered spheres of identity. Clan identities take shape in the arrangements for a funeral or finding a place to build a house. In myriad ways people unconsciously embody their past as they kick the dust in their daily routine.

The experiences of the disasters show that even with extreme upheaval and societal stress, memories do not disappear. In radically changed situations people need to resort and reshape these memories to fit their present needs. However, the landscapes still remain and people still habitually perform the bodily practices of routine and ritual. The western Serengeti elders who retain the memories of the past are those whose fathers and mothers returned from Sukuma after the drought to settle in the same landscapes with other people who also had memories of that landscape. People must respond to crises in the present but they do so with memories of the past.

These memories, embodied in the core spatial images of oral tradition and ritual, represent the generative principles out of which people constantly improvise their daily lives. Generative principles inherited from the past do not determine the choices that people will make but only the wealth of possibilities from which they will choose. We cannot understand the present choices that people make without knowledge of the choices they have made in the past and the basis on which

they made those choices. It is equally true, however, that we cannot understand the past without knowledge of the choices that people have made in the present which have reshaped those memories. The core spatial images of memory are so powerful because they are repeated daily in the landscapes that people inhabit and the routines that they practice.

Can refugees then carry memories, removed from the landscapes in which they were formed? They can and do but, as Malkki so eloquently demonstrates,¹¹¹ they translate those memories onto new landscapes and give them new meaning. After all, what were the first Bantu-speaking farmers in the western Serengeti but refugees from the very different forest landscapes of central Africa? Their memories, translated onto a dry savanna parkland where hunters and herders preserved a different kind of memory, created the dynamic synthesis that exists today.

What will happen to those memories if the western Serengeti landscape is significantly altered? Perhaps only then will the memories die. This region does not face the industrialization and urbanization that threatens most landscapes of memory. Oddly enough, the threat is more likely to come from the "wildernization" or "naturalization" of a landscape that the memories of a peopled past now enliven.¹¹² The Serengeti National Park, with its expanding "buffer zones," "game control areas" and "corridors," takes new pieces out of habitation and cultivation each year. People cannot return to the sacred sites of the *emisambwa* without paying park fees and hiring a game guard. The tourist propaganda of the park maintains that the Serengeti remains today as a pristine wilderness area because permanent human settlement was never possible. The visitor's center features the stone tools of early man but does not mention the farmers of the last millennium

¹¹¹ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*.

¹¹² For a critique of the naturalization of these landscapes by the conservation movements see Jonathon S. Adams and Thomas O. Mc Shane, *The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation without Illusion* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1992).

who knew and named these landscapes. The Maasai herders and the Ndorobo hunters appear as part of the natural landscape, people who went through seasonally to herd or hunt but never to occupy the land. The Maasai cave paintings at Moru Kopjes that are probably less than one hundred years old, take their place in the minds of tourists next to australopithecus skull fragments and the fossilized footprints of an ancient woman.

Serendipitously, as I finished this dissertation, I received a card from the artists whom the park commissioned to paint a mural on the visitor's center wall at Seronera.¹¹³ They wondered whether I could share my work with them since they were "researching human history in the Serengeti area" for presentation as artistic images. They were especially interested in any "post Ambrose work" I might know. Ambrose is an archaeologist of the pastoral neolithic period, 1000 B.C. and 700 A.D. That this entire last millennium of human habitation in the western Serengeti could be so completely erased in the minds of the government, park and donor agencies illustrates the threat to these landscapes of memory. I wonder if they really want to hear about farmers crossing the Serengeti as hunters and pilgrims, building enduring settlements in the western hills of what is now the park, and creating various kinds of networks over time which made the Serengeti a corridor of interaction rather than a wilderness barrier. The landscape of memory that the artists are asked to recreate on the wall at Seronera is the pristine wilderness imagined by an industrialized society to define its own identity. Will school children from Ikoma, Nata and Ngoreme taken to the park for an educational tour accept the naturalized images of the Serengeti over the peopled landscapes of their grandfathers recreated in oral tradition?

¹¹³ David Bygott and Jeanette Handby

APPENDIX 1: NATA EMERGENCE TRADITIONS

This version was told by Megasa Mokiri, in Motokeri, 4 March 1995. He was one of the top ranking elders in Nata, taking the title of *Omangibha*. Once my male colleagues introduced our purpose, to learn the history of the Nata, Megasa chose to begin with this story. He told it without a pause and took on the characters of the dialogue with different voices:

The beginning of Nata was two people, Nyamunywa and Nyasiganko. The waman was Nata and the man was Asi. The waman was a farmer who planted kunde beans, sesame and millet. She had na fire ta cook. One day the Asi hunter killed an eland near ta her field. After a little while the hunter went by and faund the waman sitting on a large rack. He asked her, "did you see an animal gaing by here?" The wamen answered, "I saw it gaing by, it is aver there." The waman was naked and the hunter ware skins. They went aver ta the animal and the man skinned and butchered it. The waman asked, "da you eat these animals?" The man said, "wait a minute." He went and made fire, cheeecheeecheee, and when he was finished he tald the waman, "I have excreted the fire." They taak the meat and raasted it. The waman lived in a cave. The hunter lived in a grass shelter in the wilderness. The man tald the waman, "let us mave ta the hause af grass." When they reached the hause the man was the leader. He gave the waman a skin ta caver herself with. They lived together and were married. The waman became pregnant and gave birth ta a san. Then she gave birth ta a daughter, and in total faur bays and three girls. When they were grawn they were married ta each ather. This is the reasan that Nata inherit through the waman's side. The children made the clans af Nata. The place where they lived is called Bwanda. When they gat to be tao many the divided into the Saiga.

This version was told with detail and enthusiasm, without pause, by Mgoye Rotegenga Megasa, in Motokeri, 13 March 1995. He is from Chief Rotigenga's family. Even though the interview was with his sister concerning women's circumcision he wanted me to record this story.

They came fram the east, the man was Nyamunywa and the waman was Nyasiganko. He was an Asi, a hunter af zebra. The animal he was hunting fell on the rise and died, he taak aut the arraw and saw that there was a persan in frant af him. He came claser and saw that it was a waman. He went ta the daar and asked wha was there. The answer came, "the persan af this hause." Ta which he replied, "a persan af the wilderness." They greeted each ather in Ekinata. She invited him inside. He went in and put up his bow and quiver, asking her, "wha are you?" She said, "I am Nyasiganko." She asked him wha he was and he said, "I am Nyamunywa." He said, "let us ga back ta the animal and you hald it while I skin it." Sa they went and did this. Then he said, "let us take all the meat back ta your hause." Sa they taak it all inside. The sat awhile and then Nyasiganka gave the man same raw millet ta chew an. He ate until he was full. She taak the knife and cut aff a piece af liver ta eat. The man said, "why da you eat it raw?" "Let us raast it." The waman said, "where would I get fire?"

He man asked her, "dan't you make fire ar caak?" She said that she didn't know how. He told her to get water and waad. Then he taak his quiver and went outside. He taak out his stick and baard and twirled the stick, cheecheechee, until it made fire. Then he went back into the house and started the fire inside. The waman roasted the meat and they ate. The man asked her to get water after he had chewed the millet. She said, "the water is in the river." He said, "dan't you have anything to carry it?" She did nat. Sa he taak the stomach of the zebra and sewed it like a bag to carry water. He made four bags, washed them and they carried water to the camp. The man went outside again and laaked on the mauntain until he found a stane far grinding. . . [he taught the woman to grind millet and make porridge and they ate the first meal]

A third version was told to me by Sochoro Kabati, in Nyichoka, on 2 June 1995. He is the Bongirate age-set leader, *Kang'ati*, for the Getiga and Gaikwe clan moiety. He began to tell this story because he was explaining why these clans have priority in Nata. This version gives more of the dialogic nature of these narratives. Nyawagamba was my colleague who came along to introduce me and help with the interview. The old man came to listen and, I believe, was Sochoro's uncle.

Sochoro : *Nyamunywa and Nyasiganka, Nyamunywa was a Gaikwe clan member and Nyasiganko was the waman. You know this Nyasiganko, they say she was Sancha, but naw this waman . . .*

Old man: *She was Getiga.*

Sochoro: *Ok, she was Getiga.*

Nyawagamba: *Mmmm.*

Sochoro: *She was Getiga, all the clan names come from these . . . [holds up two finger]*

Nyawagamba: *Twa*

Sochoro: *Twa . . . the Nata today, even the Mariha clan, ar any ather, came from this inheritance. The Ghikwe get the first inheritance. If an old man dies they can't divide the inheritance unless a Ghetiga goes first. He takes the beer straw.*

Nyawagamba: *Eeeee.*

Sochoro: *This is because the waman was in her hause, a cave, in the racks, that is where they lived. But she was a farmer and used a digging stick (amaroso), because this sail in the east at Bwinamaki. . . Da you know that this sail is sa laase that they could farm with a digging stick. The man, Nyamunywa saw her and every day when he passed he saw her. "Muuu Muuuu, this persan wha is here, where does she live?" He was a hunter and came ta her hause. Sa one day he caught her by surprise. They greeted each ather and she asked him ta sit down. He asked her ta let him live there with her and asked her what she ate. She said, "this is millet, this is kunde, this is sesame, this is sarghum and I eat them all raw." He said, "I eat meat caaked." She asked, "how da you caak?" He said, "with fire." He went and gat the animal and prepared it far roasting. Then he said, "I am going out ta make fire." He went out and twirled the stick until he made fire. He brought some grass and kindled the fire. "Da you know how ta make fire?"*

Nyawagamba: *Eeeee*

Sochoro: . . . [explains how to make a fire] *They roasted the meat and ate. They were married. That is where aur names came fram. She gave blrth ta children, fram which came aur age-sets and clans.*

Nyawagamba: *Mmmmm*

Sochoro: *Eeeee*

This version was told to me by Mariko Romara Kisigero, in Burunga, on 31 March 1995. He was in his seventies, one of the first to receive an education, spending much of his life in government service and as a TANU activist. My colleague, Mayani, participated in the interview.

Jan: *How did the Nata begin?*

Romara: *The Noto, their asimoka (emergence). . . . Father Nyomunywo was o hunter. . . and this hunter on his journeys here and there in the wilderness, over there, he shot an animal with his orrow. Basi. After he hit the animal he followed its tracks. . . followed its tracks. . . followed its tracks... and he found that the animal had fallen on a large flat rock, where there was water. And before he did anything he saw another person coming to meet him there, and she was a woman. The woman was carrying a bundle on her bock. Now she welcomed him there and they begon to talk. We don't know what they talked about but it seems that he decided to live with her there ot that lorge rock. The man skinned the animal and prepared it for roasting with the water that was there. Then he sold to the womon, "excuse me while I go out ond excrete the fire." So she left and he took the chance to make fire by twirling o stick in o board.*

Mayani: *Whot were the sticks colled?*

Romara: *Ekingaita and rurendi. . . . After he made the fire he called the woman and she come. They roasted the meat ond ate it. Then the woman, look . . . , in her bundle she hod grain seeds. They took o stick ond mode holes ond plonted them there ond the seeds sprouted. They harvested the grain, and that was their home.*

Mayani: *Whot kind of groin?*

Romara: *Millet. . . . For the Noto this was their most important seed. So that is the way it is... And this womon's nome was Nyasionko. Some people who have looked into it say that she was from Soncho. So they lived these together ond hod children, and those were the Nata. We say of ourselves, "we ore the Nota of Nyamunywa and Nyasionko." That is because our parents were Nyamunywa ond who?*

Mayani: *and Nyasionko.*

Romara: *Eeeee*

Mayani: *Eeeee*

APPENDIX 2: IKIZU EMERGENCE TRADITIONS

Zamberi Manyeni and Gutu Manyeni Nyabwango, Sanzate, 15 June 1995. These are brothers, the elder Zamberi was a retired farmer and the younger Gutu held a number of political offices. They are of the Kombogere clan of Isamongo on their father's side and the hunting clan of Hemba on their mother's side. The contentious nature of history is evident in their dialogue.

Gutu: Let us begin with how the Ikizu started. The Ikizu began. . . The Ikizu began. . . with a man named Isamanga. This Isamanga met his wife who was named Nyakinywa. He was a hunter, a great hunter, he lived on the mountain. He was an expert at making fire, his wife Nyakinywa knew how to make rain. She made it and it rained. When they met to marry he asked his wife how she made rain. And she asked him how he made fire. So now Nyakinywa excelled Isamanga in cleverness. One day he went to hunt and she put out the fire. When Isamanga came home he was shivering. He had been rained on. He called, "Nyakinywa, where is the fire? Make it for me." Nyakinywa said, "it went out and you are the expert on fire, show me how to make it." "My wife, go to my quiver and get two things, a small stick, and another thing. Rub them together and you will get fire." Nyakinywa knew that she had tricked him and learned his expertise. After awhile. . . the Kombogere. . . They gave birth to children. One was named Mugabho. He was a son. The daughter was named. . . Wanzita. Wanzita went to the clan where she got married, the blacksmiths. So that is why the blacksmiths are Kombogere clan. The children of Wanzita were Waturi. We sing — "Ikizu wetu, cha Wanzita na Magabha." Ikizu wa Isamanga na Nyakinywa, cha Wanzita na Magabha.

Zamberi: Isamanga and Nyakinywa left each other. Isamongo wanted to circumcise the children but Nyakinywa refused. They fought about it and separated. While they were fighting Isamongo wanted to circumcise, but Nyakinywa refused. Isamongo said if you want to live in this country the children must be circumcised. The woman refused and they separated, each building in a different place.

Jan: Where?

Zamberi: Isamongo came to build in Sarama. Nyakinywa stayed at Kihumbo. They met at Kirinero. It is a known place. At this time the woman lived at her house and the man at his. The man had medicine. He made a plan with the medicine to make the children sick, one was lame and could not walk. Nyakinywa was upset and came to the man. My husband, why are the children sick and lame, what shall I do. He said, it is because you refused the tradition of this land. This land does not accept that a child lives here without being circumcised. If you agree to have them circumcised they will be healed. So she agreed and they were circumcised and they became well. So this is how Ikizu knows the tradition that they must circumcise their children.

Gutu: So they divided the work, one became a prophet/healer, the other became a rainmaker, omugemba. The prophet had the speciality of protection against enemies. When enemies came he would keep them from entering the land. The enemies were the

Moosoi from a long time ago. The man was a prophet to keep the Moasoi from entering to kill us. The woman was a prophet to bring rain. They divided the work. The medicine of the prophet was the orokoba. The man went clear over there and circled around putting the medicine on the trees to keep out the enemies. The enemies could not enter.

Jan: *Do people still have this medicine?*

Guti: *Up to now, traditions do not die, they are here.*

Jan: *Is there one for the whole land or many?*

Guti: *There are few who know it, those from one clan of Kombogere wo Soromo, Bohiri Zegero. They are the only ones who know it. The whole clan.*

Zamberi: *One at a time they take the title. One dies and leaves it to the next in line. It follows like this.*

Jan: *Did the medicine first come from Isomongo?*

Zamberi: *Yes, they got it from Isomongo the Bohiri Zegero. Those who followed him in the line. The clan, the children of Isamongo do the orokoba. [...]*

Jan: *Do they inherit the expertise or do they dream it?*

Zamberi: *They do not dream. They learn it.*

Guti: *Like me, if I have medicine I can teach my children to use it. This person takes it and teaches his children. [...]* *Not by dreaming.*

Jan: *There is not another kind of orokoba in Ikizu?*

Zamberi: *There are smaller ones but not the big one. Many help the prophet but he makes the medicine and keeps it.*

Guti: *When you do it you must wear the traditional leather clothes. The prophet wears the woman's clothes of leather, goat. Because his expertise... the uniform gives him authority to do the medicine. . . . The enemies will see him spreading the medicine and think it is just a woman and no threat. . . .*

Guti: *We are finished with the story of Isomongo. Let us go back to the work of momo, Nyokinywo, she was an expert in rain. This woman was the leader of the land, the Mtemi. The whole land respected her and knew her. Isomongo let her be leader because she brought the rain to bring food, the plants flourished.*

Kinanda: *Where did she come from?*

Zamberi: *Sukumo, Konadl. [...]* *[goes over the story again to show why she has authority.] To get the mtemi she took him one day to show him. The man killed a pongo (bushbuck), and brought the skin. She said, this is prohibited for me, take it and throw it away. So he threw it away. It landed on a tree. The next day she said I will now take you to show you how to make rain from above. They went to the rock where there is a pool of water. She said, put the skin on the water. He could not do it. But the woman could do it. She stoked it out to dry. So Nyokinywo got the authority. Everyone knows how to make fire today but only few can make rain.*

Jan: *Who followed her as mtemi.*

Zamberi: *Nyokinywo, then Wong'ombe, then Kisoziro, then Wekunzo. All of these were women, four women, then it went to the men. Mayoi, Gibwege, Mweso, Motutu, Mokongoro. It follows the clan of Nyokinywo, Aboraze. [...]* *Of the land of Kihumbo. There are no other rainmaker clans. [then lists the line of the prophet, Isamongo.] [...]* *All of these of one clan. Abohiri Zegero. [...]* *do sacrifices on Chomuriho. Muriho was the one who began Ikizu. . . . he came from Ukambo. He come here. The mountain of Chomuriho is called Chomuriho cho Mukambo. [...]*

Zambei: *Three women come with Nyokinywo from Sukumo... Wong'ombe and Wekunzo one stayed in Sizoki (Wekunzo) and the other in Hunyori (Wong'ombe). [. . .] Nyokinywo was at Kihumbo. Wong'ombe gave birth to Hunyori and Nyomong'uto, Ikizu of Wonzito and Mugobho. They were born of Wang'ombe, the sister of Nyokinywo. I do not know who their father was.*

Guti: *The mzee (elder) has talked about the history of Sukumo, but I want to tell you the history of Ikizu. He puts it together the stories of Sukumo and Ushashi. I want to tell you about the two women. I want to tell the story of Ikizu. This woman asked the story of Ikizu. The elder told you the story of Ushashi, but our history does not come from Ushashi and Usukumo. The other women, he does not know who they came from. But Ikizu is of two people, Isomongo and Nyokinywo who met, they had two children, two children, one was on Mturi and he was a prophet, and the other was a roinmaker. Mugobho and Wonzito. If you asked anyone to sing the song. They will say the same thing. This is our history. [. . .] [they fight amongst each other on the utemi list order, Guti finally leaves]*

Zambei: *Moroho came here but he had no people. The Hengere were here. Chamuriho mountain was inhabited by the Hengere people. [. . .] [Sings the song of Muriho and the Hengere.] This Mukambo named Muriho chased out the Hengere. The Moroho ore the united clan lords of Kirinero, Kihumbo, Butazo and Mariwondo, Buraze. This is the lord of Muriho. [. . .] Nyokinywo, because of her medicines, knew how to milk buffalo. When they met, she went to Isamongo's house, but then she asked him to come to her house at Kihumbo, Goka. So they went there. In the evening she sold since you ore a hunter, do not shoot my cattle when they come home. He found milk inside the house. She milked the buffalo. . . . She was a former.*

This version of the Ikizu emergence tradition appeared in print, E. C. Baker, "Notes on the Waikizu and Wasizaki of Musoma," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 23 (June 1947): 66-67.

In the region of Konodi, which is in Sukumolond, the people were so rich in cattle that they could not make use of the doily yield of milk and were in the habit of throwing the surplus into the river which flowed through their country. But this wastefulness was the cause of their downfall, for the river flowed into the Masoi country and the Masoi, wondering to see the milky water, followed the river bed until they come to Konodi. They saw the prosperity of the people and the greatness of their herds and, thereafter, they raided them so continuously that the dwellers in Konodi fled their country and were dispersed.

Among those who left Konodi were two women, Nyokinwo, who was the elder, and Nyombubi, and they wandered together until they came to Sizoki and there, in the Chongugi Hills, Nyakinwo, who was a roindoctor, deposited the Imburo (roin) stones which remain there to this day. These Imburo stones are the medium of communication between humans and the supernatural beings; they are produced in times of crisis and offerings are made through them to the Gods. After leaving the stones at Chongugi the two women went on until they come to Chomuliho where they met a man of the Msoraro tribe, a hunter by profession whose name was Somongo. After that Nyokinwo and Somongo lived together at Chomuliho and no further mention is made of Nyombubi. Water was very scarce round Chomuliho and the carrying of it arduous but Nyokinwo prayed to her ghosts and always found plenty in the clefts and crannies of the rocks near

their dwelling place and so she was able to carry it home without the discomfort of a long and hot journey. Somongo noticed the short time it took her to fetch the water and tried to discover the source of her supply but, though he questioned her, she refused to tell him.

After a time the two quarreled as to who was the ruler and owner of the land. Somongo said that he must be the chief for it was he who had found and adopted Nyokinwo but Nyokinwo said no; it was she who had given shelter to Somongo. One night, while Somongo was out hunting, hyenas howled round Nyokinwo's hut until dawn and rats destroyed the skins which she used as a covering. But she guessed that this was Somongo's doing and next morning she retaliated by bringing a number of lion and buffalo which she shut in the compound. Then she made rain which drenched Somongo and made him shiver so that he ran home for shelter, only to find that he could not enter his compound which was full of wild beasts. He called to Nyokinwo and asked her what he should do and she calmly told him to come into the kraal by the usual path. He pointed out that the place was full of lion and buffalo which prevented him from entering his own hut but she replied that they were her cattle and that she had brought them into the compound in order to milk them. At last Somongo begged her to come out and guide him and she came out to him and covered his face, for he was terror-stricken, and led him into the hut. When they had settled down she milked them and, when Somongo reminded her that she had arrived from Konodi empty-handed, she said that she had sent her flocks and herds ahead of her. As a last resource, Somongo challenged her to milk her so-called cattle and she went out and did so and brought him the milk.

Next morning Nyokinwo drove the beasts from the compound to enable Somongo to go out and hunt but she brought them back before he returned in the evening and left him outside until he begged her to lead him into the kraal. When she had brought him safely in she went out and milked the buffalo and drank their milk.

Somongo complained bitterly at having all these wild beasts about the place but Nyokinwo retorted that if he was afraid of the animals in the compound she, and not he, must be the ruler of the country. Somongo made a last effort to maintain his argument and pointed out that he must be the ruler of the land as he was living there when Nyokinwo arrived but she said that if he was indeed the overlord he should prove the fact by killing a bushbuck and floating the skin on the water of Bunuri pool, which lay in the Chomulho plains, until the skin was dry. If, she said, he could do this she would say no more but would submit to his authority. Somongo agreed and killed a bushbuck but when he spread the skin on the surface of the water it sank. Then Nyokinwo took a green skin and floated it on the surface of the pool until it was dry. And thus was female rule established in the land of Ikizu.

APPENDIX 3: IKOMA EMERGENCE TRADITIONS

Ikoma emergence stories were particularly difficult to collect in Ikoma itself because of the current political implications of the story. My Ikoma colleague told me that people were reluctant to say they came from Soncho for fear that the government would send them back there and incorporate their land into Serengeti National Park. Ikoma land has been slowly reduced as the park and game control areas expand. The one village of Robanda is really the only land left which is in the old Ikoma territory. Most Ikoma people live in other territories today and they were the only ones willing to tell the emergence story. The Ikoma story is also difficult because seems to be an ellision of ethnic origin story, clan origin story and settlement site place-names on the migration route.

Mabenga Nyahega and his brother Machaba Nyahega, Mbiso, 1 September 1995, were interviewed mainly because they have been important singers throughout the region for many years. Mabenga sings the solo parts and Machaba does the responses. They are Ikoma but have settled in Nata Mbiso and were friends of the Magoto family. One of their singing performances in on video tape.

Machaba: *The Ikoma came from Rogoro, the east, they came from over there . . .*

Jan: *Ok*

Machaba: *They had a Taturu prophet then. Mwikoma and his wife, had an argument. The prophet got mad. But he didn't let them know. He said to Mwikoma, "make an arrow." So he made it. The day that it was finished the Prophet asked him, "is it ready?" He said, "yes." The Prophet said, "tomorrow many animals will come, at one o'clock they will come in here, when you have enough do not follow them anymore, do not bring the meat home. But there will be an animal. . . [. . .] All of these animals you will get, but you cannot return here. ...when you get there the animal that you will see will be a lion. You will kill it. When you get the lion you will know that the animals are finished. Do not return home. So for the Ikoma it turned out like this, they came from over there, from Loliondo, there they were the Sonjo. For those who came it was only a few days journey. When they got to the lion they were already at Robanda (presently in Ikoma), over at that mountain which sits all by itself on the plain. They found the lion there. When they got the lion they said to each other, "we have wives and children here." "And Sonjo is so far away." "What is it that would take us back there." "So now let us begin to farm here." They began to farm. When they farmed they got food and made their homes here at Ikoma. There was no one here, it was wilderness. There were no people. They made a camp and farmed and got food and so they settled settled here. Then they went on living here and had children and stayed, but they came from Sonjo. When we got here we found the people of Nyowagamba (Nata) here, don't asked me where they came from? But we began to understand each other and get along together.*

Jan: *Then there is no relationship between you and the Nata or the Ishenyi by birth?*

Machaba: *No none, it is just tribe, you see when one tribe builds near to the other, they begin to get along and understand other. Even you white people, don't you settle next to*

athers who speak o different language but eventually you learn to like each other ond to understand each other? We were neighbors. I don't know who got here first, but the Ikomo got here o reolly lang time aga. Our grandfathers of long long ogo were born here.

Sabuni Machota, Issenye, 14 March 1996.

Sabuni: *Ikoma . . . Ta say where we come from, we come from Soncha. We came from Sancha. . .*

Jan: *Where in Sancha? [. . .]*

Sabuni: *I don't know. . . Sancho Regata [. . .] Serunga Nyageta was the one who brought us to Ikoma, who came first. We came as hunters to Bonogi Mountain. It was at the time of hunger so they followed the herds ond when the animals stopped the hunters would make a comp there. They would hunt and eat. In this way they came to Bonogi. Then to Memuno. Then we come to Chengero. All of these ploces ore in Ikomo, but now in the park [. . .] Then finally to Rewanda. They mode a camp. There was o roin. Serungo made his big comp under on Ikomo tree. The ploces where they camped were good so there was na reasan to return to Regato. They stayed there under the Ikoma tree. Sa when athers would ask them where they were going they would say, "I am gaing aver there to the Ikamo tree." And that become the nome of the people who lived there. Then they sent back to Regota far the wamen to come. [. . .] They mode the camp with skins and gross thotch. Then groduolly began to build regular houses. [. . .] Rewando was the first big settlement. It is the some as what is taday called Rabanda, nomed ofter the "toothbrush tree" (Rewanda). The white man wha asked whot the ploce was colled mispronounced the name. [. . .] Serunga hod two sons, Momuriso ond Marogora. Each of them had four children. Momuriso gave birth to Mogoikwe, Murochi, Mserubati, and Mwancho. Morogoro gave birth to Mogetigo, Mohikumari, Mahimurumbe and Msogorori. The four doors (clons) of the Ikoma.*

APPENDIX 4: TATOGA EMERGENCE TRADITIONS

This is the story of how the Tatoga separated from the Maasai, told by Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girimanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995:

Giriweshi was born of a woman and was the son of God. His son was Masuje who tricked God, the Sun, in a game of bao because he knew how to make the stones revolve endlessly without coming to an empty hole. Because the game never ended the Sun never set and Masuje's cattle could graze for from home. The Sun became onry and retreated into the sky, taking Giriweshi with him.

Mosuje's son was Gambareu who had a twin brother, Senondogeu. The elder brother, Senondogeu, told his younger brother that they should move east, so they went. But when they got to Getamweka (near what is now Sibora in Noto), Gambareu, who was a prophet, saw that the trip would turn out badly. In the morning he told his brother that they should turn back. The elder brother refused and forced Gambareu to go on. Later on Gomboreu told his brother that his shoe had broken and that he would catch up later after he fixed it. When Senandogeu was out of site the younger brother went back to his father at Roho. He took his iron brocelet and bent it into a hook, with which he dug a channel all the way to the lake, creating the Roho River. He did this so that Senondogeu would not see him across the plains.

He built his home near the lake and put in a livestock krool. He gathered a lot of bones and put them in the kraal. During the night the bones turned into cattle. Among those cattle was the rainmaker's cow with the hump of power on its back. Soon Senondogeu sent his son back to find out where Gambareu had gone. They saw that he already had cattle and even one which would be used to make rain. They reported this to their father, who told them to go back and say that his elder brother orders him to move. If he refused the sons were to steal the cattle. They tried to steal the cow of rain prophecy and were defeated, going home empty handed. Since then they have been separated. The elder brother became the Moasai, of the first clan of Laibons, living at Furwari, on the rim of Ngorongoro Crater. Senandogeu promised his brother that he would always come to steal the cattle of his father, and Gombareu promised him that he would always defeat him. Gambareu didn't die either but disappeared into the loka.

The story of Giriweshi's birth explains the separation from the farmers and their relationship to the Tatoga, told by Mayera Magondora, Juana Masanga, Marunde Godi, Manawa, 24 February 1996:

Giriweshi's mother had a swollen belly and the people were ready to move on to another place where there was rain. They had to leave her behind because she could not travel. They left her with a sheep so that when the hyeno come to eat her it would eat the sheep too. They spread its stomach contents over her to make her grove. The people moved away and for two years there was no rain. In the third year it rained in the place where they had left the woman. They sent four youth back to their old home to check it

out. They found lots of good grass there and their eyes were overcome with the sight of the person that they met, his was a shining color. They went back and told everyone of the incredible brightness of the person that they met. Others came to see for themselves. But then they saw that he was only a person and greeted him. Giriweshi called his mother and told her to give them some milk. When they saw his mother they were amazed, she was beautiful and her stomach was no longer swollen. They went back and told the others that the woman they had left behind had given birth. Then they went to ask Giriweshi if they could come and live there again. When they asked Giriweshi he said that they must go back and kill their mothers and fathers if they wanted to move here. So they did and then brought back the report that they had done it. So Giriweshi said that they should all come. When the all arrived Giriweshi called them all together and divided them into two groups, those who had killed their parents and those who had not. Those who had not killed their parents were only a few and those who had were many. Those who had killed their parents were changed and became the Washashi or Nadiga — that is all of those who are not Tatoga, including the Sukuma, the farmers.

Another story explains the relationship between the three territorial sections of the Tatoga in Tanzania, told by Stephen Gojat Gishageta and Girmanda Mwarhisha Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995:

The three sections of the Aratoga, the Barabaraig of Mbulu, the Burarega of Singida and the Rotigenga of Mara, separated from each other on their journey from the north, maybe from Misri (Egypt). On their journey a donkey was lost and some stayed behind to look for it. They ended their journey there and became the Rotigenga. The others went on south in the journey and one group was tired and so stopped to rest. They became the Burarega. The last group went on until they stopped to cut walking sticks. They stayed there and became the Barabaraig. ... In each of the sections you can find each of the clans so we have a close relationship with each other even now, all are Aratoga... Within the area of the Rotigenga there were also separate sections but all of the clans were represented in each.

The Tatoga also had hunter/gatherers, the Isimajek, living in symbiotic relationship with them. The story of how the hunters got separated from the herders is told by Isimajek informants and is a different version of the emergence story told about Gambareu above, told by Mayera Magondora, Juana Masanga, Marunde Godi, Manawa, 24 February 1996.:

This story begins on the shores of Lake Victoria in a time when all the cattle were gone — finished. Their prophet ordered them each to make a livestock kraal at home and inside of it to put bones, any kind of bones they could find, wild animal or whatever. Some of them refused to make a kraal because they did not believe the prophet. The prophet's name was Naiyi. The next day those that had finished their kraals went and reported to the prophet that they were finished. He said that they should return and sleep that night. In the night they heard the sound of cattle and in the morning they awoke to see that the bones had turned into a herd of cattle, male and female and calves. The women went right away to milk the cows. Those who had not made kraals and had gotten no cattle went back to the prophet to ask for cattle for themselves. But the prophet said that they were too late and that it would not come around for a second time.

He told them to go home and that it would rain tonight and in the morning they should go to the river to see what they would depend on. So they went home and it rained very hard that night and in the morning they went to the river and saw lots and lots of fish floating on top of the water. But they were afraid of the fish, thinking they were snakes. They went back to the prophet and explained to him about the snakes. The prophet told them that this was their food and not snakes. They should return to the river and fish. So they were happy and went back to the river to fish. This was the division of the Totoga into the Isimojek and the others. The others have cattle and we don't. The other Totogo want nothing to do with us, they laugh at us because we don't have any cattle. Even if we have cattle we still cannot be admitted to their society. The blacksmiths also have no cattle and are separated from the rest of the Totoga.

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Tapes, translations and transcripts of interviews will be deposited with the African Studies Association oral data collection housed at the Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University, Bloomington. Translations and transcripts will be forwarded to the University of Dar es Salaam, History Department and the Musoma Regional Archives.

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- Mang'oha Machunchuriani, Mbiso, 24 March 1995, Nata, M, 77, Mbiso, Advisor to the Age-set (Mwikundu), Elder of the Court (Baraza), CCM, Chairman of the Store Committee, Elder of Defense (Jadi), Eldership title of Amaaka, #8-11.
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- Mariam Mturi, Nyamuswa, Makongoro Secondary, 30 June 1995, Ikizu, M, 68, Secondary School teacher and headmaster, Makongoro Secondary School, author of local history book.
- Mariko Romara Kisigiro, Burunga, 31 March 1995, Nata, M, 73, Burunga, Representative (Diwani) on Chief's Council and Chairman of TANU of Natta Branch, #15-17.
- Marimo Nyamakena, Sanzate, 10 June 1995, Ikizu, M, 99, Sanzate, Farmer, Wealthy cattle owner, #51-55.
- Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995, Sonjo/ Temi, M, 53, Samunge, Sonjo, Story teller, #193-94.
- Maro Mchari Maricha, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 90, Maji Moto, Eldership title of Black tail, Omokoro Anyangi, Rainmaker, #152-53.

- Maro Mugendi, Busawe, 22 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 77, Busawe, Farmer, Eldership title of Eborano, #148-49.
- Marunde Godi, Manawa, 24 February 1996, Tatoga Isimajega, M, 60, Manawa, #202-03.
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- Maswe Makore, Mesaga, 28 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 85, Mesaga, Farmer, Eldership title of the Black tail, Risancho, keeper of the generation-set medicine, #155.
- Matias Mahiti Kebumbeko, Torogoro, 2 April, 1996, Nata, M, 70, Mbiso.
- Mayani Magoto, Bugerera, 3 March 1996, Nata, M, Bugerera, #204.
- Mayenye Nyabunga, Sanzate, 8 September 1995, Ikizu, F, 75, Sanzate, Farmer, #118-20.
- Mayera Magondora, Manawa, 24 February 1996, Tatoga Isimajega, M, 75, Manawa, Prophet, #202-03.
- Megasa Mokiri, Motokeri, 4 March 1995, 13 March 1995, Nata, M, 87, Motokeri, Farmer, Eldership title of Omorokingi, Kuvinza Kitatinyo, Aguho, Black and White tails, #2-4.
- Merekwa Masunga, Mariwanda, 6 July 1995, Tatoga Rotigenga, M, 77, Mariwanda, #71-2.
- Mgoye Magutachuba Rotegenga Megasa, Motokeri, 13 March 1995, Mbiso, 1 May 1995, Nata, M, #27.
- Mikael Magessa Sarota, Issenye, 25 August 1995, Ishenyi, M, 73, Issenye, Son of former Chief, #101-2.
- Mnyengere (Bhoke) Magotto, Mbiso, 13 May 1995, Nata, F, Mbiso, #30.
- Mohere Mogoye, Bugerera, 25 March 1995, Nata, M, 53, Bugerera, Farmer, #12-13.
- Moremi Mwikicho, Robanda, 12 July 1995, Ikoma, M, Robanda, #75.
- Morigo (Mchombocho) Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 October 1995, Ishenyi, M, 85, Issenye, Farmer, Eldership titles of Egishe and Ekiero, #178-80.
- Mossi Chagana, Nyeberekera, 16 February 1996, Ishenyi, M, 72, Bugerera, #200.
- Musa Matabarwa, Mariwanda, 8 July 1995, Ikizu, M, 70, Mariwanda, Ten-cell leader, Chairman of the Secondary school committee and Director, Elder of SDA church, #73-74.

- Mwenge Elizabeth Magotto, Mbiso, 6 May 1995, Nata, F, 69, Mbiso, #28-9.
- Mwikwabe Maro, Busawe, 22 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 65, Busawe, #147.
- Mwinoki Munyewa, Bugerera, 21 May 1995, Ikizu, F, Mariwanda, Her grandson says she is one of the very few "old style" rainmakers left., #32.
- Mwita Magige, Mosongo, 9 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 74, Mosongo, Farmer, WW II Corporal in the army, worked in the Nyambara mines, Mgambo, Ten-cell leader, Village Chairman, #121-24.
- Mwita Maro, Maji Moto, 29 Septmeber 1995, Ngoreme, M, 71, Maji Moto, The leader for the Abamaina generation-set, Village chairman, Court elder, #160.
- Nata Elders Meeting, Mbiso, 14 August 1995, Nata, M.
- Nata singers and dancers, Bugerera, 19 August 1995, Nata, #100.
- Njaga Nyasama, Kengesi, 2 September 1995, 14 September 1995, 29 March 1996, Ngoreme, F, 81, Kengesi, Farmer, #112, #128 and #221
- Nyabori Marwa, Kengesi, 14 September 1995, Ngoreme, F, Kengesi, #128.
- Nsaho Maro, Kenyana, 14 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 64, Kenyana, Farmer, Chairman of Kenyana, Speaker (Omokina), #125-7.
- Nyabusogesi Nying'asa, Nyamuswa, Makongoro Secondary, 30 June 1995, Ikizu, M, Nyamuswa, 68, Farmer, Prophet.
- Nyamaganda Magotto, Bugerera, 3 March 1995, Cultural Vocabulary, numerous days, Nata, M, 66, Mbiso, Teacher.
- Nyambeho Marangini, Issenye, 7 September 1995, Ishenyi, M, 75, Issenye, Farmer, Msamu of the Generation-set and Age-set (the one who divides the meat), #114-17.
- Nyambureti Morumbe, Robanda, 27 May 1995, Ikoma, M, Robanda, Eldership title of the white tail, #36-39.
- Nyawagamba Magoto, Site, Kikongoti, 2 April 1996, numerous other informal discussions, Nata, M, Bugerera.
- Paulina Wambura, Bugerera, 16 April 1995, Kuria, F, 65, Bugerera, Farmer, #22.
- Paulo Maitari Nyigana, Maji Moto, 29 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 79, Maji Moto, Farmer, Sergeant Major in Army, TANU.elder, #158-59.

- Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995, Sonjo/ Temi, M, 47, Samonge, Sonjo, "Controller of water," #191-92.
- Philemon Mbota, Mugumu/Matare, 15 March 1996, Kuria, M, 55, Mugumu/ Kiabakari, Farmer, Mennonite Pastor, #214.
- Phillipo Haimati, Iramba, 15 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 72, Iramba, Chairman of the party Ngoreme and Kiagata 1959 and secretary of TANU to 1970 Ten-cell leader, clerk for Catholic Mission, Iramba, #129-132.
- Raheli Wanchota Nyanchiwa, Mugumu/Morotonga, 16 March 1996, Ikoma, F, 80, Mugumu/Morotonga, #215.
- Ramadhani Masaigana, Motokeri, 8 June 1995, Nata, M, 59, Motokeri, Farmer, #46-49.
- Raphael Machogote, Issenye, 14 March 1996, Ishenyi, M, 67, Issenye, Representative for the Section (Diwani Kata) of Issenye, Village Chairman, CCM Chair of Village, Anglican Church Council, #213.
- Reterenge Nyigena, Maji Moto, 23 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 81, Maji Moto, Farmer, Road Foreman, #150-51.
- Riyang'ang'ara Nyang'urara, Sarawe, 20 July 1995, Ikizu, M, 77, Sarawe, Eldership Title Amagiha, Healer, #78-79.
- Robi Nykisokoro, Borenga, 21 September 1995, Ngoreme, F, Borenga, #140-141.
- Rugayonga Nyamobega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995, Ishenyi, M, 93, Mugeta, Advisor (Mchama), Age-set and Generation-set leader Ekireri, Eldership title Egishe, (blind), #175-177.
- Sagochi Nyekipegete, Robanda, 12 July 1995, Ikoma, M, Robanda, #75.
- Samueli Buguna Katama, Bwai, 11 November 1995, Ruri, M, 68, Bwai, Farmer, Ten-cell leader, Advisory Council CCM, Mennonite Church leader and elder 1962, #186-87.
- Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995, Sonjo/Temi, M, 64, Samonge, Sonjo, various government and party offices, including first medical dresser in Sonjo and District representative (Diwani), #196.
- Samwell M. Kiramanzera, Kurasanda, 3 August 1995, Ikizu, M, 59, Kurusanga, Farmer, Healer, Numerous government positions, #86-87.
- Sarya Nyamuhandi, Bumangi, 10 November 1995, Zanaki, M, 84, Bumangi, Farmer, Court Elder, Ten-cell leader, Eldership title of the Red Tail, Sirori, #184-85.
- Senteu Maghanye, Issenye, 14 March 1996, Ikoma, M, 80, Issenye, Leader of the Age-set, #210-12.

- Silas King'are Magori, Kemgesi, 21 September 1995, Ngoreme, M, 68, Kemgesi, Farmer, Chairman of the Branch for TANU 1954, Diwani in colonial days, #137-39.
- Sira Masiyora, Nyerero, 17 November 1995, Kuria, Nyabasi, M, 80, Nyerero, Farmer, Tax collector, Eldership title of Wife's Isubo, #189-90.
- Sochoro Kabati, Nyichoka, 2 June 1995, Bwanda 16 February 1996, Riyara, 7 March 1996, Nata, M, 70, Nyichoka, Leader (Kangati) of the Abangurati Age-set, Eldership title of the Omongibo, #44-45, 200, 206.
- Songoro Sasora, Nyamuswa, Makongoro Secondary, 30 June 1995, Ikizu, M, #68.
- Stephen Gojat Gishageta, Issenye, 27 July 1995, 28 March 1996, Tatoga Rotigenga, M, 75, Issenye, District Representative (Diwani), Mennonite Church Elder, #82-83, #217-18.
- Sumwa Nyamutwe, Mugeta, 9 March 1996, Mbiso, 4 April 1996, Nata, F, 87, Mbiso, Eldership titles of Egise and Omwikarabutu, #207-09.
- Surati Wambura, Morotonga, 13 July 1995, Ikoma, F, 83, Morotonga, #76-77.
- Tatoga elders and singers, Kyandega, 18 August 1995, Tatoga Rotigenga, M, #97-98.
- Tetere Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995, 1 May 1995, Nata, M, 63, Mbiso, Farmer, TANU youth league, Ten-cell leader, Village Council. Court elder, Eldership title of Atitinyo, #18-19, #27.
- Thomas Kubini and Jacob Mugaka, Bunda, 10 March 1995, Sizaki, M, 70, Bunda, Member of Parliament.
- Tirani Wankunyi, Issenye, 7 April 1995, Nata, M, 90, Issenye, #20-21.
- Wambura Nyikisokoro, Sang'anga, Buchanchari, 23 September 1995, Ngoreme, M.
- Warioba Mabusi Nyangabara, Sarawe, 20 July 1995, Ikizu, M, 71, Kitare, Eldership title of Mhimaye, #78-79.
- Webiro Ginyewe, Sarawe, 20 July 1995, Ikizu, M, Sarawe, #78-9.
- Webiro Zeze, Mariwanda, 8 July 1995, Ikizu, M, 53, Mariwanda, Secretary of TANU, Chairman of CCM Section of Hunyari., #73-74.
- Weigoro Mincha, Kemgesi, 29 March 1996, Ngoreme, F, 59, Kemgesi, Farmer, #219-20.
- Wilson Shanyangi Machota, Mugumu/Morotonga, 12 July 1995, 16 March 1996, Ikoma, M, 61, Mugumu/Morotonga, Mennonite Pastor, political offices, Leader of the Generation-set, #216.

Yohana Kitena Nyitanga, Makondusi, 1 May 1995, Nata, M, 83, Makondusi, Headman of Bigo (colonial), Catholic Catechist, Church elder, Chama cha Msingi, #23-6.

Zabron Kisubundo Nyamamera, Bisarye, 9 November 1995, Zanaki, M, 59, Bisarye, Ten-cell leader, Village representative, Committee of the Rikora, Mzama, #183-85.

Zamberi Manyeni, Sanzate, 15 June 1995, Ikizu, M, 82, Sanzate, Mrugaruga, Mchama, Member of TANU, Eldership titles, #56-59.

Zamberi Masamhwe, Mariwanda, 22 June 1995, Ikizu, M, 77, Mariwanda, #65.

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Abbreviations Used in Footnotes

TNA	Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam
CORY # EAF UDSM	Cory Papers, East Africana Collection, University of Dar es Salaam Library
MDB	Musoma District Books (microfilm, Tanganyika National Archives)

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jan Bender Shetler lives on a farm in southwest Colorado with her husband, Peter, and her two sons, Daniel (15) and Paul (11). She was born in Philadelphia and raised in a small town in Indiana. She graduated with a B.A. in History from Goshen College in 1978 and went on to begin graduate work at Utah State University. In 1980, she and her husband went to Ethiopia with Mennonite Central Committee where she worked as a secondary school teacher and community development worker. This led to assignments in Zaire and Tanzania in community development and as Co-Country Representative for Mennonite Central Committee before returning to the United States in 1991 to begin a graduate program at the University of Florida. Her Master's paper was published as "A Gift for Generations to Come: A Kiroba Popular History from the Forgotten Side of the Lake in the 1980s," in the International Journal of African Historical Studies (1995). She spent eighteen months, from January 1995 to July 1996, in Tanzania doing field research.

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