

## **The Historical Context of Mara Region Cultural Narratives**

by Jan Bender Shetler, December 2001, adapted from Chapter 1, Introduction in *Telling our own Stories: Local Histories from South Mara, Tanzania* (Brill, 2002). See also other works by the author.

People in the Mara Region of Tanzania, like people all over the world, tell and write stories about their past without the aid of academic history texts. Grandmothers often tell mythical stories of animal tricksters or heroes from the past to their grandchildren as they go to sleep at night. Adult men talk to young boys about the past around the fire in the homestead courtyard or on hunting trips, but use the past to decide matters of urgency in the community today around a pot of beer and in the company of other elders. Women sing songs or tell stories about the past to entertain children as they sort beans or pick cotton. Descent group leaders discuss their collective past as they meet to propitiate the ancestors, settle blood debts or attend a relative's funeral. Age-set rituals include narrations of heroic deeds in the past. Elders put on elaborate feasts to take new titles and learn the secrets of the past particular to that rank. Children learn the wider history of Africa and Tanzania in school. Elders tell ethnic stories of origin and migration to curious researchers from abroad. How these narrators tell their story and what they choose to tell about is largely determined by their social position, title, gender, class, descent group, or age and the context in which they tell the story. Narrators continue to tell all of these kinds of histories because they transmit crucial information for living today. Yet many in the Mara Region fear that these stories will be lost as the next generation moves further from the village and loses the natural contexts for remembering the past.

Over the last thirty years literate men in the Mara Region began to act on this concern by writing down and organizing their elders' memories about the past. They join many other authors of ethnically based histories appearing in the late colonial and post-colonial era throughout Africa. Jan Bender Shetler has compiled some of these written histories from the Mara Region south of the Mara River, known as South Mara since colonial times (specifically the Serengeti and Bunda Districts), in *Telling our own Stories: Local Histories from South Mara, Tanzania*.<sup>1</sup> It includes texts from the Rogoro ("peoples of the east")—Ikizu, Sizaki, Ishenyi, Nata, Ikoma, Ngoreme and Tatoga. Other peoples in South Mara include the Nyancha, "the peoples of the lake or the west," and the Zanaki. The lakes people have a somewhat different history much more directly connected to a Lake Victoria zone of interaction. With the exception of the Southern Nilotic-speaking Tatoga, all speak closely related and mutually intelligible East Nyanza Bantu languages. From an external perspective South Mara appears to share a common regional culture

and history, yet each of the many small ethnic groups claim a separate identity commemorated in the written histories.<sup>2</sup>

The work of these local historians represents a significant shift in historical memory. Beyond the obvious change from orality to literacy the texts in this collection now organize the many diverse stories about the past, representing many different social groups and their various interests, into a single historical narrative based on the ethnic group. Because the "tribalization" of the past is a fairly recent phenomenon these written histories still contain unassimilated fragments of the former stories of descent groups, age-sets and titled ranks on which they were based. Laid side by side in one collection they also demonstrate an obvious regional unity that calls ethnic divisions into question. These texts are of critical interest to historians today because they provide evidence both for these more recent shifts in historical memory and previous social identities beyond the ethnic group. Judging from an initial distribution of this manuscript in the region, local people also find the written texts useful for preserving their own knowledge about the past. The publication of *Telling our own Stories* represents one attempt both to enable the continuation of local discussions about the past and to seriously engage local historians as colleagues in larger historical debates.

#### *Telling our Own Stories: Authors, Origins and Uses of Local Historical Texts and Oral Narratives*

The collection in *Telling our own Stories*, or indeed in the oral texts, consists mainly of local or "tribal"<sup>3</sup> histories written by primary and secondary school teachers, mission/church workers, clerks and government officials, in collaboration with community elders who felt an urgency to set these histories in writing before they were forgotten altogether. Both the literate authors who wrote the manuscripts and the community elders who knew the oral traditions come from the same generation of elders, born between 1920 and 1940, the first generation that could not remember a time before colonialism. These two sets of elders differ most significantly in their education and experience outside of the community.

The literate elders of Ikizu, Sizaki, Ikoma, Ngoreme, Ikizu, Nata and Tatoga have significantly chosen to tell the story of their "tribe" or ethnic group rather than, for example, their descent group, region, rank, or age-set group, as the oral traditions were often told. This was a logical choice during the colonial years when indirect rule required "tribes" as the administrative unit. In the Mara region (then the Musoma District), where there were few precolonial chiefs or sharply defined boundaries, disputes over what constituted a "tribe" and its "traditional" leaders abounded.<sup>4</sup> When colonial officers realized that the

system of chiefs was not working they called the elders of these “tribes” to Musoma in 1945 to consult on “pre-European tribal organization” to restore the “ancient rights and powers” of the clan elders as the basis for indirect rule.<sup>5</sup> What they never considered was that the “tribal” unit itself was not fixed nor necessarily primary. The peoples of the Musoma District reworked existing identities to comply with the need of the colonial government for “tribes,” but they did so on their own terms, creating small units that were responsive to local control. These elders did not make up new identities or necessarily change preexisting boundaries as much as they called on different sets of boundaries, relating to different kinds of social units to negotiate specific needs in the colonial setting. In the process, certain men, in the generation of the present-day elder’s fathers, gained authority as spokesmen for their people.

The authors of these books, however, did not stay home when they were young and learn oral tradition from their fathers. They spent much of their lives away from home and came to have a stake in promoting the ethnic identities articulated by their fathers that allowed them to make connections in a mobile colonial society. They put together ethnic histories from clan and community narratives in an era in which they had increasing opportunity to travel and meet people from other places. Some among those who later wrote these accounts were the first to go to school in Musoma; others worked as teachers, government clerks or mine supervisors throughout the Territory; others went as far as Burma with the King’s African Rifles during World War II, or to Nairobi, Tanga and Magadi Soda as migrant laborers. Subtle shifts in historical narratives took place as these men began to account for a larger nation of “tribes.” Away from home, men began to see themselves as part of larger ethnic or regional communities, seeking out people who were from their home area and speaking similar languages. Laborers in Nairobi popularized Kuria identity (peoples who live north of the Mara River) by forming the Kuria Union in 1945. Their goals were to promote modernization, help the sick, arrange for funerals, and return fugitive women from the city.<sup>6</sup> Migrant laborers walking to Magadi Soda in Kenya found hospitality among the Sonjo in the midst of a hostile Maasailand when they showed the *ntemi* scar on their right breast. Men used ethnic histories to establish claims for security and support critical to their survival away from home.

This generation of working men far away from home, in collaboration with older colonial chiefs and elders, also used the “tribal” narrative as a way to ensure their control over the land and family they left behind.<sup>7</sup> Without living wages men needed women to stay at home and farm in order to support the family

and maintain control over rural land for their retirement. The histories in this collection all contain appeals to customary law and tradition that make clear the authority of senior men over women and junior men. However the highly contested disputes over marriage and divorce laws in the colonial record demonstrate that acceptance of what customary law meant was far from settled. 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."<sup>8</sup> Litigation in the Musoma District on the issues surrounding marriage and bridewealth counted for the biggest percentage of court cases.<sup>9</sup> As Chanock noted in his study of the creation of customary law in colonial Africa, traditional understanding of justice which had been open to situational interpretation now became fixed and inflexible, with a clear bias toward the interests of a male elite and supported by the colonial regime.<sup>10</sup>

However, "tribal" histories did not just serve the interests of the colonial regime. The struggle for independence under the leadership of TANU (1954-1961) also made use of "tribal" histories and identity. Early nationalist leaders emerged from ethnic self-help groups like the Sukuma Union or the Usambara Citizens Union.<sup>11</sup> Throughout Africa nationalist leaders looked to "tribal tradition" to provide an authentic model for building a new nation. During the years immediately after Tanzanian independence a number of "tribal" histories from other regions were published by local presses with a nationalistic agenda of finding unity in diversity.<sup>12</sup> The state promoted "tribal" identity in the context of a unified nation, rather than as a source of division. The act of writing itself was an important symbolic way to use the tools of the colonial oppressor for liberation. More than any other single feature, writing or the pen is used in oral narrative to describe the power of the colonial regime. The Germans gave the first colonial chiefs a book and a pen as signs of their authority.<sup>13</sup> 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).<sup>14</sup> Written histories served as a powerful tool for defining an authentic African identity in opposition to colonial rule.

Although the "tribal" historical narrative took shape in a colonial context and was co-opted to serve the optimistic nationalism of the early independence years, the written histories in this collection appear much later and in a post-colonial, post-development context. Perhaps the instability of "tribal" identity in this area delayed the impulse of other more politically active and larger ethnic groups in an earlier era to consolidate a pan-ethnic identity. These histories represent one set of male elders' attempts to

define just what it means to be Ikizu or Ikoma in relation to other peoples in the region and to the larger nation of independent Tanzania. They were written in the 1980s and 1990s when the economy was on the decline, after the dreams of modernization and quick post-colonial development were crushed under the burden of debt and deteriorating terms of trade.

The authors make a direct connection between knowing where they came from and economic development. In fact, the Ikizu Development Association sponsored the first text in this collection, the *Ikizu and Sizaki History*. Their other projects include various community development works and a secondary school. The Ishenyi council of elders declared that their meeting of deliberations over the history and traditions of the Ishenyi was, by definition, "a development meeting."<sup>15</sup> The texts make numerous direct or indirect references to first president of independent Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere, his policy of *Ujamaa* or African Socialism and the development rhetoric of the revolutionary party, CCM. They assert that the solidarity and cooperation necessary for development is not possible without a return to the moral character of the past when women and young men submitted to the benevolent authority of the elders. The Ngoreme authors use history to exhort the youth to bring an end to cattle raiding. All the authors affirm the benefits of development at the same time as they bring a sharp critique of modernization that leaves out tradition and ancestry.

Women are conspicuously absent as authors or informants of ethnic history. This is not because they do not know anything about the past but because they were not in a position to learn or pass on these particular ethnic histories of origin, migration and settlement that evolved during the colonial period. While in the past women held positions of authority in the community as rainmakers, prophets or elders, the colonial administration systematically denied them a voice in formal politics. In the past women left their natal homes to live in their husband's family homestead, thereby functioning as valuable intermediaries between clans and ethnic groups. But when the emphasis shifted to ethnic unity and exclusivity in the colonial era women became outsiders and strangers. 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 in the community.<sup>16</sup> This knowledge is critical for women to carry out their many daily chores that require extensive use of reciprocal relationships, yet this is not the subject of ethnic histories.

The choice of what to include and not to include in ethnic histories reflects the interests of the literate male elders that assembled them. Each of these authors asks what it means to be Ikizu or Nata, Ishenyi or Ngoreme in post-colonial Tanzania and chooses the content of their texts accordingly. Some of the common subjects include origins, first settlement and migration, first parents and founders, clan and lineage divisions, division of the land, age and generation-sets, leadership and authority, prophets, rainmakers and titled elders, rituals, boundaries and landforms, economic activities, spirits of the ancestors, months of the year, education, customary law, inheritance, marriage and divorce, songs and dances, and religion. Each of these topics has resonance today as South Mara people continue to rely on the social networks established by clans or age-sets, to consult experts for rain, fertility or wealth, and to protect the land and its people from outside forces that may wish them harm.

These texts as they appear in this *Telling our own Stories*, or indeed in the oral texts, can be read at multiple levels and are aimed at multiple audiences. Teaching African history in universities outside of Africa suffers from the lack of primary sources available to students. Much of the research over the last forty years, which established the academic discipline of African history, was based on oral sources. Yet because of language problems and the lack of fixed texts, scholars have published very few oral sources. In addition, western researchers collect and frame the oral sources according to their own research agenda. This collection is unique in that the texts are based on oral tradition but framed by local people according to their own agenda and based on their own research among knowledgeable elders. Therefore, just as oral sources collected by outsiders, one cannot read these texts as unmediated links to the past.<sup>17</sup> They tell as much about present concerns as they do about the past. The student of African history may read these texts as sources for the study of ethnicity, gender, social relations, authority or ideology in the post-colonial era.

Yet these local histories should not just be read as a way to understand present concerns in terms of the past, they also tell us something about the past itself. The student of African history can begin to draw tentative hypotheses about the past by comparing similar themes in each text. Endnotes alert the reader to other related sources and explain obscure references. By using these texts as primary sources the student will certainly gain a sense of the problems involved in documenting and dating change over time. Although the texts tell the story of each isolated group in sequence, their historical significance lies in the larger pattern of regional similarities and differences. The Tatoga traditions have been included to

demonstrate the regional interactions of East Nyanza Bantu-speaking farmers with Southern Nilotic-speaking herders over time. These few texts indicate the fundamentally different cultural tradition of the Tatoga. Yet the interactions of Bantu-speakers with Tatoga herders and Asi hunters who preceded them in the region are fundamental to understanding the historical meaning of the origin stories that postulate entrance into an empty land.

The narrators of these histories write in a style and tense that communicates a static traditional past carried on into the present, known to anthropologists as the "ethnographic present." They write about the cultural traditions of their ethnic group as if the ancestors created traditions in isolation from neighboring groups and have passed on those traditions unchanged to the present. Historians understand that culture and society are always changing, in response to both internal and external forces. What is understood as "tradition" changes from one era to the next and in relation to the regional or even global context. The authors of these texts use the concept of a static "tradition" as a way to differentiate their ethnic group from others and to legitimize the authority of the male elders. The reader must be aware that much of what is depicted as "tradition" from the beginning of time is often a later innovation. In order to interpret this, other kinds of evidence must be used along with the oral traditions in these texts.

#### The Regional Historical Context: Long-term Processes of Settlement and Interaction

The histories in this collection all begin with the origins of the ethnic group through the collaboration of hunters and farmers in the distant past. We also have information about the early interaction of farmers, hunters and herders through the evidence of archaeology and historical linguistics. Like oral traditions these sources show that Bantu-speakers were not the first peoples in the area and had to make accommodations with the autochthonous hunter-gatherers.

Hunter-gatherers have occupied East Africa since the dawn of the human species. After 1300-1000 BCE some local residents gradually began to adopt livestock that had been domesticated in the Sahara, long before agriculture was introduced. Perhaps in response to drought, small groups of immigrants from the north began moving in with livestock. Autochthonous peoples seem to have assimilated these newcomers into their communities without breaking the essential cultural continuity of the region. As the region became drier and other groups of immigrants from the north, perhaps with the first domesticated plants, introduced better-adapted cattle breeds, pastoralism played an increasingly

important role in the economy.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the hunter-gatherers and pastoralists, a third set of archaeological evidence demonstrates the arrival of another group of people around 500 BCE.

Archaeologists speculate that they grew grain crops in addition to practicing pastoralism, although there is as yet no direct evidence for agriculture during this time period. Hunter-gatherers, agro-pastoralist farmers and pastoralists coexisted with little competition in the Neolithic period by occupying separate ecological niches—the montane forests, the transition zone between the forest and savanna, and the open savanna grasslands respectively.<sup>19</sup>

However, as time went on the pastoralists, and later the agriculturalists, put increasing pressure on the habitats of the hunter-gatherers. Hunter-gatherers originally practiced a fairly sedentary lifestyle, occupying the transition zone between savanna and forest, in order to exploit both sets of resources. They relied heavily on small game that they hunted in the woodlands with traps and snares and also kept some small stock.<sup>20</sup> Over time pastoralists and agro-pastoralists began to encroach on the ecological niche occupied by the hunter-gatherers, restricting them to increasingly marginalized zones in the forests and woodlands. They seem to have compensated for this loss of resources by developing interdependent and often subordinate relations with the incoming populations.<sup>21</sup>

Historical linguistic evidence postulates that the earliest pastoralist peoples in this region spoke Southern Cushitic languages and those practicing a mixed pastoral and farming economy spoke a Rub Eastern Sahelian language. The identity of the earliest languages of hunter-gatherer peoples remains in doubt as they were found historically in association with pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities throughout the Great Rift Valley.<sup>22</sup> Hunter-gatherers in East Africa have a longstanding pattern of living in close symbiotic relationship with other communities and adopting their language.<sup>23</sup>

Bantu-speaking immigrants encountered this diverse linguistic, cultural and economic mix as they moved into this region from around the Lake Victoria shore land and into the interior around 300-400 AD. As they lost touch with their ancestral homelands in the Great Lakes their languages differentiated into what we now know as the East Nyanza speech community. At about the same time Mara Southern-Nilotic speaking people also began moving into the interior of the Mara Region from the north.<sup>24</sup> Gradually the Southern Cushitic and Eastern Sahelian-speakers disappeared from the historical record and East Nyanza Bantu-speakers came to dominate the region. The Mara Southern Nilotic speakers lasted somewhat longer



before disappearing, occupying for a time the ecological niche of the pastoral groups in the open grasslands.<sup>25</sup>

Although East Nyanza Bantu languages became dominant throughout the Mara Region by or before 1000 AD, the diverse regional interactions of the earlier period fundamentally shaped their development. For example between 500 and 1000 AD East Nyanza speakers adopted the cycling age-set names used today by Mara peoples as loan words from Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers.<sup>26</sup> From the kinds of loan words they adopted one might conclude that as they moved into an unfamiliar environment away from the lake, they used common age-sets and the comradeship of peers to gain access to livestock expertise and develop new kinds of homesteads built around the livestock corral.<sup>27</sup>

Today the Mara Southern Nilotic-speakers are gone but the Southern Nilotic Dadog-speakers, the Tatoga Rotigenga and Isimajek occupy their ecological and economic pastoral niche.<sup>28</sup> Dadog speaking peoples entered the Mara Region and around 1000 AD, after East Nyanza Bantu-speakers had already come to dominate the region. The characteristic features of Dadog-speaking culture—including herding cattle, sheep and goats, drinking milk, bleeding cattle, paying bridewealth in livestock, cultivating some grain and hunting—have also remained constant over the millennium. The Dadog 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.<sup>29</sup>

People speaking East Nyanza Bantu languages, and living among people speaking other languages, diversified over time as they became separated from each other. 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. 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 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.

Many of the linguistic innovations in South Mara languages are within the realm of livestock vocabulary, some of which are loan words from Dadog.<sup>30</sup>

By or before 1500 AD the present linguistic/cultural foundations of this region were well established. Each of the Bantu languages that is now distinct had differentiated itself. East Nyanza Bantu-speakers coexisted on the land with Tatoga pastoralists and Asi hunter/gatherers. Although each of these specialized communities of herders, hunters and farmers developed a separate identity and culture formed in the context of their interdependent relationship to one another, they also share a considerable cultural heritage. Historical linguistics provides evidence for the interactions among farmers, herders and hunters that reach 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 majority of those people who came to speak East Nyanza Bantu languages were not new immigrants but local peoples who had adopted and helped to formulate a new culture and language.<sup>31</sup>

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. 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 and assimilation that have functioned in historical times, the most important of which has been the kinship system.

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.<sup>32</sup> Many ethnic groups in the Mara Region today remain matrilineal, while others have adopted patrilineal descent systems during the colonial years or before. In fact, judging from the broad array of strategies and diverse kinship arrangements in the region one might conclude that the lineality as such does not function. In any case, the linguistic 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.<sup>33</sup>

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 where people must exploit productive land intensively favors the patrilineage with its ability to concentrate wealth.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand David Schoenbrun also argues that nondifferentiated descent ideologies allowed communities to be open to newcomers. Great Lakes Bantu speakers were interested in “securing access to people—children and followers—not in controlling access to land”<sup>35</sup> The ability to reckon descent through either line suggests that a flexible strategy was necessary for negotiating various kinds of relationships on the frontier.

Bantu-speaking communities may have incorporated Southern Nilotic or Southern Cushitic-speaking individuals who brought the skills and environmental knowledge necessary for survival in the Mara region. These new community members 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 connections through marriage 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. Kinship organization is also a powerful mechanism for incorporating strangers and uniting people of diverse origins.

The distribution of clan names, avoidances and clan histories across the region adds parallel evidence to support this hypothesis. Clan names are not restricted to one ethnic group but found throughout the region. Dispersed clan members claim a common ancestor in the distant past but cannot calculate their exact genealogical relationship to one another, as can those of descent groups at a closer level. Clans are united by a common avoidance and praise names, such as the baboon, bushbuck, millet or cattle, as well as the acknowledgement of a common origin place and tradition.<sup>36</sup> At least before the nineteenth century, the clan territory was the largest unit of residential settlement through which people organized communal action.<sup>37</sup> The place designation prefix *bu* before the clan name designates the clan territory, *hamate* or *ekyaro*. The colonial "tribe" was often an amalgamation of clan territories and ethnic history a combination of the much older clan histories. The words for descent groups in local languages also refer to physical features of the homestead—the house, the gateway and the hearthstones.<sup>38</sup> By using a kinship idiom of relationships within the household people are able to understand and talk about their relationships with disparate people across the region. Oral traditions describe the hunting clans as first comers with ritual authority over the land. In the ethnic account they are the first children or one of the founding ancestors and given special ritual functions.<sup>39</sup>

Judging from present-day ethnographies and oral narratives it seems that in the past clans controlled particular suites of knowledge and resources, both spiritual and material. People used and maintained dispersed clan affiliations in order to gain security in times of drought, trade partners, access to resources and reciprocal obligations.<sup>40</sup> Migration stories of clan ancestors provide a mental map of the various places and people in the region who are connection by clan affiliation. Clan histories united diverse people, crossing the boundaries of ethnicity, economic subsistence patterns and geographical distance. Membership in a clan, either by birth or fictive kinship, allowed a person to make claims on the particular expertise, ritual knowledge or resources of other members who would have otherwise been far distant strangers. In Ikizu and Tatoga particular clans passed on the gift of prophecy and rainmaking. People consulted prophets from other ethnic groups, to the extent that a Tatoga prophet was named as an Ikoma colonial chief.

The general word for prophecy, healing, divination and rainmaking throughout the Mara Region is *obughabo*. This word is derived from the old Lakes Bantu root, *-gàbá*, "to divide up, distribute," usually in

the sense of one who gives big feasts or gives things away generously.<sup>41</sup> 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 and support. This developed into ritual roles for protecting the land through the office of the chief or king throughout the Lakes Region.<sup>42</sup> In the Mara Region, where decentralized patterns of authority persisted until the colonial era, the role of the *obughabo* was restricted to prophecy and rainmaking, which nevertheless carried significant political authority. This ancient principal of distribution rather than consolidation as the basis of authority also reinforces the pattern of clans and lineage groups as a means of connection and inclusion rather than exclusion.

Heterarchical, rather than hierarchical leaderships patterns characterized this period of early settlement in the Mara Region.<sup>43</sup> Although oral traditions of the Ikizu describe the origins of the role of chiefship with the female rainmaker Nyakinywa, it is also clear that this was neither centralized nor exclusive authority. The prophet and the titled elder also shared in responsibility for and authority over the Ikizu. Different clan groups had authority over territories not necessarily controlled by the rainmaker. Heterarchy was also apparent in the early encounters of Mara peoples with the Germans who asked to meet the chief. The people put forth various leaders with a variety of roles in their confusion over who was the most important or "chief" among them.<sup>44</sup> Leaders had authority over variously constituted groups that overlapped and complemented one another. Leadership crossed as often as it served to define territorial boundaries.

Even today people remember prophets, rainmakers and other significant ancestors in the past who are propitiated by particular descent groups at their gravesites to bring fertility, rain and protection. Many of the important places mentioned in oral traditions are ancestral gravesites that have now become *emisambwa* or spirits of the land. *Erisambwa/emisambwa* in East Nyanza 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)."<sup>45</sup> One of the most famous Ngoreme *emisambwa* is the hot springs at Maji Moto. An elder of the Kombo descent group, who are ritually responsible at this site, said that the people of a whole village live under the water.<sup>46</sup> Elders perform specific rituals at these sites and the sites must be left to grow wild. By collapsing the meaning of specific ancestors into the concept of a territorial spirit of a place, peoples of South Mara made claims to the land that they occupied. Yet more than that,

this is a profound statement of identification of themselves, in the form of their ancestors, with the land. This is most evident in the Ikizu stories in Chapter Two of Muriho planting spirits, *emisambwa*, in the streams to drive away the Mbilikimo.

This pattern of incorporation and settlement through the idiom of kinship is also echoed in the ethnic origin stories that tell how farmers and hunters, first woman and first man met and formed a new society through their union. If these stories do refer to the frontier settlement process of the distant past, well beyond what we would expect to be carried along in oral memory, then it should come as no surprise that each ethnic group tells a variation of the same underlying story of the meeting of first man, the hunter, and first woman, the farmer. For example in Ikizu tradition Muriho, and later Samongo, are representative of indigenous hunters who meet the woman farmer, Nyakinywa. In the Nata tradition this is the story of the first man and first woman, Nyamunya and Nyasionko. Perhaps this common story comes from a time before the ethnic groups that we now know existed. Rather than each ethnic group entering the region separately, with its own history and identity already formed, these origin stories seem to refer to the sense of group identity that developed locally as new kinds of communities developed and differentiated themselves.

The places designated by origin traditions of the Ikizu, Ishenyi, Nata, Ikoma and Ngoreme are all located in hill zones, all within the Mara region but further east than the present location of these ethnic groups.<sup>47</sup> Linguistic evidence shows that these settlers followed a very old Great Lakes Bantu pattern of inhabiting the hill ridges.<sup>48</sup> Because of local soil and climatic patterns, hills constitute the ecological niche most favored by millet farmers.<sup>49</sup> Nyasionko, the first Nata woman, was a farmer of eleusine millet, known in Nata as *oburwe*. These particular hills were also located at the intersection between the woodland and grassland ecologies of the hunter and herder respectively, where Bantu-speaking farmers could maintain interactions with these other communities and a diversified economy. In addition, the hill location of the origin sites within the region provides further evidence that these ethnic groups formed their present identity through interactions in the Mara Region rather than as immigrants from outside. Both oral and linguistic sources provide a consistent picture of early settlement patterns in the Mara Region.

The difficulty, however, with the congruity of oral and linguistic sources is that oral traditions of the Ikoma, Ngoreme, Ishenyi, and to some extent Nata and Ikizu as well, all assert that their founding

ancestor came, not from around Lake Victoria to the west, but from the east in Sonjo. Sonjo is today a small "island" of Bantu-speaking peoples in the "sea" of Maasailand, east of the Serengeti National Park in the Loliondo District of Arusha Region. As an Ikoma elder so succinctly put it: "an 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."<sup>50</sup> Examples of stories explaining their ethnic origins in Sonjo appear in the following collection from Ngoreme, Ishenyi and Nata. The stories provide no indication of when they took place except that they happened, a very long time ago, in the beginning. Yet an analysis based on other sources indicates that the connection to Sonjo may be of relatively recent origin.

One of the few academic historians of the Mara Region, Tanzanian scholar Odhiambo Anacleti, accepted the Sonjo origin accounts at face value. He concluded that the Ngoreme, Ishenyi and Ikoma peoples moved from a place called Regata in Sonjo beginning around 1750 AD in response to pressure from Maasai raiding. The Sonjo, who now live some eighty linear miles away across the Serengeti National Park, also acknowledge kinship with the Ikoma. Anacleti calculated the chronological date of this move from his knowledge of Maasai history and lists of named generations. After extensive interviews in the Serengeti District he constructed a table of "generation cycles among the Serengeti people" which is relatively consistent among the Ngoreme, Nata, Ikoma and Ishenyi going back to 1734.<sup>51</sup> Anacleti collected one set of age-set names and projected them back in time to three recurring cycles in eight-year intervals. He also surmised that at this time they adopted male and female circumcision and the initiation system into age-grades. Elders that I interviewed could also come up with lists of cycling names that they projected back infinitely in time, saying that these cycling names had always been used and were part of Nata or Ikoma tradition. Oral tradition thus presents an account of the age system in South Mara, including both generation- and age-sets that are static and timeless.

However, close attention to other oral traditions demonstrates that there was a break in the continuity of these named generations around the mid-nineteenth century. One Nata elder said that the first *saiga* or age-set system was formed during the generation of the Maina, who lived at Site, where they divided into the three age-set cycles of Bongirate, Busaai and Borumarancha.<sup>52</sup> One of the Ishenyi texts in this collection confirms that they divided into the cycling age-sets or *saiga* when they left Nyeberekera during the generation of the Maina (c. 1852). Something new happened at this time—a new way of

organizing age-sets. Further investigation also shows that Anacleti's list of generational names cannot be projected back in time to three cycles beginning in 1734. Many of the names on his list are not the generation-set names but are age-set praise names that refer to specific events that occurred at their initiation. For example, the Sanduka age-set refers to the boxes that the migrant workers brought back with them filled with blankets and other presents for the family left at home, or the boxes that they had to carry as porters for the Germans. The Hobasi age-set is named after the Habasha or Abyssinians who fought against the Italians in WWII, and Ngerecha age-set after the English. Many of the age-set names are thus anachronistic when applied to people before the colonial period.<sup>53</sup>

Not only do we find inconsistencies in the oral evidence but also in comparison with other kinds of evidence. Sonjo people speak a Bantu language of an entirely different branch of the family tree than the East Nyanza Bantu languages spoken by Mara peoples today.<sup>54</sup> If South Mara peoples came from Sonjo, even as late as 1750 AD, one would expect to find at least some traces of that language in their newly adopted East Nyanza languages. Yet no significant linguistic connections exist. Sonjo language shows a strong influence and interaction with Tatoga but not East Nyanza languages.<sup>55</sup> Moreover there are few other consistencies in cultural practices or social organization. How then do we explain the insistence of South Mara peoples that they "came from Sonjo"? What happened to make some South Mara people claim connections to Sonjo rather than more ancient connections around the lake?

A close examination of oral traditions concerning origins in Sonjo demonstrate that they refer to historical contexts, places and social groups of the nineteenth century rather than to the time of "first" origins. This becomes obvious in talking to the Sonjo about their relationship to the South Mara. Some of the interviews from Sonjo are included in the final chapter of oral transcriptions. Numerous Sonjo people that I met on a visit accompanied by an Ikoma and a Nata man said that the "Ikoma"<sup>56</sup> and the Sonjo are people of "one womb" who both carry the *ntemi* scar under their right breast as a sign of their brotherhood. Physical signs such as the *ntemi* may have originated as a mark of alliance or fictive kinship.<sup>57</sup> When questioned about connections to Ikoma, elders from the Sonjo village of Samonge referred to Tinaga as one of eight villages collectively known as Masabha (the north).<sup>58</sup> Maasai raiders destroyed Tinaga and the people dispersed, some fleeing to Sonjo villages to the south or as far as Ikoma.<sup>59</sup> Ngoreme traditions mention clans that came from Tinaga and Masabha.<sup>60</sup> Ishenyi elders recall a time when they knew



themselves as the Regata people, and both Ikoma and Ngoreme note origins in Regata, Sonjo, perhaps referring to the Sonjo village of Sale, also known as Rhughata.<sup>61</sup> An elder from Rhughata claimed origins at Jalati and Ngrumega (Mbalageti and Grumeti rivers in western Serengeti) and the praise shouts of the Rhugata clan names the place called Nyankerekera (perhaps the abandoned Ishenyi village known as Nyaberekera). The original ancestors of Rhugata were hunters of the Sagati clan, a clan name also found in Ishenyi and Ikoma.<sup>62</sup> One elder from the Tinaga clan in Sonjo said that the destruction of Tinaga took place in the time of his grandfather (c. 1880).<sup>63</sup> Maasai history would also confirm this rather late date.<sup>64</sup>

Clearly, there is an important link between Sonjo and Ikoma. But the time of “origins” noted in the oral traditions seems to be most closely traceable to the mid-nineteenth century, in the context of Maasai raids, rather than to the beginning of time or even to the eighteenth century. This is not to say that there were no earlier interactions between Sonjo and South Mara. Ecological and landscape patterns make it likely that Sonjo and South Mara peoples met often as hunters and likely had trade relations. Shared clan names and alliances marked by the *ntemi* scar would indicate long-term reciprocal relationships.<sup>65</sup> However these interactions were not sustained or consistent enough to leave their mark in South Mara or Sonjo speech patterns. It seems that Ikoma people did not come from Sonjo as a group but rather that some refugees from Maasai raids in Sonjo came to Ikoma and made such an important contribution to the reformulation of group identity that they are remembered as first ancestors.

Both the stories of first man and first woman, hunter and farmer, and the stories of origins in Sonjo are “true” stories, but they tell about very different kinds of origins of very different groups of people. When identities were reformulated in the nineteenth century a new kind of people emerged who began to talk about their origins in new ways. Spatially they turned from looking for their identity and origins towards the lake to the west to an orientation towards Maasailand in the east. They were incorporated into a larger multi-ethnic region rather than existing as isolated units. In current oral traditions time begins with the arrival of Sonjo ancestors in the nineteenth century and the formation of linear age-sets that were, at least outwardly, modeled on the Maasai age system.

#### The Disasters of the Late-Nineteenth Century and Historical Change

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Mara Region, as much of East Africa, experienced a series of devastating epidemics combined with drought and subsequent famine that eventually led to

ecological collapse and resettlement.<sup>66</sup> The period seems to have begun 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 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 Bantu-speaking farmers after the rinderpest panzootic and traded their children or worked as herders for food. The German explorer 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 "to pass through Masailand again if we wished." Kollmann, some years later, also reported full granaries and fat cattle.<sup>67</sup>

Many oral narratives refer to the "Hunger of the Feet" (*agecha ya maghoro*) as a new kind of famine because of its intensity and regional scope, brought on as the result of a culmination 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.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> 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 in exchange for food in order to stay alive. Famine also gave Kerewe people, deeply involved in the slave trade through caravan routes to the coast and dependence on Buganda, the opportunity to actively search along the lakeshore and up the Mara River for children to buy as slaves.<sup>70</sup>

Although coastal caravan routes did not pass directly through the region they were not unknown to local people. 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> This is confirmed

by Ngoreme testimony of Arab caravans. While there was a more “dangerous” route to the north, the main caravan route, trading mainly in ivory and slaves, went to the south in Sukuma and then across the Lake to Buganda. The devastating effects of the caravan trade on local society are well documented elsewhere.<sup>73</sup> The case of South Mara is important because it demonstrates that even with the most insubstantial contact the caravan trade had long-term effects on local societies.

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. Oral traditions contain accounts of "foreign" diseases introduced during this period such as syphilis,<sup>74</sup> small pox, cholera and measles, collectively associated with dysentery and dehydration.<sup>75</sup> Epidemic disease on top of an already weakened population resulted in wholesale migration to Sukuma in search of refuge. The origin traditions of Ikizu, Nata and Sizaki claim a connection to Sukuma, which we can date to this period when Mara peoples took refuge from famine in Sukuma. Mara peoples often paid for the food in Sukuma with wild animal products. As a result of increased wealth in Sukuma from the caravan trade, the demand for ivory bracelets, wildebeest tail flywhisks and bracelets, ostrich feathers and eggs, wild animal skins and lions' manes increased rapidly. South Mara peoples supplied these products in return for iron, salt or livestock. As a result hunting became much more commercialized during this period, far beyond the immediate need for meat.

Finally, the outbreak of sleeping sickness identified by the Germans in 1902 indicates that the cycle of disasters had, by the turn of the century, resulted in loss of control over the environment.<sup>76</sup> It is now accepted that sleeping sickness had been endemic in East Africa, kept at bay rather than eradicated, by local patterns of bush clearing, burning, cattle grazing, a heavy reliance on goats, and farming.<sup>77</sup> Depopulation as a result of famine and epidemic 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 and the resurgence of the disease.

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.<sup>78</sup> 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. 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.

Oral testimonies from South Mara express most directly and keenly the devastating effects of the disasters through the experience of Maasai raids. Although the Maasai may have been present in South Mara since the late eighteenth century, expansion based on a specialized form of pastoralism did not develop until the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> The Maasai entered this region gradually, in search of new grazing areas.<sup>80</sup> Their lifestyle depended upon symbiotic interaction with farmers and hunter/gatherers within a regional system. As the Maasai gained preeminence in the region they did not annex new territory as much as dominate their neighbors through fear of raiding by age-set warriors.<sup>81</sup> As early as 1800 the Loitai Maasai began expanding from the Rift Valley to the Loitai hills in what is now western Kenya where they pushed the Siria Maasai up to the Mara River in Kuria and Ngoreme Territory as early as 1800. Shortly thereafter the Serengeti Maasai began using lands in what is now the western part of Serengeti National Park for dry season grazing. As the Maasai began asserting their identity as pastoralists and the rightful owners of all cattle they ran into conflict with South Mara people who farmed, hunted and also kept small herds of sheep, goats and some cattle. The Maasai drove the Bachuta Tatoga south after winning the battle to control the Ngorongoro crater and the nomadic Asi or Ndorobo hunters in South Mara soon became Maasai dependents.<sup>82</sup>

The Maasai gained dominance by developing a highly specialized form of pastoralism in the nineteenth century. 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. The 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 Bantu-speaking 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 Mara Region, Maasai power lay in both military and cultural domination. In order to survive in this new context South Mara people had to accommodate the Maasai who had successfully deployed age regiments for cattle raiding. Although the South Mara peoples practiced an age system already, they adapted it in order to claim their identity in this newly forming region of growing Maasai hegemony.<sup>83</sup>

It seems likely that the most intense Maasai raiding in South Mara actually took place after the rinderpest panzootic (1880-1890), as a strategy to recover stock. Before the rinderpest most Mara 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. 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 animal skins until the turn of the century. This later period of raiding went on up to the beginning of British rule. The Maasai resorted to intense raiding of their neighbors after they lost most of their cattle. The German explorer, Baumann, described the starving Serenget Maasai who had taken refuge in Ngorongoro Crater highlands in 1892 as "walking skeletons." He also found Maasai sick and dying on the Lake Victoria coast.<sup>84</sup> 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 also burn houses and fields, leaving devastation behind them.<sup>85</sup> In 1902 the Germans built Fort Ikoma in the western Serengeti specifically to control Maasai raiding.

Largely as a result of Maasai raiding Mara peoples began moving to concentrated settlements and building fortified walls to protect their villages. 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. 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. 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.<sup>86</sup> The German traveler Kollmann (1899) described "Ushashi" villages up in the rocky hillsides surrounded by high hedges of euphorbia or thorns.<sup>87</sup> The remains of these structures can still be

seen in Ngoreme, Kuria and Ikoma, where the stones are gradually being hauled away to build structures for the park. Although previous settlement patterns grouped people of related descent in one area, the intense concentration of settlements during this period seems to have been a temporary response to stress. When peace came during the colonial period people moved out of these concentrated settlements.<sup>88</sup>

Maasai influence was so strong during this period that early explorers and colonial officers mistook peoples of South Mara to be Maasai. German explorers Baumann and Weiss both noted the similarity between these peoples and the Maasai in dress, ornamentation, ear piercing, use of snuff and weapons.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> The encyclopedist Schnee described all of the Bantu-speaking peoples of the Mara Region as possessing Maasai "blood" and similar in many cultural aspects.<sup>91</sup> Early German notes on the "tribes" of South Mara categorize Ikoma and Nata as "lands of the Maasai."<sup>92</sup> The early map of native caravan routes from Wakefield shows the whole region inhabited by the Maasai "Lumbwa."<sup>93</sup> South Mara peoples obviously admired as well as despised the Maasai.

They also had personal, and sometimes even friendly, interactions with the Maasai. They knew the people that they were fighting against, and could name them in oral traditions about the raids. Many Ikoma and Ngoreme families claim Maasai ancestors. The most famous of these is the story of Saroti, a Maasai man who was left behind and was aided by an Ngoreme man Matiti, from Nguku near Kisaka, who taught him to farm and gave him a daughter, Nyaboge, to marry.<sup>94</sup> During the *rihaha* famine or rinderpest of 1890 the Maasai came to sell their children in Ikoma for food. During the "Hunger of the Feet" many Ikoma took refuge in Maasailand.<sup>95</sup> A 1933 report from the Musoma District refers to these strong family connections:

*... 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 to exchange with the Waikoma who sell them in Sukuma.... A Masai can always rely on a bed and a meal when he visits Ikoma... it is quite useless to expect the Waikoma to abandon friendly relations which have survived the raids.<sup>96</sup>*

It was within the region defined by Maasai hegemony in the nineteenth century that South Mara people forged new ethnic identities and became the Ikoma, Ishenyi, Nata and Ngoreme. The experience of intensive Maasai raiding had far reaching effects on historical consciousness and identity formation. South Mara communities drew on Maasai culture to reorder their age-sets and in doing so, revised their very concept of time. Before this, time was measured by the passage of named and cycling generation-sets,

during and after the disasters the initiation of each new warrior age-set marked the passage of time. 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.

Within this new regional system, South Mara peoples formulated new kinds of age-sets that were territorially based. The reorganization of lineage-based settlements into age-set territories enabled people to reformulate the interdependent economic strategies of woodlands for hunting, hills for farming, and grasslands for herding among their own sons who were sent out to each of the territories as they reached the age of circumcision. One elder said that the Nata age-set territories were divided ecologically with the Busaai living in the hills as farmers and herders, the Bongirate on the plains as herders and hunters, and the Borumarancha in the bush woodlands as hunters and farmers.<sup>97</sup> South Mara farmers responded to the disasters by spreading out both their risks and their opportunities when the former regional system of economic interdependence broke down. They became part of a common regional age system revolving around the Maasai. Yet South Mara people were not just reacting defensively, they were also choosing to become integrated into a meta-ethnic region through a synchronized age system that was based both on enmity and cooperation.

In order to understand how the age system changed we must first look at the age organization that existed in South Mara before the nineteenth century disasters. People of an older generation in South Mara today very clearly identify themselves not only by their ethnic, clan and lineage affiliations but also by their age-set (*saiga*) and generation-set (*rikora/amakora*) names.<sup>98</sup> Every man was a member of the named generation-set (*rikora/amakora*) that followed the generation-set name of his father in either the Saai or Chuuma cycle. Throughout the region there were two sets of cycling names, the Saai cycle and the Chuuma cycle. A man took the generation-set name at birth, as a birthright without a special ceremony to confer it. If a man was of the Saai cycle and his grandfather was of the Saai generation, his father would be of the Nyambureti generation and he would be of the Gamunyere generation and his son the Maina generation. In some places, like Ngoreme and Ishenyi each cycle was territorially based, in other places,

like Nata and Ikoma the two cycles were mixed territorially. The Saai cycling names were 1) Saai, 2) Nyambureti, 3) Gamunyere, 4) Maina and the Chuuma cycling names were 1) Mairabe (Ngorongoro among the Kuria and Ghabasa among the Ikizu), 2) Gini, 3) Nyangi, 4) Chuuma.

One of the most important tasks of the generation-set was to perform the ritual of healing the land by walking over it every eight years and planting medicines prescribed by the prophet. In the texts that follow this is referred to as passing the *orokoba* or protecting the land. The *orokoba* can be passed around an individual homestead, a village or an entire ethnic group to protect it from disease, raid or witchcraft. In the retirement ceremony the ruling generation retired and handed over authority to the next generation. The ritual of retirement was not fixed and could be delayed by the ruling elders at will.<sup>99</sup> A person's generation determined daily greetings, marriage partners, eating arrangements, hospitality, respect and responsibility throughout the region. Because a person got his generation-set name based on his father's generation, rather than on his year of birth, people in the same generation were not necessarily peers. An elderly man in a "younger" generation would have to greet a young boy from an "older" generation with respect.

All adult males were involved in the generation-set rituals, regardless of origins, which made it an inclusive rather than an exclusive institution. Anthropologists Simonse and Kurimoto note the integrative role of age organization in uniting communities based on, and sometimes divided by, segmentary lineage systems. Baxter and Almagor's edited collection of age system scholarship further emphasized the internal ritual and ideological role of age-sets over their external political and military role.<sup>100</sup> In the Mara Region the ritual role of the generation-set in healing the land and integrating a kinship based community seemed to be more important than its military aspect since one generation set did not represent a peer group and could not easily be mobilized for war.<sup>101</sup> The symbols of the generation-set rituals in the transfer of power include: lighting a new fire and cutting strips of hide to be worn by the new generation, symbolizing the orderly transfer of power from one generation to another; the generation-set walk which passes through and gathers people from each of the clan lands, symbolizing the uniting of disparate people through the generation-set; and finally the initiation ceremony itself in which elders sprinkle the new generation, both men and women with a mixture of milk and millet flour, symbolizing the need for fertility and growth. In



Nata the ritual “father” prayed that the youth might have “ children, abundant livestock, good harvests and rain” during their “rule.”<sup>102</sup>

Both men and women in South Mara were also members of a *saiga* or age-set. One became a member of an age-set along with one’s peers sometime after circumcision when a new set was formed. The names for the age-sets followed a cycling pattern but also chose a praise name that was specific to events of the time. One recent Nata age-set was called (aba)Chabhani (Japan) and another (aba)Motorazi (Motorize). Circumcision took place every couple of years in each locality or clan territory, *ekyaro*, rather than one mass circumcision for the entire ethnic group. These smaller groups (*siriti*) then joined together when it was time to initiate a new age-set every eight years. This age-set system was more useful for mobilizing young men for battle or other communal duties because it grouped together peers in competition with other sets. Generation-set rituals to heal the land and bring fertility to the new generation seem to have been taken over by age-sets in the nineteenth century. Today it is often difficult to distinguish which organization does which job.

If Serengeti people adopted a new kind of age system in the Maina generation (c. 1850), what parts of the age system described by elders today were practiced before that time? Once again the evidence from historical linguistics brings into question the evidence from oral accounts. Generation-set cycles seem to be the oldest form of age organization in the region. The cycling names of nyangi, maina, chuuma, saai, ngorongoro are all Mara Southern Nilotic loan words (originally of Cushitic origin) in the East Nyanza Bantu languages spoken in the Mara Region. The adoption of age-set names and Mara Southern Nilotic words for peer friendships and cattle related items sometime between 400 and 1000 AD seems to have been an important way for East Nyanza Bantu speakers to adapt to an unfamiliar environment and gain access to livestock. The Tatoga pastoralists who came into the area after 1000 AD do not use these cycling names but have a linear generation-set system called *saigeida*.<sup>103</sup> The word for the age-set system of the Ikoma, Nata, Ngoreme and Ishenyi, *saiga*, presumably derives from this Tatoga word. Great Lakes Bantu speakers had adopted circumcision and initiation by 500 BC, before they even came to the east side of Lake Victoria Nyanza.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, it seems from this historical linguistic evidence that the cycling generation-sets (*rikora/amakora*) developed before 1000 AD in relationship with Mara Southern Nilotic pastoralists in the

region while the linear age-sets (*saiga*) developed after 1000 AD in relationship with Tatoga pastoralists. Both were used to reach across the boundaries of ethnicity and economy to form interdependent relationships with pastoralists, to mobilize young men for military and other collective tasks and to unite people across boundaries of descent within the community for rituals that would bring healing and fertility to the land.

The South Mara response to the disasters was a total reorganization of the age system into three territorially based age-set units, *saiga*, which would “rule” for eight years, each in their turn. Those three age-set eras of eight years each would then be equivalent to one *rikora* generation of 24-25 years before cycling back to the first age-set territory. In Nata, Ikoma, and Ishenyi first the Busaai, then the Bongirate, then the Borumarancha ruled and finally back to the Busaai in a cycle. During this time period people refer to age-sets, *saiga*, using the prefix “bu,” meaning “the land of,” rather than “the people of,” using the normal age or generation set prefix “aba.” The Ngoreme, Nata, Ishenyi and Ikoma all used these same *saiga* names (with the Ngoreme adding a few additional ones) and had lands within their collective territory known as (bu)Saai, (bo)Ngirate and (bo)Rumarancha. This system of synchronized age-set cycles operated at a meta-ethnic level. The territories of the Borumarancha, Bongirate or Busaai age-sets in Ikoma, Nata and Ishenyi overlapped and were in essence one territory.

Recovery from the disasters was largely a result of investing wealth acquired from hunting into cattle. The demand for forest products in Sukuma led to the commercialization of hunting on a scale unknown up to this time. Age-sets were also used to organize hunting camps during the dry season to harvest wildebeest. Young men gained wealth in cattle, either through cattle raiding or trading wildebeest tails, over which their fathers had no control. Baumann reported in 1894 seeing a "worn path" in Ikoma that was the trader's trail to Sukuma.<sup>105</sup> Elders across ethnic groups agree that the first *saiga* to fully exploit the Sukuma trade were the Kihocha (c. 1900).<sup>106</sup> Young men also gained cattle by using the new age-set system to raid on the lakeshore, often dressed as Maasai to scare the inhabitants during the generation of the Kihocha, Kong'ota and Kubhura (1900-1916). Many stories, such as the tragic battle of Hantachega, testify that South Mara warriors made alliances with Maasai age-sets that corresponded to their own.<sup>107</sup>

The Ikizu forged the most direct and lasting links to Sukuma during the period of late nineteenth century disasters by their incorporation of rainmaker leadership from the Kwaya clan of Kanadi, Sukuma.

The Ikizu have two parallel origin stories that have been unified into one narrative in the text included in this collection. In the first, the founding ancestor, Muriho, established authority over the land. However, later his hunter descendant, Samongo met Nyakinywa, an immigrant from the royal clan in Kanadi, who contested his authority over the land. She became the "chief" of Ikizu but not without accepting compromises with the existing authority and tradition. The various lists of Ikizu chiefs can be compared to demonstrate that the origins of Ikizu as a unified chiefdom under a Kwaya clan rainmaker certainly does not date before the nineteenth century and likely not before mid-century. None of the lists collected here agree on the names or order of chiefs after Nyakinywa and before Gibwege. Significantly, Gibwege dates to the time of the "Hunger of the Feet" when many Ikizu went to Sukuma as refugees. The reason for the discrepancies may be that no unified Ikizu existed before the time of the disasters. Sizaki was also consolidated under Sukuma-style chiefship at this time. Sukuma sources indicate that Sukuma people were gradually moving into the Mara region at about this time and asserting a more centralized style of chiefly leadership.<sup>108</sup> Thus, similar to the Ikoma, Ishenyi and Ngoreme stories of origins in Sonjo, the period of the disasters was so significant in the formation of new identities that history begins here.

Close interaction between Mara and Sukuma peoples during this period also seems to have resulted in the adoption of new forms of eldership titles borrowed from Sukuma and grafted onto the older system as "traditional" ranks. *Nyangi* refers to the celebration of advancement through a series of life stages performed by the individual. Each ethnic group had a different set of stages and rituals to accompany them, including: naming the child, appearance of the first teeth, piercing the ears, circumcision (*asaro*), setting up a homestead (*titinyo, borano*), birth of the first child, circumcision of the first child (*egise*), birth of the first grandchild (*ekirangani*). However, once eldership was reached a further series of optional *nyangi* could be performed by those who had the wealth to do so, since each title was taken by given a big feast for the whole community. Oral traditions about these optional titles place them in the context of the return from Sukuma after the disasters.<sup>109</sup>

Wealthy men consolidated their power and formed bridges to wealthy men in other ethnic groups by the elaboration of this new system of eldership titles. At the same time the community used this system of eldership titles to force "big men" to share their wealth. The mark of a leader was one who could feed the people. These highest eldership titles were associated with powerful and dangerous medicines

(*masubho*) that initiates were taught when they gave the feast. The *Nyangi* elders used their power to enforce community discipline and tradition. Those who attained the highest rank carried a white tail and other symbols of their office. They were feared by the community and respected as powerful leaders.

When the colonial authorities arrived in the district they were often at loss to define who held ultimate authority in these communities and where their boundaries lay. In other words, they were looking for well-defined "tribes" with hereditary "chiefs." In different situations a prophet, an age-set leader or a titled elder were put forward as the "traditional" authority and became the colonial chief. The stories in this collection do not discuss the colonial period at length but these struggles over who had authority and how a "tribe" was defined are surely the context in which these stories were told.

The colonial records discuss at length the on-going problem of cattle raiding and corruption among the chiefs. Rather than stopping raids the chiefs seemed to be in collusion with and benefiting from the raiders. The proximity of the Kenya border made it easy to slip stolen cattle across the border to sell for higher prices in Kenya's booming post-war commercial economy. A combination of the weak traditional legitimacy of the colonial chiefs and the lucrative profits from cattle sale put the chiefs in a difficult position. Cattle raiding also continued to be an important avenue for young men to gain the wealth they needed to avoid dependency on their fathers for marriage and the start of a new homestead. The Mara Region had a relatively small percentage of its men involved in colonial labor migration because of their access to alternative means of earning cash through hunting and raiding.<sup>110</sup> The unspoken agenda of many local historians is the discussion of legitimacy of traditional leaders in relation to the problems of colonial chiefs and the ongoing need to solve the problem of cattle raiding. It was in this colonial context that "tribal" identities formed in relation to administrative boundaries, colonial chiefs and customary law.

The authors of the following texts took these colonial identities, built on a variety of preexisting identities, and molded them into a historical account that makes sense in a post-colonial context. This is the richly diverse heritage out of which the authors of the histories in this collection drew their material. Both the longer-term processes of settlement and interaction on an intercultural frontier and the shorter-term but critical effects of the late nineteenth century disasters, all framed as "tribal" histories, provide the context for understanding the texts that follow. The authors of these written histories did not have access to the archaeological, linguistic and written records that informed my account of the past. Yet, even more

importantly, they bring a culturally grounded understanding of the local context and personal access to the wealth of oral knowledge in the community. It is to their invaluable work, as colleagues in the pursuit of the past, that we now turn our attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Bender Shetler, *Telling our own Stories: Local Histories from South Mara, Tanzania* (Brill, 2002). The authors gave these manuscripts to me by during the fieldwork for my dissertation in 1995-6). Much of this introduction comes from various sections of the dissertation. Jan Bender Shetler, "The Landscapes of Memory: A History of Social Identity in the Western Serengeti, Tanzania" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, May 1998. On locally written histories see also 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): 69-112.

<sup>2</sup> On the creation of tribes throughout Africa during the colonial era 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). On the question of why Mara peoples kept small scale group identities see A. O. Anacleto, "Serengeti: It's People and their Environment," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 81/82 (1977): 23-34.

<sup>3</sup> I use the term "tribe" here in quotation marks to convey the idea that these are constructed identities of the colonial period.

<sup>4</sup> 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. (Schultz, Schirati, to Governor, Dar es Salaam, 25 December 1909, Schirati, 1909-1910, G/45/2, TNA). 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 Ishenyi as "Shashi" peoples. (Musoma District, "Notes from the Musoma District Books on Local Tribe and Chiefdoms in German," [c.1912?], CORY #348, EAF, UDSM). 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) (Native Affairs Census 1926-1929, Chiefdom Census 1926, 246/P.C./3/21, TNA). A 1937 report on governance identified "upwards of forty petty chiefs" and thus corresponding "tribes" (E. C. Baker, "System of Government, Extracts from a Report by R. S. W. Malcolm," 1937, MDB).

<sup>5</sup> District Commissioner, Musoma, "Memorandum on the Revival and Application of the Clan Regime in the Musoma District," 4 July 1945, CORY #347, EAF, UDSM. See also 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.

<sup>6</sup> Tarime District Office, Native Administration, Kuria Union Meetings 1946-52, 83/3/2, TNA.

<sup>7</sup> Many have made this point, see Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992), p. 98-108. Also in Vail, "Introduction," pp. 1-20.

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<sup>8</sup> 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./1/7, TNA.

<sup>9</sup> See Barthazar Aloys Rwezaura, *Traditional Family Law and Change in Tanzania: A Study of the Kuria Social System* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985) for an analysis of court cases in the North Mara Sub-District.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Chanock, "Making Customary Law; Men, Women, and Courts in Colonial Northern Rhodesia." In *African Women and the Law; Historical Perspectives*, pp. 53-67, edited by Margaret Jean Hay and Marcia Wright, Boston University Papers on Africa, no.7 (Boston: Boston University, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), see chapter 8. Also Iliffe, *A Modern History*, see chapters 10, 13 and 15.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Gabriel N. Chacha, *Historia ya Abakuria na Sheria Zao* (Dar es Salaam, 1963); W. D. Kamera, *Hadithi za Wairaqw wa Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam, 1978); S. J. Ntiro, *Desturi za Wachagga* (Dar es Salaam, 1953); and Dodoma Literacy Committee, *Ugogo na Wilaya Zake* (Dar es Salaam, 1965). Examples of schoolbooks with this agenda, Taasaisi ya Elimu, *Historia, Shule ya Msingi: Jamii za Watanzania tangu 1880* (Dar es Salaam, 1984) and for secondary schools, Institute of Education, *Development of African Societies up to the Nineteenth Century* (Dar es Salaam, 1981). For an English translation and introduction see, Mathias E. Mnyampala, *The Gogo: History, Customs, and Traditions (Sources and Studies in World History)*, Gregory H. Maddox, Introduction (M.E.Sharpe, 1995). For an analysis of local history writing see Jamie Monson, "Memory, Migration and the Authority of History in Southern Tanzania, 1860-1960," *The Journal of African History*, 41, 3 (2000): 347-372.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Moherere 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.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Tetero Tumbo, Mbiso, 5 April 1995 (Nata).

<sup>15</sup> See introductions to these texts in the collection.

<sup>16</sup> See Shetler, "Landscapes," pp. 81-92. This has been observed by many 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."

<sup>17</sup> See Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

<sup>18</sup> John Bower, "The Pastoral Neolithic of East Africa," *Journal of World Prehistory* 5, 1 (1991): 74-76.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 30; Ambrose, "The Introduction of Pastoral Adaptations," p. 238.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Ehret, *An African Classical Age: Eastern and Southern Africa in World History, 1000 B.C. to 400 A.D.* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

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<sup>23</sup> See Michael G. Kenny, "Mirror in the forest: the Dorobo hunter-gatherers as an image of the other," in *Africa* (1981), 477-494; and Corinne Kratz, "Are the Okiek really Maasai? or Kipsigis? or Kikuyu?," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 20, no. 3 (1980): 355-368.

<sup>24</sup> David Lee Schoenbrun, "Early History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes Region: Linguistic, Ecological, and Anthropological Approaches, ca 500 B.C. to ca A.D. 1000," (Ph.D. Dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1985), 156-7, 182-204.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 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. Ambrose, "The Introduction of Pastoral Adaptations," pp. 233-234.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of the Past* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 130-132, Tables D.1 and D.2.

<sup>27</sup> Southern 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*. Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 130-132, Tables D.1 and D.2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40-42. The Southern Nilotic Mara 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.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Loanwords from Dadog appear in Sonjo, Iraqw and Aramanik. The impact of Dadog on the ancestors of the Sonjo was particularly significant.

<sup>30</sup> 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 *-galni* 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 *-subiini* 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; S. M. Muniko, B. Omagige, and M. J. Ruel, *Kuria-English Dictionary* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, for the International African Institute, 1996); Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, Appendixes D.1-D.4. 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 *iguruki* (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.

<sup>31</sup> For a recent critique of the Bantu Migrations paradigm see John H. Robertson and Rebecca Bradley, "A New Paradigm: The African Early Iron Age without Bantu Migrations," *History in Africa* 27 (2000): 287-323.

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<sup>32</sup> David Lee Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, a Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998) pp. 94-101.

<sup>33</sup> 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. 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. Another interpretation of this root word is simply that it indicates possession that could be gendered either way. Schoenbrun, personal communication, the underlying root is a simple possessive particle "of", -ny- (the feminine form) cannot be automatically equated with -ne.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 100.

<sup>36</sup> During the colonial era District Commissioner and amateur anthropologist E. C. Baker collected clan names, avoidances and origin places throughout the region. Baker, "Tribal History and Legends," Musoma District Books; Baker, *Tanganyika Papers*.

<sup>37</sup> Abuso and others working among the Kuria call the clan territory a "province", Abuso, *A Traditional History*, p. 7; Eva Tobisson, *Family Dynamics among the Kuria: Agro-Pastoralists in Northern Tanzania* (Goteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1986), pp. 94-116; Malcolm Ruel, "Kuria Generation Classes," *Africa* 32 (1962), pp. 14-36; E. D. Dobson, "Comparative Land Tenure of Ten Tanganyika Tribes," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 38 (March 1955): 31-39.

<sup>38</sup> See Shetler, "Landscapes," Chapter 6.

<sup>39</sup> For an analysis of clans in the kingship rituals, see David Newbury, *Kings and Clans: Ijwi Island and the Lake Kivu Rift, 1780-1840* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1991), pp. 200-226.

<sup>40</sup> See 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): 410-428.

<sup>41</sup> David Schoenbrun, *The Historical Reconstruction of Great Lakes Bantu Cultural Vocabulary: Etymologies and Distributions* (Koln, Germany: Rudiger Koppe Verlag, 1996), #162.

<sup>42</sup> Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp. 183-9.

<sup>43</sup> For more background on the term heterarchy see Roderick James McIntosh, *The Peoples of the Middle Niger: The Island of Gold* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1988) and Susan Keech McIntosh, "Pathways to complexity: An African Perspective," in *Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa*, ed. Susan Keech McIntosh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-30.

<sup>44</sup> See Shetler, "Landscapes," pp. 548-558.

<sup>45</sup> Schoenbrun, *Etymologies*, #347.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Maro Mchari Maricha, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995.



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<sup>47</sup> Shetler, "Landscapes," Chapter 5, "The Ecological Landscapes on Interaction: The Emergence Traditions of a Hill Farmer Society," elaborates this point.

<sup>48</sup> Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, pp 93.; also see Michele Wagner, "Whose History is History?: A History of the Baragane People of Buragane, Southern Burundi, 1850-1932," 2 vols. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991), pp. 26-39.

<sup>49</sup> Finger millet requires a fertile and free draining sandy loam soil, since it cannot tolerate water logging. J. W. Purseglove, *Tropical Crops: Monocotyledons* (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 146-149.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Machota Nyantitu, Morotonga, 28 May 1995.

<sup>51</sup> A. O. Anacleti, "Serengeti: It's People and Their Environment," *Tanzania Notes and Records*, no. 81/82 (1977): 33. Anacleti's list is based primarily on interviews in Mbiso, Ishenye and Murutunga, 1975. The table is as follows:

(aba)Kongota	1904	(1824)	(1734)
(aba)Kubura	1912	(1832)	(1742)
(aba)Kinaho	1920	(1840)	(1750)
(aba)Sanduka	1928	(1848)	(1758)
(aba)Horochiga	1936	(1856)	(1766)
(aba)Nyanyanga	1944	(1864)	(1774)
(aba)Hobasi	1952	(1872)	(1782)
(aba)Ngerecha	1960	(1880)	(1800)
(aba)Rumarancha	1968	(1888)	(1808)
(aba)Kihocha	1974	(1896)	(1816)

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Kirigiti Ng'orita, Mbiso, 8 June 1995. Kirigiti is the last surviving Nata generation-set leader of his section.

<sup>53</sup> A. Odhiambo Anacleti, "Pastoralism and Development: Economic changes in Pastoral Industry in Serengeti 1750 - 1961" (Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1975), p. 8-14.

<sup>54</sup> Sonjo is classified as an Eastern Bantu language that stands on its own along with Swahili, Pokomo, Gikuyu, Kamba, Haya and Luyia. Stanley H. Ambrose, "Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions of History in East Africa," in *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History*, eds. Christopher Ehret and Merrick Posnansky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 110. Ambrose states that, "The presence of Sonjo, Bantu cultivators, in the Lake Natron Basin of the northern Tanzania Rift Valley is an ecologically understandable exception to the distribution of Bantu speakers," p. 115. He also links the Later Iron Age Engaruka Complex with modern Sonjo irrigation agriculture, p. 143. On Sonjo cultural characteristics see Robert F. Gray, "Sonjo Lineage Structure and Property," *The Family Estate in Africa: Studies in the Role of Property in Family Structure and Lineage Continuity*, ed. Robert F. Gray (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 231-262.

<sup>55</sup> Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, p. 55.

<sup>56</sup> "Ikoma" is often used generically to refer to peoples of the Serengeti District but only the Ikoma, some Ishenyi and some Ngoreme practice the "ntemi" scar.

<sup>57</sup> Interviews with Peter Nabususa, Samonge, 5 December 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Tinaga was located to the north on the plains, unlike Sonjo villages today that are protected under the hills. This may indicate a time when the Sonjo had more livestock.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Marindaya Sanaya, Samonge, 5 December 1995, and Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995. The Tinaga site was visited by anthropologist Gray, see Robert F. Gray, *The Sonjo of*

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*Tanganyika: an anthropological study of an irrigation based society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 11-12.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Nsaho Maro, Kenya, 14 September 1995. Philipo Haimati, handwritten notebook on the Ngoreme, n.d.

<sup>61</sup> Interviews with Surati Wambura, Morotonga, 13 July 1995 (Ikoma), Bokima Giringayi, Mbiso, 26 October 1995 (Ikoma), Rugayonga Nyamohega, Mugeta, 27 October 1995 (Ishenyi), Mang'ombe Morimi, Iharara Issenye, 26 August 1995 (Ishenyi), Morigo (Mchombocho) Nyarobi, Issenye, 28 October 1995 (Ishenyi), Mashauri Ng'ana, Issenye, 2 November 1995 (Ishenyi), Nsaho Maro, Kenya, 14 September 1995 (Ngoreme), Elfaresti Wambura Nyetonge, Kemgesi, 20 September 1995 (Ngoreme), Maro Mchari Maricha, Maji Moto, 28 September 1995 (Ngoreme), Francis Sabayi Maro, Masinki, 6 October 1995 (Ngoreme), Bhoke Wambura, Maburi, 7 October 1995 (Ngoreme).

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Emmanuel Ndenu, Sale, 6 December 1995.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Samweli Ginduri, Samonge, 6 December 1995

<sup>64</sup> John Lawrence Berntsen, *Pastoralism, Raiding, and Prophets: Maasailand in the nineteenth century*. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin- Madison, 1979)., pp. 112-143, 172, 224. It also confirms the previous fighting with the Lumbwa.

<sup>65</sup> Shetler, "Landscapes," pp. 213-218.

<sup>66</sup> 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, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999); and Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, editors, *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).

<sup>67</sup> 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), pp. 38-42; Paul Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza: The Land, the Races and their Customs, with Specimens of some Dialects*, H. A. Nesbitt, Translator (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Ltd., 1899), p. 176.

<sup>68</sup> Visitations Book, Nyegina, Mwanza I, 1931-1932, pp. 67-69, White Fathers Regionals' House, Nyegezi.

<sup>69</sup> Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères-Blancs), "Ukerewe," *Chronique Trimestrielle de la Société de Missionnaires d'Afrique* (Pères Blancs) 27me Année, 1905, p. 133.

<sup>70</sup> Kirsten Alsaker Kjerland, "Cattle Breed; Shillings Don't: The Belated Incorporation of the abaKuria into Modern Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 1995), p. 135, cites the Mwanza District Books, and Gerald Hartwig, *The Art of Survival in East Africa: The Kerebe and Long-Distance Trade* (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1976) 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.

<sup>71</sup> 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.

<sup>72</sup> 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

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Routes through the Masai Country," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, n.s.*, 4 (1882): 742-747. Hartwig, *The Art of Survival*, p. 78.

<sup>73</sup> For an overview see Iliffe, *A Modern History*, pp. 40-77.

<sup>74</sup> The epidemiology of 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 pre-colonial 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.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> 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 that 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.

<sup>77</sup> 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*.

<sup>78</sup> H. A. Fosbrooke, Senior Sociologist, Tanganyika, "Masai History in Relation to Tsetse Encroachment," Arusha, 1954, CORY #254, EAF, UDSM.

<sup>79</sup> 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 1840s 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.

<sup>80</sup> See Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding and Prophets," p. 40, on the process of migrational drift.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Spencer, "Age Systems and Modes of Predatory Expansion," in *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition*, ed. Eisei Kurimoto and Simon Simonse (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998), 172.

<sup>82</sup> On the Tatoga Bachuta see, Morimichi Tomikawa, "The Distribution and the Migrations of the Datoga Tribe," *Kyoto University African Studies* 5 (1970): 1-46.

<sup>83</sup> Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, "Introduction."

<sup>84</sup> 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.

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<sup>85</sup> 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.

<sup>86</sup> Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> 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. Other accounts in 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.

<sup>88</sup> 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 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 Hans Cory, "Land Tenure in Bukuria," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 23 (1947): 70-79. For Sonjo see Gray, *The Sonjo of Tanganyika*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>89</sup> Baumann, *Durch Masailand*, pp. 57, 196-99, 246; and Max Weiss, *Die Volkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin: Carl Marschner, 1910; reprint edition, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), pp. 244-5.

<sup>90</sup> Kjerland, "Cattle Breed," p. 123

<sup>91</sup> Heinrich Schnee, ed. *Deutsches Kolonial Lexikon*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Quelle and Meyer, 1920), pp. 121, 679, 680-81.

<sup>92</sup> Musoma District [Notes from Musoma District Books on local tribes and chieftains, in German [c.1912?]] Manuscript, CORY #348, EAF, UDSM.

<sup>93</sup> Wakefield, "Wakefield's Notes," pp. 303-339; and Wakefield, "Native Routes," pp. 742-747.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Elia Masiyana Mchanake and Robi Nykisokoro, Borenga, 21 September 1995. Another version by Isaya Charo Wambura, Buchanchari, 22 September 1995.

<sup>95</sup> Interviews with Mahesa Timanyi and Nyambureti Morumbe, Robanda, 27 May 1995; Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996.

<sup>96</sup> Annual Report 1933, Musoma District, Annual Reports, Native Affairs Section, Lake Province, 215/924/2, TNA.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Nyamaganda Magoto, Bugerera, 3 March 1995.

<sup>98</sup> Yet informants often seemed confused about how each of these groups functioned and in what contexts. Both seemed to be described in similar ways with similar functions. In addition the exact way that age and generation organization interacted in each of the small ethnic groups of Nata, Ikoma, Ngoreme and Ishenyi varied. Often times the great variety seemed random and inconsistent, indicating that perhaps because these structures had ceased to be functional.

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<sup>99</sup> See good explanation of the retirement ceremony of the Zanaki in Benjamin Mkirya, *Historia, Mila na Desturi ya Wazanaki* (Ndanda Mission Press, n.d.).

<sup>100</sup> Simonse and Kurimoto, "Introduction," 1-2.

<sup>101</sup> Kurimoto and Simonse discuss that this aspect of age systems, the importance of ritual over military functions, goes back to Evans-Pritchard's assertions about the Nuer age system in 1936. Baxter and Almagor also emphasize this point P.T.W. Baxter, *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East Africa Age Organisations*, ed. Uri Almagor (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978) while Kurimoto and Simonse hope to renew the interest in the political aspects of age-systems, Simonse and Kurimoto, "Introduction", 1-28.

<sup>102</sup> See Shetler, *Landscapes*, pp. 397-409. Quote is from the Nata *saiga* initiation ritual.

<sup>103</sup> Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History*, pp. 55-62.

<sup>104</sup> Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p. 176.

<sup>105</sup> Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, p. 59

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Mmang'ombe Morimi, Issenye Iharara, 26 August 1995.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Machota Sabuni, Issenye, 14 March 1996.

<sup>108</sup> Gregory Bugomora, *Lumuli*, 5 August 1949. *Lumuli* was a White Father's Sukuma language newspaper that often featured accounts of local history. For an ethnography of the Kwaya ethnic group near Musoma see Hugo Huber, *Marriage and family in rural Bukwaya (Tanzania)* (Fribourg, Switzerland: The University Press, 1973). See Shetler, "Landscapes," p. 305-311. For a Sukuma account of the same processes see 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.

<sup>109</sup> For the Kikong'oti narratives in Nata, interview with Gabuso Shoka, Mbiso, 30 May 1995.

<sup>110</sup> For recent research on Kuria and cattle raiding see Michael L. Fleisher, "Kuria Cattle Raiding: Capitalist Transformation, Commoditization, and Crime Formation Among an East African Agro-Pastoral People," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 4 (October 2000): 745-69.