

Can the Masai be Kenyans?

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The Masai, warrior herdsmen of Kenya, have been the subject of admiration or disgust, terror or imitation for all those people with whom they have come in contact through recorded history. Yet today, and for the past thirty to forty years, the striking thing about these pastoralists has not been the strong emotions they evoke from those around them, but their almost complete social irrelevance to the development and realization of Kenyan nationalism and their indifference to the feelings of modernization and racial consciousness which have emerged in most other parts of Africa. It is the purpose of this paper to try and analyze this political irrelevance, explain its causes, and examine the possible course of development of the near future.

In attacking the problem, one must first define Kenyan nationalism in terms of the social forces which facilitated it and the pivotal issues which gave it direction. In broad terms, the issues of nationalism fall into three categories: cultural conflict, economic conflict, and matters of personal discrimination. The first major issue which brought organized dissent was the cultural struggle with the Scottish Church over the practice of female circumcision among those tribes in close contact with the missions. The ritual was opposed by the church fathers as being a retention of paganism and as such a transgression of the Africans' vows as Christians. Thus they threatened with excommunication any African who allowed herself to be circumcised, allowed children to be circumcised, or took even the slightest part in the periodic tribal ceremonies.

This adamant stand brought forth an anguished and defiant response from all affected, but most of all from the more numerous Kikuyu. The anguish came from the fact that circumcision was the universal mark of entry into adulthood and full membership in the tribe. Any female not undergoing the symbolic operation never escaped the demeaning status of a little girl and could hardly be considered suitable for marriage by

any self-respecting tribesman. In effect, such a decree forced the African to choose between being a good Kikuyu and being a good Christian. Such a choice few saw as desirable and even fewer saw as being in any way necessary. From this lack of necessity sprang the defiance for such an ultimatum could only mean the church fathers were trying to force the Kikuyu and others to say that the basis of their own society was bad and should be given up in favor of the culture introduced by the British.

Though the prosecution of this issue was finally abandoned by the church, largely at the urging of the colonial authorities, lasting effects did result. At a time when Africans had been coming to accept a sort of submission in expectation of progress by apeing Europeans, this attack led to an increased consciousness on the part of the Kikuyu and the few other tribes affected of the institutions and values of their culture and the inherent threat posed to both by the indiscriminate imposition of European civilization. This major attack on their culture caused Africans to look at their institutions with an increasingly defensive pride and to look upon those of the English which contradicted theirs with an ever more critical eye.

The physical effect was perhaps the most important as the issue provided Africans, and Kikuyu in particular, with the first basis for organizations to protest European actions. Many of the leaders who later gained national prominence in the struggle for self-government had their first leadership and organizational experience during the circumcision crisis.

As this cultural protest started nationalistic organizations and built emotional support for African social autonomy, so the major economic interests furthered the structuring of nationalistic groups and pro-

vided concrete, long-term greivances around which to build mass interest and eventually, political parties. In a phrase, the key economic issue was that of the alienation of property rights by British settlers. For the Kikuyu this was a matter of land alienation; for the Kamba it was one of compulsory destocking. But for both the issue was a fight to maintain the property form which was the basis of their social order against the past and future incursions of Europeans.

To gain an idea of the emotional as well as the cold economic significance of the land issue for the Kikuyu and similar tribes, one may look to a statement by Senior Chief Keinange, "When someone steals your ox, it is killed and roasted and eaten. One can foeget. When someone steals your land, especially if nearby, one can never forget. It ~~is~~ always there, its trees which were dear friends, its little streams. It is a bitter presence."¹ There is ample evidence that at the time of the first wave of European immigration in 1903-04, the Kikuyu occupation of Southern Kiambu, the province where the major alienations took place, was considerably less than it had been before the outbreak of smallpox in the disastrous years of 1898-99. A resident of the Kikuyu mission in 1898 estimated that between 1/2 and 2/3 of the nearby population died in those years.²

If the Europeans had come only as missionaries, traders and administrators, those areas which later became European coffee estates and dairy ranches would have been Kikuyu settlement and expansion areas.³ White settlement rapidly created a crisis for Kikuyu traditional cultural. The quantity of Kikuyu land alienated to white settlers, as contrasted to that taken from the Masai, was comparatively small, but in ecological and sociological terms the Kikuyu could least afford to lose land. Moreover, their social system, which was closely linked to pioneer land settlement,

new found barriers placed on its expansion.

Yet until 1934, land was merely one of the many greivances on which nationalism might have fed. Others in their effects could have been of equal or more importance- restriction of the growing of coffee, the absence of good roads and railroads in the reserves, the low level of agricultural extension services; discrimination in education, marketing and employment.⁴ But land was the most visible and as the population expanded and internal conflict deepened, the cry for return of the "stolen land" emerged as the salient political issue for the Kikuyu masses.⁵

While the struggle over land intensified the growth of political consciousness among the Kikuyu during the 1930's, this consciousness was by no means restricted to them. Associations among the Luo and Luhya in Nyanza, the Kamba in Central Kenya, and the Taita near the coast, protested government actions and policies, demanding redress of economic and land greivances.⁶ Yet in many ways, what land is to the Kikuyu, cattle are to the Kamba and the other pastoral and mixed agricultural tribes. They are a means of livelihood and the traditional symbol of wealth and honor. They are of the utmost importance in every transaction of tribal affairs.⁷

Thus the attempts of the British in 1938 to implement compulsory destocking of the Kamba areas brought forth a group of politicians among the Kamba such as the female circumcision crisis had originally produced within the Kikuyu tribe. The problem of overstocking, which was the major reason for the destocking attempts, was in part artificial, created by the land alienation policies of the government. Here again was a policy which directly threatened the ideas and values that cemented the Kamba social structure. Nonetheless, the government attempted to handle it as strictly an economic problem.⁸ Both these issues, land and cattle, were

ones which affected each tribesman and instilled in him a sense of grave injury whether or not he had suffered great personal property loss; whether or not he regarded the English culture and technology as something his people would profit from through imitation.

On the individual level, the onus of racial discrimination fell on all who were in contact with the settlers or administrators. Some associations, such as the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, the Kikuyu Association of Southern Kiambu, and the Progressive Kikuyu Party of Nyeri, tended to accept the British values as a whole, thus implicitly condemning their indigent values where the two conflicted. In a rather blunt psychological defense of the native inability to resist the British incursion in the '20's and '30's, such groups adopted many of the elitist, paternalistic, and authoritarian views that permeated the attitudes of the District Officers, settlers, and some missionaries. In short, they attempted to rationalize their second class status in the colonial state.⁹ While such organizations may have been useful in bringing Africans into quasi-political groups, they quickly proved of little use when the main push for nationalism began.

At the same time, around 1930, other African organizations, such as the Kikuyu Central Association under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, were forming to resist the social, economic, and personal discrimination to which the Kikuyu, being in especially close contact with the settler areas, were constantly subjected. In a defense and explanation of the KCA, Kenyatta made this statement, "...the purpose of the organization is to help the Kikuyu improve himself as a Mukikuyu- not to ape the foreigner." The feeling of cultural discrimination is made evident by the statement of KCA goals with which Kenyatta concluded his statement, "...to be permitted to retain our good tribal customs, and by means of education,

to elevate the minds of our people to the willing rejection of the bad ones."¹⁰

Whether their ultimate collective goals are to be considered progressive or reactionary, it is clear that by the 1920's the many and varied forms of discrimination with which the English colonials had inflicted Kenya had set the issues which were to be the basis of Kenyan nationalism, and had begun to evoke the social forces and processes, such as the aforementioned groups, which were to sustain the drive for self-government to an apparently successful conclusion.

While it is clear that sufficient grievances existed to foster nationalism, and rudimentary groups formed early to make these grievances known, these two factors by themselves are not sufficient to explain the emergence of the organized mass support or the broadbased leadership cadre necessary to pressure the colonial regime into granting major concessions. To explain the emergence of this elite and the fairly well disciplined mass they led, it is necessary to examine four factors: the common education of elites, the growth of commerce and urbanization, the establishment of an African press, and the experiences of Africans in the world wars.

The common secondary education of the nationalistic elite has been given credit for the cooperation which led to the success of anti-colonial revolutions not only in Kenya, but in most of Africa and Asia. In Kenya, Alliance High school, the major secondary school for British East Africa, was where many of the future elite first met.¹¹ The friendships and symmetry of world images developed at this crucial stage can be viewed as at least permissive, if not a necessity, for the later cooperation of these men with their diverse tribal backgrounds.

Secondly, the growth of commerce and urbanization furthered nationalism by concentrating the educated new elite where they could work to-

gether at the nerve center of colonial affairs. The increase in commerce further helped by giving many persons reason to travel over good distances and thus through acquaintance with people of similar interest from other areas to form the grass roots of a truly national organization. Once such basic support was formed, the urban setting of Nairobi made rapid communication and the day to day operation of major groups possible. In addition to the fledgling trade union movement an array of other associations, tribal, vocational, social, and political, came into being in the '30's in the expanding urban areas. These tribal associations, such as the Luo Union, the Kikuyu Union, the Masai Union, the Kisii Union, the Taita and Taveta Union and the Akamba Union, founded to promote the social welfare of their members in Nairobi and Mombasa, became a further part of the infrastructure of the new nationalism.¹² The urban, or at least non-rural, setting also posed the battleground on which the new educated elite wrested power from the elderly chiefs with their conservative attitudes towards national unity. Especially in the Fort Hall area, this was one of the most important tasks of nationalism.¹³

A third, and perhaps decisive, factor in sustaining nationalism in Kenya's cities was the African Press. This tool of agitation grew rapidly after 1945. Some papers were published in English or Swahili, but many were for the first time written in the vernacular- Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, or Kamba. Most, naturally, were in Nairobi, though Mombasa had as many as two at various times. Not only did these serve to stir and coordinate feeling and action among the nationalists, but they also conveyed the sympathies of world opinion to the African and in some small measure made the rest of the world aware of African inditements of the colonial system.

Finally, the world wars, especially World War II, served to widen the horizons of large numbers of Africans. A new generation of ex-soldiers

a large portion of whom had a smattering of elementary education, absorbed the same broadening influence as had their fathers who served in the carrier corps, but they also had certain additional experiences. For example, thousands saw service in India where politicians had been actively agitating for a rapid post-war advance to independence.¹⁴ Thus through the medium of military service, the African was given an appreciation of a world primed for anti-colonial revolution.

Besides being exposed to the desires of others, personal expectations as to being status by merit and being able to enjoy a higher standard of living were raised. As one British official stated his view of the African after World War II, "His capacity for taking responsibility and his capacity for skilled work have surprized those who knew him only as a manual laborer. ...he has shown his worth and it will not be surprizing if he expects to see it acknowleged. A second factor is the standard of life to which he has become accustomed. His pay and allotments have been comparatively high and on discharge the habits of the standard of life he has become accustomed to will not easily fall from him. His desires will be such that he will not easily be content with the low standard of life with which most Africans were content before the war."¹⁵ Through the mechanisms mentioned above, one which is certainly not exhaustive, more and more people had their attention and energy focused by personal interest and mass emotion on the cause of Kenyan nationalism.

Having drawn a rough sketch of Kenya's perindependence political development, it is time to turn to the main subject of this paper, the Masai. By any evaluation of the early history of the region, one would have been justified in thinking that they, with their military prowess and seemingly unconquerable pride, would have been in the forefront of any effort to expel the colonial invader. Yet with the exception of a few in-

◉ individuals detribalized by education, the Masai can lay claim to little, if any, significance in the emergence of modern Kenya. While little published research has been done in this area, even a brief analysis shows five factors to have been of importance in deleting the Masai from the anti-colonial activity.

The first of these factors would be the pastoral conservatism of the tribe. As Huntington pointed out in his discussion of Nilotics, the Nilotics valued warfare because through it losses to their herds could be recouped, wealth could be accumulated, and young men could be provided a means to wealth, fame, and fortune. All these factors combined to produce a feeling of pride among the pastoralists, feelings of well-being and superiority over other people, and a fierce desire to maintain the style of life which made these possible.¹⁶ The last part of this statement, the belief that their traditions would preserve their traditional superiority, goes far to explain their resistance to any form of change.

In addition, the Masai still insist on leadership by the senior members of their tribe not only because of the belief that with age comes wisdom through experience, but also because Masai religious dogma says that the old man, closer to death, is closer to the spirits of the dead who are the chief leaders of the tribe in matters other than warfare. Hence the old man is best fitted to speak to the tribe on behalf of the dead and also to act as the tribe's spokesmen to their celestial guides. While this may seem specious to the Western mind, it is well to remember that this view is not confined to the primitive Masai, but is the basis of gerontocracy throughout Africa.¹⁷

Yet simply because the belief is so widespread throughout the continent, and because other elders have adjusted their views on politics, this explanation is insufficient to explain the adamancy of the Masai elders.

However, explanation is forthcoming if the circumstances which shaped the views of the elders in power during the late colonial period are examined. As H. A. Fosbrooke wrote in 1948, "The period of 1890 to 1920 was one of great upheaval for the...Masai. The most obvious effect was the breakup and submergence of many of the tribal sectors together with the loss of the loyalties which held those sections together and political cohesion in general.

"It is almost impossible to find at present (1948) an elder who did not go through considerable hardship in his youth. To anyone who has lost and regained a possession, such possession is of greater...sentimental...value. The Masai lost their mode of living, their cattle, and their tribal life and largely by their own efforts have once again regained them. It is suggested that their intense conservatism...may be better understood in light of this."¹⁸

A second factor was that because of their warlike nature and migratory economy, the British chose to treat with the administration of the Masai differently than that of the primarily agricultural tribes with their more settled mode of life. Once they were displaced from the lands desired by the British, the colonial regime built a cocoon of isolation around Masailand. In short, rather than deal with the Masai, they chose the easy way out and simply contained the tribe. By their shortsighted and overpaternalistic administration, the British reinforced the strong Masai conservatism and discouraged socio-economic and political advance. In their hostility to the young Masai educated's attempts at participation in local government they retarded progress.¹⁹

In addition to this broad indictment, many specific instances of directed isolation may be sighted. Steps were taken as early as 1913 to prevent Somali and native traders from making cattle transactions in

the reserve. Orders were issued prohibiting the introduction of new livestock to the Masai regardless of the bad effects on the genetic health of their stock. The sole concession to this rule was that cattle earned by working for Europeans could be brought in as insurance that there would be a sufficient number of Masai for hire as herders.²⁰ Kikuyu traders, who in other areas acted as pollinating bees carrying political dissent with them were forbidden entrance to the reserve from 1911 onwards. As a direct assault on giving the Masai access to wider horizons, General Sir Joseph Byrne, on becoming Kenya's Governor in 1930, stated that detribalization was something "to be avoided and discouraged."²¹ For the Masai, positive efforts against detribalization could only mean an indefinite period of stagnation on the reserve.

Perhaps the most important form of isolation, at least in the eyes of today's Masai, was the British policy towards them as regards education. The consensus of opinion among the Masai is that their downfall as a tribe in modern Africa lay in their lack of education. Even among traditionalists there is the attitude that pen and paper have replaced the spear as the way to tribal power today. When asked why other tribes took to education and the Masai did not, many stress that as a wealthy cattle people they saw no reason to change. Others blame the British for not having forced them to send their children to school as they did other tribes because they admired them too much in their blankets. Amongst Kenya Masai moderns, there is the bitter notion, mixed with more than a taint of Chauvinism, that the British held them back on purpose in order to keep them as a quaint attraction for the tourist trade and/or because they feared an educated Masai would throw them out of the country.²²

While all of these rather base motives attributed to the colonial administration may have some element of truth, more concrete reasons for

the educational neglect of the Masai exist. Firstly, the vast size and low population density of the Masai reserve would have made the establishment of schools similar in adequacy to those in agricultural districts cost a sizeable sum per pupil because of the greater number of separate facilities needed. To add to this the cost of enforcing attendance, given the unfavorable attitude of the Masai towards education at the time, would have added to a per pupil expense almost impossible to justify as a government expenditure either economically or politically.

As a final note on this issue, from their off the record statements, there can be little doubt that many of the British administrators assigned to the Masai reserve themselves believed that the pastoral life prized by the herdsmen did have great merits in its African setting and thus should be preserved. Such a shortsighted line of thought is better given the label of ignorance as opposed to perversity.

Looking to the international scale, the fact that the Masai reserve was on a border contiguous with German East Africa implies that before and during World War I the British used the reserve as a buffer zone. Such a policy was best implimented by keeping the area as free as possible of political agitation. In practice, such a policy meant simply keeping the warriors quiet and otherwise maintaining the traditional Masai cooperation and conservatism as much as possible. This, of course, preempted any development of education or the water supplies which could have increased population density in order to preclude the emergence of political activism.

After World War II and the annexation of Tanganyika to British East Africa by a League of Nations mandate, there was no geopolitical reason to continue the policy of isolation. However, with the development of settler exports of beef cattle, there were still positive reasons to keep

the Masai away from a market economy where their large herds would have quickly driven the price per head below the level where Europeans could profitably operate. In addition, it will be remembered that it was during the 1920's that the first political protest arose from the more modernized tribes. From this point on, the growth of protest put a premium on keeping those tribes not as yet infected with nationalistic fervor as apolitical as possible. Such a goal could only mean the continuation of the enforced stagnation of the Masai.

Even had the policies outlined above not been completely successful, there is every reason to believe the Masai would not have fit effectively into the main nationalistic groups. One major reason for this was the strong and sincere Masai belief that all other tribes, especially those of the Bantu race were inherently inferior to them and thus not worthy of their attention, let alone follow Bantu leadership.

Yet apart from this problem which could have been overcome in the face of a little common interest was the fact of the historical animosity of the Masai and the Kikuyu. During the 1800's, the major cattle raids of the Masai were conducted against the Kikuyu. These raids resulted in substantial loss of life for the Kikuyu and relatively little for the Masai. So while Jomo Kenyatta may disclaim any animosity towards the Masai in his writing,²³ it is doubtful that this view is representative of the average Kikuyu.

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, this warfare was not all one-sided. Between 1880 and 1910, civil wars and plagues killing many of the Masai and most of their cattle swept throughout East Africa. This left the tribe divided and its military apparatus paralysed with no real unity higher than small groups of manyattas. This forced the Masai to rely completely on raiding as a means to feed their families.

Such an existence called for the able bodied men to be away from their

manyattas for long periods of time, leaving them defended only by young boys and old men. From their forests above the escarpment, the Kikuyu warriors would wait until they saw the raiding party a good distance away. Then, in coordinated attacks, they would descend on the manyattas burning them, taking the women and able men to use or sell as slaves, and kill all others. An index of the success of this Kikuyu strategy is the fact the coastal markets were so glutted with Masai slaves that prices dropped to half the pre-1890 level.²⁴ The raiders who returned to find their homes and families destroyed were the elders of the colonial period. It is not likely they forgot the Kikuyu.

Even after the British stopped most of the raiding and gave the Masai protection, the alienation of Kikuyu land pushed some of the Bantu onto the edges of the Masai reserve. This infiltration started with the press gang raids of the first world war and continued with major spurts at each additional alienation in the Kikuyu areas. While it is said some of the Kikuyu pioneers achieved a modus vivendi with their unwilling hosts, many others lived in a state of open conflict.²⁵

Though the ideology of African nationalism developed into something the Masai found at least partially relevant to their experience, it was hardly possible to reconcile the Masai hatred of the Kikuyu with the overwhelmingly Kikuyu orientation of the Kenya African Union, the first and major nationalistic party. Inevitably at KAU meetings great use was made of issues, slogans, symbols, songs, and values derived from the Kikuyu experience. These would have had little meaning for the Masai in any case, but when coupled with the Kikuyu leaders, the party became anathema for all but a few of the Masai.²⁶

As a fourth point, one must ask what positive incentives the Masai could find in a Kikuyu nationalism movement. In the colonial government they at least had a regime which was content to leave them largely undis-

turbed in their traditional social system. In a Kikuyu government, they would very likely find a regime committed to the breaking up of that social system. It must be remembered that here were a people dominated by two things, war and cattle, so much that when the first could no longer be followed, they had difficulty finding something to put in its place. Their problem has always been that, unwilling to debase themselves in the eyes of foreigners, they have refused to accept any substitute for warfare as an outlet for their physical energies. Thus they have existed since shortly after the turn of the century as people leading a half-life, a life mainly occupied with cattle, but mainly an aimless void.²⁷ Since the Masai certainly could not expect a Kikuyu government to allow them to return to a life of war, if one considers the curtailment of combat and not the alienation of land to have been the major British oppression in the eyes of the Masai, nationalism was no less aimless a void than colonialism.

Finally, one must look to the map and consider the fact that the Masai as a tribe lie both in Kenya and Tanzania. While the fluidity of this border may have decreased somewhat since the independence of the two countries, during the colonial interval after the 1920 annexation of German East Africa, there was a great deal of traffic between the two by herdsmen in search of water and grazing for their livestock. The point is simply this, during the period of nationalistic fervor, the African whose first allegiance was to the Masai tribe might have substantial reason not to consider himself a Kenyan, or even if he did to be highly indifferent towards the fact. This, of course, served to lessen in their eyes the significance of much of what occurred around Nairobi as to its implications for their future as a people.

Having looked at the main factors in Kenyan nationalism and at some

of the particulars of the Masai situation and culture, it is now possible to bring the two together and examine the reaction of the Masai to the KCA and later the KANU movements. It will be remembered that the initial issue around which the KCA was formed was one of cultural nationalism. It is clear that here the Masai would have had little room for protest because of the very permissive view of the English towards their culture. A measure of this permissiveness is that present Masai sentiments are that the British allowed them to retain too many of their customs .

Even if warfare has claim to the title of a cultural root as has been argued above, it can be shown that historical circumstances allowed the British to suppress the warlike tendencies of the tribe without exciting the cultural outrage of the Masai. The circumstances are the epidemics which immediately preceded the British invasion. As has already been outlined, these plagues put the Masai in such a weakened position that they were almost wiped out. They were so weak that they actually asked permission to live by the British District Officer in order to elicit protection from the raids of the Kikuyu. Finally, it is somewhat ludicrous to imagine that a Masai nationalism based on the issue of resumption of intertribal raiding could have gained much support among the tribes to be subjected to the raids.

On the issue of usurpation of property rights, the situation at first glance would appear to justify expectations of a great deal of Masai protest. In terms of sheer land area lost to Europeans, the Masai lost more than any other tribe, including the Kikuyu. Even this fact understates the true severity of land loss since the acres given in reserves are usually subtracted from the total land given up. However, the land given up by the Masai was without exception well-watered, fertile land while that they

were given in return was semi-arid scrub and desert.

Yet this first glance ignores three important factors which devalue the land issue as a basis for anti-European protest. The first factor is the oft-forgotten fact that the standard of wealth among the Masai is not land, but cattle. Thus protest could not really be expected unless the reserves provided for the Masai were inadequate to support their herds. This is borne out by the observation that the first proposed reserve did not meet this requirement and the Masai laibons and elders balked in approving the move. However, when the British agreed to add additional acres of scrub, the move to the reserves was made peaceably.

Further it should be noted that the Masai at the time of their moves were able to maintain possession of their lands only through the protection of the pax britania. The Kikuyu had always exerted pressure against the Masai frontiers and with the massive alienations of Kikuyu lands and the weakening of the Masai military apparatus, this pressure increased. Even later, when the Kikuyu were using the alienated lands as their main nationalistic issue, much of the land they were demanding was acreage which had formerly belonged not to the Kikuyu, but to the Masai. Because of their relative numbers and political strengths, there could be little doubt who would have first claim on this prime land once independence was achieved. It is then not too surprising to see that the Masai had no incentive to make massive and costly efforts for nationalism simply to have their land transferred from one non-Masai to another.

Another factor which must be considered is the effect of the moves on the internal politics of the tribe. The importance of this was certainly apparent in the 1911 move, the one which was most harmful to the property holdings of the tribe. The 1904 move had separated the tribe into northern and southern sectors connected only by a miniscule strip of land

unsuitable for travel by Masai with their herds. This isolation caused the overall laibon to feel his influence over the northern section of the tribe was waning. Thus when the British asked the Masai to move again because of settler desires for land, the laibon and the elders were quite receptive to the suggestion. The importance of tribal unity compared to land loss can be assessed by remembering that the previous generation of Masai had lost tribal unity and had fought a civil war which nearly destroyed them. While it should not be construed that there was no resentment to the move, feelings among the elders were mixed, and this prevented any united resistance to the British incursions.

Even though the Masai do not value land as such, it might be expected, looking to the Kamba experience, that the Masai would have had occasion to protest British seizure of their stock. In fact, just the opposite occurred. Most of the stock with which the Masai replenished their herds after the great plagues were acquired through service with the British in suppressing the resistance of other tribes to the establishment of the protectorate. They were used extensively as levies against the Kikuyu. The standard practice was to give the African troops all the cattle seized above that amount needed to pay the expenses of the expedition. While no exact figures exist, the official estimate is that the Masai acquired approximately 100,000 head of stock in this manner.²⁸

During World War I, it is true that the British tried to seize, or buy at absurdly low prices, large numbers of Masai stock with which to feed their troops. However the hesitancy of the British to employ drastic measures in what could have been a sensitive border area, and the ingenuity of the Masai in concealing their stock meant that this policy was by and large ineffective in securing livestock. The end result was a loss of face for the British in the eyes of the Masai rather than the

creation of any sustained hostility on the part of the Masai.

It should further be noted that the settler ranchers had no desire to see large numbers of Masai cattle leaving the reserves because of the depressing effect it would have on beef prices. This caused any destocking proposals with regard to the Masai to be met by strong settler opposition. This situation did not apply in the case of Kamba destocking because of the smaller absolute size of their herds.

As far as the issue of personal discrimination was concerned, the isolation of the Masai during the major part of the colonial period kept many of the situations where large numbers from other tribes were discriminated against from materializing. Since education was not desired, and was in many cases actively resisted, it was of little concern to the Masai that such opportunities would not have been available had they wanted them.

In the highly sensitive area of requiring passes for Africans in urban centers, the fact that few Masai ever went to urban centers made this issue largely meaningless from their point of view. Of those who did go, either they went to stay permanently and almost inherently transferred their prime allegiance from tribe to nation, or they went to accumulate enough wealth to pay the brideprice and once settled, had little more to do with the cities. In either case no indignation was created which could be felt by the mass of the tribe. Finally, in matters of economic discrimination, the Masai, unlike the Kikuyu, were not in competition with the settlers and thus posed no threat the settlers felt compelled to combat. As their only produce was the increase of their herds which they had little desire to sell, there was little occasion for friction.

Looking to the factors which facilitated the effective expression of Kikuyu nationalism, one sees there are logical reasons why the Masai were not affected in the same way. Since one of the main reasons for the

success of Kikuyu organizations was the concentration of their population and their proximity to the centers of communication in Nairobi, it is not surprising to find that the Masai played little part in these groups and were in an equally bad position to found similiar groups of their own. Not only is the Masai reserve out of easy foot or bicycle distance of Nairobi, but the reserve was almost void of the means of mass communication which have proved necessary to mass movements. One of these means of mass communication would have been a concentrated and non-migratory population. This, of course, could not occur because the traditional Masai scheme of ranching forced the tribe to disperse over a large area and for the young men to be separated from their homes and the old men for at least half the year.

Because of the large number of Kikuyu employed in the urban areas and the large amount of transit between the Kikuyu reserves and the cities, the entire tribe was exposed at least indirectly to the influences of tribal associations, unions, the press, and the rising expectations usually found in the proletariat in a rapidly changing urban environment. Furthermore, the leaders capable of organizing the masses were those with urban experience.

In contrast to this picture of a tribe with a rapidly growing urban outlook must be placed the situation of the Masai. As has been stated before, those who left the reserve tended to remain off and thus whatever influence of leadership they might have exerted on the rest of the tribe was lost. Besides this, in the case of the Masai the skill they had to sell to earn money to matry was usually herding. This meant staying on the ranch and going into the urban area only for a short period to market the herd. The urbanizing effects of such employment could hardly be significant. in breeding political dissent.

Because of their pride and conservatism, the Masai were also denied the educational experience of the two world wars. The Masai categorically refused to serve in the carrier corps in the first world war because they felt it to be beneath their dignity. When the British finally decided to conscript them as combat troops near the end of the war they again refused. Firstly they considered serving under British officers against their will to be also beneath them. Secondly, in a recent court case where the Masai had sought redress for land grievances under British law, they had been told they were a separate nation and thus had no claim to protection under the civil law. The Masai found it highly questionable that they should protect the British when the British refused to protect them.

In the second world war, while it is not clear that the Masai actively resisted service, the troops they supplied were stationed in East Africa and in Egypt. As a result, they were not subjected to the same anti-colonial environment as were the other troops from Kenyan tribes. Furthermore, because the Masai troops did attain marketable skills during the war, many elected to abandon their previous tribal life and take jobs in the urban areas. For this reason, most of the broadening influence discussed above had no opportunity to reach the Masai in the fields.

At this point it can be said in summary that it has been shown that the Masai played almost no part in Kenyan nationalism, and some attempt at an explanation of this non-participation has been offered. While, quite frankly, there is little scholarly interest in this subject, there is even less controversy. While no claim is made that everything contained here would be accepted by all, no significantly distinct explanations have been offered in print. This forces the question to a discussion of the inherentcy of this lack of participation if the present Masai social system remains unchanged. In other words, can the Masai play a significant part in modern Kenya and still remain Masai? To explore some tentative answers

to this complex question, it is proposed that the rest of this paper explore the extent to which the Masai have already adapted their social system and the extent to which they might theoretically adapt it in the future without abandoning it altogether.

In an admittedly simplified analysis, the "basic" Masai social system will be defined to consist of the cattle complex, common ownership of grazing land, a polygamous family structure and a quasi-free love ethic, and a system of political leadership vesting authority in a gerontocracy and a now defunct warrior class.

The cattle complex must be considered together with pastoralism in assessing reactions to change. While among the relatively maleable Bantues it seems to be in competition with other values, it is the single focus of Nilotic cultures. Among the Nilotic peoples it is an all-encompassing value; among the Bantu it seems to have been deemphasized by the values of trading, agriculture, education, lineage solidarity, and other pursuits.²⁹ While this cannot be taken as sole explanation of Nilotic resistance to change, it suggests that to the extent that any modernization requires a muting of the love for cattle, the Nilotic will be totally unreceptive, while in the case of a Bantu, the same proposal could be made attractive by appealing to one of the equally important cultural values.

Two other factors to be considered with regard to the cattle complex are the degree of adaption to the typical Nilotic habitat and the degree of cultural integration. In ilotic cultures all the diverse elements seem to be mutually compatible and to function with a minimum of friction. Thus the easier facilitation of change among the Bantu may be interpreted as a lesser degree of cultural integration.³⁰ Clearly there is substantial reason to deduce from the above that the possibilities of adapting the cattle complex is the crucial variable in the modernization of the

entire Masai culture.

while all the above increases the importance of the cattle complex, it says nothing about whether the cattle complex must be adapted or abandoned to allow modernization. That decision is made by the part played by the market economy as perhaps the central tool for rationalization of an economy. By definition, that which is the standard of value for an economy can not also be its main product for direct and indirect consumption. This is so for, while the use of cattle as value requires retaining them indefinitely as the Masai do now, their use for either direct or indirect consumption requires disposing of the animals as is the practice in commercial ranching. Therefore, for the Masai to enter the market economy, which is imperative for them to have political relevance in the economic development orientation of Kenya today, cattle must be abandoned as the value standard. This then means almost complete abandonment of the cattle complex as it exists today.

The second basic institution to be considered is the common ownership of grazing land by the distinct sections of the tribe. Here the problem is much easier to deal with. The reason for common grazing grounds is the unreliability of the carrying capacity of any given property due to the erratic nature of the water supply. The objection to common grazing lands is not the institution as such, but the well known plaint that when everyone is responsible for the maintenance of property, no one is responsible.

Clearly, either side of this problem may be attacked, or both may be attacked at once. If private ownership of land is desired for political, this can be induced by increasing expenditures on water supplies so that each tract of land will consistently be able to sustain a given number of cattle. However, if all that is desired is a conversion of com-

mon ownership practices to modern forms, a corporate institution is clearly consistent with both. Here it would be argued that common ownership was originally a rationalization of the Masai environment, thus changes can be made without destroying the social system.

The problem with discussing the future of a polygamous system is finding some criteria for determining when it has been adapted and when it has been abandoned. If the system was originally based on practical reasons, and here it would clearly seem to be, these reasons were probably revolve around the fact that, in warlike tribes, the mortality rate of males is likely to be much higher than that of females. This little bit of demography simply means that there will always be more adult men than adult women in the society. In the Masai system, a woman has no independent means of support for herself or her children, if she is made a widow, and her parents are neither willing, nor in most cases able, to support her. The only viable alternative is to have the men marry, according to their means, until the surplus of females is absorbed.

Clearly, this original situation no longer exists. The cessation of warfare means that women will no longer significantly outnumber men. This fact, along with the ability of more men to attain the minimum wealth necessary for marriage, will cause the surplus of women to decline and thus eventually foster a monogamous system. Whether this is adaptation or abandonment of the system is for the reader to say. Nonetheless, it is the probable solution to the problem. As to the free love system among the unmarried and in some cases the married, while not wishing to sound cavalier, there is no inherent or obvious reason why this ethic should have to be abandoned as a prelude to modernization.

The nature of the final institution, gerontocracy and warrior leadership, and the direction in which it guides the tribe will always be one of personnel and, as such, can hardly be classed as an inherent problem.

If the old men are educated, as eventually they will be, who is to say they cannot provide adequate political leadership? As was shown above, the Masai's traditional hostility towards education has recently been transformed into an aggressive drive to procure educational opportunities for all members of the tribe. While there is little doubt that modernization could take place through the advent of a young educated elite, the fact that old men die and others grow old to take their place means that in one or two generations an educated gerontocracy will appear.

In summary of this section of the analysis, it can be said that the only really inherent obstacle to modernization of the Masai political and economic situation in their social system is the use of cattle as the standard of value. The other institutions are in reality only applications of various value judgements rationalized at some point in the past to fit the requirements of the physical environment. There is no reason these traditional values, with the exception of the cattle complex, cannot be retained with only the rationalization changed to fit the demands of the new environment.

Having concluded that there is only one facet of Masai culture which is not amenable to the forces of modernization in general, a second major question remains to be examined: can the Masai become Kenyans and still remain Masai? Another way of asking this question would be to inquire to what extent non-Kikuyu participate in political life at the national level. To this time, Kenyatta has been most careful to construct his governments of Africans from all major tribes. Further, the organization of several pastoral tribes into a separate political party, the Kenya African Democratic Party, shows that the non-Kikuyu and even anti-Kikuyu forces are permitted and are to a significant degree able to take a role in national and local politics.

The economic homogeneity that the Masai and many of the tribes which make up KADU are beginning to hold in common, that of a system of commercial ranching or its rudiments, may enable the Masai to convert their present primary allegiance, the tribe, to the wider allegiance of an economic interest group of livestock producers. Such a widening cannot help but increase Masai interest in national and international politics as such will begin to have great direct effects on the conditions under which they raise and market cattle.

Furthermore, for the Masai and other pastoralists holding large tracts of land as a result of the colonial reserves the spectre of land alienation is coming into view. The number of Africans engaged in agriculture continues to grow and the large areas of the Masai reserve continues to grow more and more attractive to them. The present national government is, not unexpectedly, very favorably disposed to commercial agriculture as opposed to transhumant ranching. To safeguard their grazing areas, the Masai and similiar tribes will be forced to assume a higher degree of political participation.

From the total situation it may be seen that to remain Masai, the herders are being forced to become Kenyans to the extent that this means being an active participant in national affairs. At present, their only alternative is to be swallowed up in Kikuyu expansionism and live as alienated individuals rather than as a distinct tribe.

All this says nothing about the assumption of the Kenyan culture. Possibly that is because there are no really meaningful definitions of a Kenyan culture apart from some notion of a summing of all the tribal cultures. The lack of any fairly homogeneous national culture at this time the Masai religious and secular tradition is not in conflict for legitimacy with anything besides what are recognized as equally tribal traditions.

While this is admittedly a very sketchy appraisal of the present situation of the Masai, the rationalization must be offered that any comments on their adaptation as part of a young nation must be theoretical simply because most of this adjustment, for both parties, lies in the future. However, to the extent that the direction of this change can be either determined or assumed, certain mechanisms of adjustment do become apparent.

The first, and perhaps most far reaching, is education. As Ross wrote in 1923, "The problem of modernizing the Masai can be modified in one generation and radically altered in two or three. The Masai as a race will probably persist for many years so modification of their views is probably a wise step. It is the opinion of all who have made a sympathetic study of the tribe that the only solution of their difficulties lies in education. If conducted on wise lines, they will emerge from the suspicious tribe of today an expanding nation which, while remaining excellent stockraisers, will appreciate the value of other forms of wealth besides the lovely cow, and the Masai will become an increasingly valuable trade asset to the colony."³¹

The colony has since become a nation, but the Masai have yet to be provided with the education Ross prescribed. Fortunately, the Masai have acquired a taste for education and have at the same time become somewhat reconciled to the necessity of selling stock as a means of financing it. This means that the herdsmen will be able to gain a certain degree of education for their children regardless of their command of political patronage and thus be able to close the gap between themselves and other tribes more rapidly than would otherwise be possible. In a country with a very limited budget and a seemingly unlimited clamoring for universal education, it is indeed fortunate that the Masai

are somewhat self-sufficient in this crucial matter.

A second mechanism is the desire of the national government to take advantage of the foreign exchange earnings a totally commercial operation of the Masai herds would produce. With this in mind, they have recently begun to offer extension services, veterinary services, and easy capital credit to groups of Masai willing to set up areas on a modern ranching basis. The key feature here is the government's interest in water resource development which, if extensive enough, will allow the Masai to take up permanent residences and thus to be more fully incorporated into the cash economy.

Clearly in these mechanisms there is no need for the Masai to abandon his pride in owning fine cattle, or in being a Masai. The only necessity is the modification of the basis of his pride to include the new values of his environment as well as the old ones. Many peoples have undergone extensive transitions to meet the demands of a changed environment and have emerged with undiminished pride in their traditional culture. While the degree of cultural integration found in the Masai system may make this transition harder, the key word to remember is degree. As has hopefully been shown, there is no inherent reason why the Masai should not assume a place as a vital part of modern Kenya.

Footnotes

1. C.G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, The Myth of Mau-Mau (New York, Frederick Praeger, 1966), p. 74.
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3. Ibid, p. 159.
4. Ibid, p. 152.
5. Ibid, p. 352.
6. Ibid, p. 136.
7. Ibid, p. 170.
8. Ibid, p. 173.
9. Ibid, p. 86.
10. Ibid, p. 138.
11. Ibid, p. 76.
12. Ibid, p. 210.
13. Ibid, p. 77.
14. Ibid, p. 192.
15. Ibid, p. 194.
16. W.R. Bascom and M.J. Herskovits, Continuity and Change in African Cultures (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 167.
17. G.W.B. Huntingford, The Nandi of Kenya (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953), p. 27.
18. H.A. Fosbrooke, "An Administrative Survey of the Masai Social System", Tanganyika Notes and Records 26 (1953), p. 32.
19. Howard Banow, "Status Reversal and Political Reaction", mimeo, 1962, p. 8.
20. W.M. Ross, Kenya From Within (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1927), p. 139.
21. Rosberg and Nottingham, Op. cit., p. 143.
22. Banow, Op. cit., p. 8.
23. Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya (London, Specker and Warburg, 1953), p. 210.

24. G.R. Sanford, An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve (London, Waterlow and Sons, Ltd., 1913), p. 16.
25. Rosberg and Nottingham, Op cit., p. 251.
26. Ibid, p. 219.
27. Huntingford, Op. cit., p. 76.
28. George Bennet, Kenya, A Political History (London, Oxford Press, 1963), p. 52.
29. Bascom and Herskovits, Op. cit., p.166.
30. Ibid., p. 167.
31. Ross, Op. cit., p. 144.