From True Dorobo to Mukogodo Maasai: Contested Ethnicity in Kenya

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Between 1925 and 1936, the Mukogodo of Kenya changed from Cushitie-speaking foragers to Maa-speaking pastoralists. This rapid transition took place in the midst of competing views of Mukogodo ethnic identity. To Maa-speakers, Mukogodo were low-status *il-torobo*. To British colonialists, Mukogodo were true Dorobo, victims of more powerful agricultural and pastoralist groups. Although British administrators fashioned a set of policies designed to protect Mukogodo from such groups, other British policies inadvertently contributed to the Mukogodo acquisition of Maasai subsistence patterns, language, and culture. Mukogodo themselves strategically used a Dorobo identity to manipulate the British while striving to lose the stigma of the *il-torobo* label and achieve acceptance among Maa-speakers as true Maasai. (Mukogodo, Dorobo, Torrobo, Maasai, Samburu, ethnicity, Kenya)

Between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s, Mukogodo of Kenya underwent a rapid transition from being Cushitie-speaking hunters, gatherers, and beekeepers to being Maa-speaking pastoralists. This transition is problematic in a number of ways. First, thanks to data on time allocation collected since the 1960s, it can no longer be assumed that a change from foraging to food production will improve a group’s standard of living or reduce the workloads of its members (see Hames 1992 for a review). In the Mukogodo case specifically, there is no convincing evidence of an increase in standard of living since their acquisition of livestock (Cronk 1989b). Second, other hunter-gatherers in East Africa in superficially similar situations have remained hunter-gatherers despite contact with pastoralists (e.g., Hadza; see Kaare and Woodburn 1999), and Mukogodo themselves had had contact with pastoralists for centuries before the transition without themselves becoming pastoralists. Third, it cannot be taken for granted that even if a group does change its subsistence strategy it will also necessarily undergo the sort of wholesale cultural shift experienced by Mukogodo. Other groups in East Africa have made similar changes in subsistence while still keeping their own languages and other aspects of their own cultures (e.g., Okiek; Huntingford 1928, 1929, 1931, 1942, 1951, 1954, 1955; Blackburn 1976, 1982; Kratz 1981, 1994, 1999).

Elsewhere (Cronk 1989a, 1989b) I have analyzed the Mukogodo transition in behavioral ecological terms, suggesting that for individual Mukogodo men the adoption of pastoralism represented a response to a rapidly changing social environment in which they either obtained livestock or failed to marry. I have also examined some of the consequences of the Mukogodo transition to pastoralism, including their low position in a regional hierarchy of wealth and ethnic status (Cronk 1989c, 1990, 1991c). This article explores the change from a different but complementary angle, focusing more on the external factors that changed their social environment. An examination of the broader historical and political context reveals...
that the Mukogodo transition occurred as Mukogodo attempted to manipulate the attitudes and behaviors of both British colonialists and Maasai pastoralists, two groups with competing and strikingly different views of Mukogodo ethnicity.

THE EMERGENCE OF A MUKOGODO ETHNICITY

Mukogodo live on the northeastern edge of the Laikipia Plateau in and around the Mukogodo Hills, which are covered with a dry forest dominated by cedar and wild olive trees (Mukogodo Division, Laikipia District, Rift Valley Province, Kenya). The origins of the Mukogodo people are obscure, but linguistic evidence suggests that they may have roots among the original Khoisan-speaking hunters and gatherers of East Africa (Ehret 1974:88). Until recent decades, however, they spoke not a Khoisan language, but rather an Eastern Cushitic one called Yaaku (Heine 1974-75; see also Brenzinger 1992 and Brenzinger, Heine, and Heine 1994). Words like “Yaaku” and “Mukogodo” may have been used for many centuries as labels for hunter-gatherers in north-central Kenya. The term “Yaaku” appears to have originally meant hunters and was borrowed from a Southern Nilotic language around the end of the first millennium A.D. (Ehret 1971:51-52). The origins of the word “Mukogodo” are not so clear. Most likely the word originated among Bantu-speaking Meru, southeast of the Mukogodo area, where oral traditions dating from the early 1700s mention hunters, identified by Meru informants as ancestors of Mukogodo, referred to by such names as Mokuru, Mukoko, Mugukuru, Mu-uthiu, Mukuru, and Aruguru (Fadiman 1976:155). As suggested by a colonial official (Fannin 1936), the name may originally have meant people who live in rocks. Supporting this idea is the striking resemblance between the word “Mukogodo” and the word in Kikuyu, a language closely related to Meru, for stone used in concrete (ngogoto; Barlow and Benson 1975:277).

By the time they became pastoralists in the early twentieth century, Mukogodo society was organized into four clans and thirteen patrilineages (see Table), but this particular configuration had probably emerged fairly recently. Mukogodo informants agree that the Ol Doinyo Lossos clan, which is coterminous with the Lentolla lineage, represents the original Mukogodo. This idea is supported by the fact that this clan controlled the largest territory, one that included one of the group’s holiest sites, the peak of the mountain Ol Doinyo Lossos. Informants generally agree that the Luno clan, coterminous with the Liba lineage, and the Biyoti and Suaanga lineages, which were not part of any clan, also had ancient roots in the Mukogodo area. The two other clans, Orondi and Sialo, probably represent more recent additions. The Orondi clan, for example, includes two lineages, Matunge and Leitiko, that are known to have been founded by impoverished Maasai in the nineteenth century.
Table: Mukogodo Clans and Lineages during the Transition to Pastoralism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clans</th>
<th>Member Lineages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orondi (Herok’té***)</td>
<td>Matunge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leitiko (includes Pokisa)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pardero</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Losupuko (Leupi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sialo (Re’che’hu)</td>
<td>Sakui</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parmashu</td>
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<td>Moile</td>
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<td>Nantiri</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lioini</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ol Doinyo Lossos (Moror)</td>
<td>Lentolla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luno (Kiperper)</td>
<td>Liba (also known as Nukur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lineages with no clan affiliations</td>
<td>Biyoti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suaanga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This list differs slightly from one previously published by Heine (1974-75). For an explanation of the differences between Heine’s list and this one, see Cronk (1989a:64-66). This list includes those lineages whose members spoke Yaaku and went through the transition from hunting and gathering to pastoralism. Since that time, some families with no history of Yaaku-speaking or foraging have been accepted by most Mukogodo as Mukogodo taata (Mukogodo now), and two of the lineages listed in the table have ceased to exist. For those reasons, this list is not to be considered in any way as a definitive or authoritative statement about who is and who is not Mukogodo.

** Mukogodo informants remember some of these descent groups as having had different names in Yaaku than in Maa. Yaaku names are given in parentheses.

The idea that the Sialo clan may also be a relative newcomer is partly supported by geography. At the time of the transition, the Sialo lineages controlled some relatively small territories clustered in the southeastern corner of the Mukogodo range. Sialo informants also had oral traditions of involvement in the nineteenth century with Kirrimani, a Rendille-speaking pastoralist group, in the lowlands east of the Mukogodo forest that are not shared by informants from other clans. Finally, a separate and relatively recent origin for the Sialo is suggested by their lack of certain food taboos followed by the other Mukogodo clans. While the other clans refused to eat elephant meat, considering it to be the equivalent of cannibalism due to the similarity of the arrangement of mammary glands in elephants and humans, Sialo had no such prohibition. Also unlike other clans, Sialo would eat wild fowl, East Africa’s various species of wild hog, and possibly zebras, though informants
differ on this point. Judging from a peculiarity in the Mukogodo territorial system, these various groups appear to have coalesced into a linguistically distinct group with peaceful internal relations and a common social system in about the middle of the nineteenth century. Each of the thirteen lineages had its own territory for hunting, gathering, and beehive placement. The Leitiko lineage, whose founder was adopted by the Orondi clan in about 1840, had a territory of about average size. In contrast, the Matunge lineage, whose founder was adopted by the Orondi clan in about 1880, had only a small wedge carved out of other territories as a gift. Thus it seems that the territorial system, and so quite possibly many other aspects of the Mukogodo society that subsequently underwent the transition to pastoralism, took shape after the founding of the Leitiko lineage but before the founding of the Matunge lineage, or in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The basic subsistence pattern included residence primarily in the area’s many rockshelters and a diet based on honey from both man-made and natural hives, a few plant foods, and wild animals, chiefly small ones such as rock hyrax. This pattern, first reported in Mukogodo oral histories (Cronk 1989a), has been confirmed by recent excavations of two Mukogodo rockshelters (Gang 1997; Kuehn and Dickson 1999; Mutundu 1999). The lineages were exogamous, and Mukogodo men paid bridewealth in the form of beehives. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the Mukogodo had contact with a variety of Cushitic-, Nilotic-, and Bantu-speaking peoples (Heine 1974-75; Fadiman 1976). Although it stands to reason that there were some marriages between Mukogodo and non-Mukogodo before 1900, my Mukogodo informants have no memories of any. As of the late 1980s, there were about a thousand Mukogodo.

Today, Mukogodo are Maa-speaking pastoralists, and they share Mukogodo Division with several other such groups. Although some people refer to everyone living in Mukogodo Division as Mukogodo, Mukogodo families descended patrilineally from Yaaku-speaking hunter-gatherers are concentrated in Mukogodo and Siek Location, located in the northeastern corner of the Division. The other groups include Ing’wesi, Digirri, Mumonyot, and LeUaso. Ing’wesi, who live in the southeastern portion of the Division, have historical and cultural ties to the Meru, a large Bantu-speaking agricultural group northeast of Mount Kenya. Digirri, who live in a central portion of the Division, have some connections to the Kalenjin-speaking Okiek hunter-gatherers of the Mau Escarpment area (Blackburn 1982). Mumonyot, who live between Mukogodo and Digirri, trace themselves back to Laikipiak, a Maa-speaking pastoralist group that was defeated and dispersed by other Maa-speakers in the late nineteenth century (see Sobania 1993 for more on Laikipiak). LeUaso, who live in the far western portion of Mukogodo Division along the Uaso Ng’iro River, were once a group of hunter-gatherers and beekeepers associated with Laikipiak (see Herren 1991 for more on the non-Mukogodo peoples of Mukogodo Division). A considerable number of families of Samburu origin also live in Mukogodo Division as well as in the portion of Isiolo District immediately
MAASAI AND IL-TORROBO

Maa-speaking peoples were once distributed in a more or less continuous swath across East Africa from Kenya’s Ndoto Mountains and Lake Turkana in the north, where they are represented by such groups as Ariaal (Fratkin 1998) and Samburu (Spencer 1965, 1973), down through the Great Rift Valley and into eastern Tanzania, where they are represented by Parakuyo (Rigby 1992). In the center of this distribution are pastoral Maasai. This continuous distribution of Maa-speakers was split as a result of British colonial policies in the early twentieth century. This bifurcation occurred in two stages. The first Maasai Treaty of 1904 created two reserves, one on the Laikipia Plateau north of the new railway and another south of the railway. The subsequent Maasai Treaty of 1911 eliminated the northern reserve and obligated the Maasai to move to an expanded southern reserve (today’s Kajiado and Narok Districts). Among the Maa-speakers remaining in northern Kenya were the Mukogodo, who were still Yaaku-speaking hunter-gatherers at the time, and their Samburu neighbors to the north.

“Maasai” is an ethnic label but, to Maa-speakers especially, it is much more than that. The label carries not only a suggestion of what language a person speaks and other aspects of his or her culture, but also information about subsistence and, most importantly, status. Pastoral Maasai see themselves as being at the peak of a socioeconomic hierarchy defined by language and subsistence practices (Galaty 1979, 1982, 1986, 1993b). Simply put, Maa-speakers carry more prestige than speakers of other languages, pastoralism is more prestigious than farming, and farming, though less desirable than pastoralism, is more prestigious than hunting and gathering. Groups that conform closely to this pastoral, Maa-speaking ideal can claim greater prestige than groups that violate it either by speaking a different language or by engaging in subsistence activities other than pastoralism. Even though they are not Maasai proper, Samburu of northern Kenya are an example of a group that has high status in its area due to its recent history of conformity with the ideals of Maa-speaking and pure pastoralism. When the main body of Maasai were removed from northern Kenya after the agreement of 1911, Samburu became the sole local exemplars of that ideal. It should be noted that this rarefied definition of Maasainess, particularly the ideal of pure pastoralism, may be a relatively new invention and that this thumbnail sketch of Maasai ethnicity belies the term’s long and ongoing evolution in the context of East African history, politics, and economics (Galaty 1982, 1993a, 1993b; Sutton 1993; and chapters in Spear and Waller 1993).

Maa-speakers usually refer to Mukogodo, Mumonyot, Ilng’wesi, Digirri, and LeUaso, as well as a variety of groups in other parts of Kenya and Tanzania, not as Maasai but as il-torrobo (singular: ol-torroboni). Il-torrobo has been anglicized as “Dorobo,” also spelled Ndorobo, Nderobo, Wandorobo, Wanderobo, and Torrobo.
This article uses the spelling *il-torrobo* when referring to how Maa-speakers use the term and “Dorobo,” the most common spelling in British colonial-era documents, when referring to how British administrators and colonists used it. The origins of the term *il-torrobo* are obscure. It may come from the Maa word for “short,” *dorop* (Huntingford 1929:335); the Maa word for tsetse fly (Galaty 1986:116); a combination of the Maa words for bees, *lotorok*, with the word for cattle pen, *bo*, referring to people who keep bees rather than livestock; and the Dadoga (Southern Nilotic) word *darabe:da*, meaning forest (DiStefano 1990:55). Whatever its origin, it is clear that the meaning of *il-torrobo* to Maa-speakers is derogatory, being used to refer to poor people who must live like wild animals; i.e., by hunting and gathering, rather than from domesticated plants and animals. The label has a way of sticking with people through generations so that even groups that have not hunted for decades may be labeled *il-torrobo* (Waller 1985:128). In the minds of Maa-speakers, *il-torrobo* are associated with negative concepts, including offensiveness, meanness, poverty, cowardice, womanhood, degradation, imperfection, degeneration, and contamination (Galaty 1979, 1981, 1982, 1993b). *Il-torrobo* are associated in a Maasai myth with an original fall from grace, in which an *ol-torroboni* is said to have shot an arrow to sever the cord connecting heaven and earth, down which God had been sending cattle (Hollis 1905:271; Jacobs 1965:26-27; Kipury 1983:30-31). Other Maasai stories use *il-torrobo* as negative models to teach lessons about envy and selfishness (Hollis 1905:297; Spencer 1973:86) and hold *il-torrobo* up as objects of ridicule (e.g., Kipury 1983:200-01). The idea of *il-torrobo* is so antithetical to the Maasai image of themselves that Galaty (1979) has suggested that it acts as a kind of symbolic antipraxis, helping the Maasai to define themselves more clearly (see also Kenny 1981). One of Galaty’s informants even went so far as to list these three key differences between *il-torrobo* and Maasai: *il-torrobo* smell like urine and feces, they were reared without cattle and eat wild animals, and they speak Maa imperfectly (Galaty 1993b:185). This pattern of denigration of foragers by pastoralists is widespread in Africa (Smith 1998; Woodburn 1997).

**DOROBO**

Maa-speakers apply the term *il-torrobo* to all hunters and gatherers, not as a tribal label so much as a class designation. British colonialists, however, mistook the term for an ethnic label and lumped all hunting and gathering peoples in the Kenyan highlands under the name “Dorobo.” Thus, a wide variety of people, having nothing in common but a way of making a living and proximity to Maasai, were tarred by the brush of this derogatory term. This includes not only Mukogodo, but also Kalenjin-speaking Okiek (Blackburn 1982; Huntingford 1929; Klumpp and Kratz 1993; Kratz 1994) and Akie (Kaare 1996, 1997), Maa-speaking pastoralists who had lost their herds, and others.

The British view of Dorobo as a single tribe reflects a widespread belief in colonial Africa in the reality and fixity of various tribes (see Berman and Lonsdale
However, perhaps more than any other group in Kenya, Dorobo presented a series of challenges to this belief. First, rather than living in a single contiguous region like a proper tribe, they were scattered across the map as small, isolated groups, many of whom knew nothing of one another’s existence. Second, they spoke no single language. Rather, some spoke Maa, some Kalenjin, some Kikuyu, and, of course, one group spoke Yaaku. Third, the boundaries of Dorobo groups are especially variable, with people continually joining and leaving them, depending on their successes and failures as livestock keepers. In short, it would be hard to find a label that is less appropriate as an ethnic label than Dorobo.

Despite how little the Dorobo resembled a tribe, British officials struggled throughout the colonial period to treat them as one. It is clear from colonial records that this caused quite a few administrative headaches. For example, Smith (1907:254-55) remarked upon the difficulty he found during a safari along the Kenya-Tanganyika border of telling lapsed Maasai from “true Wandorobo,” while at the same time persisting in the belief that Wandorobo was a legitimate category to begin with. Later, a colonial administrator traveling in the Laikipia area noted in a telegram to another administrator the frustration he felt in trying to fit a particular Dorobo group into a predetermined pigeonhole, grumbling that these anomalous people “should be called upon to explain their origin and to quote to whom they were known and what their language” (District Commissioner 1931).

Although a good case could have been made to abandon the idea that the term was a tribal label, this was not done. The tenacity with which the British clung to the Dorobo notion may be explained by the important place Dorobo came to have in the ideology behind British colonialism in Kenya. Many administrators and some settlers believed that Dorobo had been systematically victimized by members of other, more powerful tribes, particularly Kikuyu and other Bantu-speaking agricultural groups. The image of victimized Dorobo became an important element in the British justification of the creation of the White Highlands in Kikuyu-dominated areas of central Kenya. This grew out of the fact that the Kikuyu case for the legitimacy of their claims to sections of the White Highlands rested in part on the idea that they had purchased much of the land from its hunter-gatherer owners, people they called Asi or Athi and Agumba (e.g., Kenyatta 1965:26; see also Leakey 1977:87, passim). Much of the work of the Kenya Land Commission in the early 1930s concerned exploring the legitimacy of these claims, and much of its subsequent report is devoted to a contemptuous and mocking dismissal of most of them (e.g., KLC 1934c:16-17, 53-54, 149-50; see Clough 1990:163-66 and Coray 1978). Elspeth Huxley (1935:112-13) summarized the pro-settler point of view:

Most of the Kikuyu country was said by the Wakikuyu themselves to have been occupied until relatively recently by Wandorobo tribes called the Asi and the Agumba. It is only in modern times that the Wakikuyu came down from the north and dispossessed these little hunters. So even that part of the disputed land which was in temporary native occupation in 1904 can hardly be said to have belonged to the Wakikuyu. They had taken it from somebody else only a few years before. For some of
although for by no means all—they paid a fee in goats. So recent was the invasion of Dorobo territory that many of the goat transactions were, according to the Wakikuyu themselves, only partially completed when the British took over the administration of the country.

Huxley’s language is worth noting for what it reveals about her view of the situation. While “these little hunters” are said to have been “dispossessed” of their lands through a Kikuyu “invasion” of their territories, the British are described as merely “taking over the administration of the country.”

If Dorobo were somehow special and worthy of protection to the British, Mukogodo, who lived in rockshelters and spoke a unique language, were extra-special, the “true Dorobo” (KLC 1934b:1471). The protective attitude of administrators toward Mukogodo is evident in testimony given before the Kenya Land Commission by R. G. Stone, Provincial Commissioner of Northern Frontier Province, in an attempt to counter the testimony of settler Raymond Hook, who depicted the Mukogodo area as one in need of improvement: “Com. Hook stated that some years ago the Mukogodo were—I think he used the term—a despicable race, but that they now own huts and stock. That appears to me to indicate considerable progression. That is a thing which the administration of this country encourages” (KLC 1934b:1481). K. G. Lindsay, another colonial official familiar with the Mukogodo area in his capacity as District Commissioner of North Nyeri District, also testified in defense of Mukogodo:

Finally I would make a special plea on behalf of the Dorobo for a permanent reservation which they can call their own.

They have the making of a useful section of the community, but for years they felt insecure in the tenure of the grazing areas left to them. They ask for little, and, having in the past been driven like chaff before a wind of progression, now merit some recognition for themselves. (KLC 1934b:1584)

The result was the creation of the Dorobo Reserve, now known as Mukogodo Division, as a safe haven for true Dorobo such as Mukogodo.

Later colonial administrators continued the tradition of defending Mukogodo from other groups. Worthy (1959a:2.1), District Officer in Mukogodo for almost a year during the late 1950s and a prolific writer of reports on the peoples of the Mukogodo area, argued that Mukogodo may have been victims of the same sort of Bantu expansionism that had victimized Dorobo in central Kenya: “[T]here is reason to believe that in the past the Mukogodo did in fact derive from the North and West of Mount Kenya. If this theory is correct then the Mukogodo must have been expelled by the Bantu invasions [sic] that brought in the Meru and Kikuyu people.” Although Worthy does not explain the source of this idea, it does fit with Meru traditions regarding the Mukogodo (Fadiman 1976). In his “Handing Over Report” to his successor as District Officer, J. Rowlands, Worthy (1959b:2.1) argued that it was “a prime necessity that at all times, the priority of the Dorobo interests be emphasized and wherever possible, a Dorobo be appointed to a post in preference of an alien.” Years later, Worthy repeated this general idea in a 1986 letter to me: “These Wanderobo were people who were and presumably still are the victims and prey of
more powerful groups. We sought in the nineteen fifties to give them a chance to retain their very unusual identity as people who predated the later migrations.”

THE MUKOGODO TRANSITION AND COLONIAL POLICIES

The stated desire of colonial administrators to protect the Mukogodo from other tribes is ironic in light of the way other colonial policies had the unintended consequence of contributing to the Mukogodo shifts from hunting to herding and from Yaaku to Maa. The creation of the White Highlands displaced large numbers of Kikuyu and others. This had created a domino effect in which one group’s displacement led to the displacement of another. One result was that two groups that were important in the Mukogodo transition, the Digirri and Iln’wesi, were forced to live as neighbors of the Mukogodo for the first time. Although both groups had a history of hunting and gathering, by the time they entered the Mukogodo area they had become Maa-speaking pastoralists. Testimony by Digirri and Iln’wesi representatives to the Kenya Land Commission in the early 1930s supports the idea not only that both groups were relatively new arrivals in the Mukogodo area but also that their movements were the result of European alienation of land, not Bantu expansionism (KLC 1934b:1571). Somewhat belatedly, this effect of European settlement was acknowledged by colonial officials familiar with the area. Worthy (1959a:3.1), for example, wrote, “The results of European pressure and settlement were that the Ndigiri moved gradually north until they came to settle in the area called Ol Choki which lies partly within and partly to the west of the present Mukogodo area.” Worthy (1959a:4.1) also cites the pressure of European settlement as a reason for the Iln’wesi movement in the Mukogodo area: “[P]ressure first by the Meru and then by the European settlers caused the Iln Ngwesi gradually to move in a North-Westwards direction toward and into the South-East corner of Mukogodo they now occupy.” In this way, the domino effect created by the creation of the White Highlands put Mukogodo into steady contact with these groups for the first time.

Other British colonial policies had the unintended effect of encouraging not only contact but intermarriage between Mukogodo and Maa-speaking pastoralists. A major goal of British administrators was what might be called ethnic tidying: identifying a limited number of discrete ethnic units in the colony, associating certain parcels of land with those ethnic units, and ensuring that people live in the areas where they have the most cultural affinities, a policy that bore many similarities to the U.S. government’s creation of a system of reservations for American Indians. The result was the creation of tribal reserves, including the Dorobo Reserve in the Mukogodo area and the Maasai Reserve in southern Kenya, and the forced movement of people into those reserves. People who did not fit the ethnic profile of a particular reserve were moved to another that administrators deemed more appropriate. Although there was some discussion of making the Mukogodo area part of the Northern Frontier Province due to their supposed Galla affinities (KLC 1934c:222-23), their status in
British eyes as Dorobo protected Mukogodo from such forced movements. On the other hand, British administrators’ protective attitude toward Mukogodo helped justify their repeated attempts to move non-Mukogodo groups out of the area. Ilng’wesi were deported en masse to Meru District in 1925, though they were allowed to move back to the Mukogodo area in 1937 (Worthy 1959a:4.1). Later, in 1958-59, some Ilng’wesi perceived by British administrators to be “Meru infiltrators” were also moved to Meru District (Worthy 1959a:4.2; District Officer, Maua 1960; Kibaki 1962). Some Digirri were deported once to the Maasai Reserve (1912-13; Worthy 1959a:3.1), Mumonyot were deported three times to the Maasai Reserve (1912-1913, 1925-26, 1929; Worthy 1959a:6.1; Spencer 1973:210) and five times to Samburu District (1935, 1935-36, 1939, 1940, 1946; Worthy 1959a:6.1-2; Spencer 1973:210). LeUaso were deported once to Samburu District (1935; Worthy 1959a:6.1, 7.1), and Samburu living in the Mukogodo area were deported nine times to Samburu District (1912, 1921, 1935, 1939, 1940, 1946, 1955, 1958, 1959; Worthy 1959a:12.1; Spencer 1973:210). In addition, the few Kikuyu families that settled in the area as traders were deported during the Mau Mau emergency in 1953 (Spencer 1973:210), and in the late 1950s there was an additional attempt on the part of the local administrators to move LeUaso to Samburu District that was foiled by an unfavorable report by the anthropologist Paul Spencer. Clearly, only those moves conducted before the late 1930s can be seen as contributing to the Mukogodo transition to pastoralism, but this still leaves five forced moves of Mumonyot, three of Samburu, and one each of LeUaso, Digirri, and Ilng’wesi that helped encourage those groups to marry Mukogodo. Moving people out of the Dorobo Reserve came to be so popular for local officials that other administrators regarded it as “the Doldol administrators’ sport” (Spencer 1973:210-11), and sometimes refused to go along with it, particularly when it involved a group for which no other area felt any responsibility. Mukogodo, their status as true Dorobo unassailable, were the only people never deported from the Dorobo Reserve.5

One non-Mukogodo response to the threat of deportation was to marry their new Mukogodo neighbors. This provided two benefits. First, it gave them additional support for their claim to have extensive local ties in the Mukogodo area (Spencer 1973:207-08). Second, it gave them Mukogodo affines with whom they could leave their livestock during deportations. As soon as they could, the deportees returned, often having left their livestock with their new Mukogodo affines. As Worthy (1959a:2.2) noted, “each time the Mumonyot Masai were removed from the Mukogodo area, their relations by marriage helped them return.” Worthy (1959b:2.1) also “had to be constantly on the alert for Samburu returning secretly and being hidden by their Dorobo relations by marriage.” The resulting failure of any of the deportations to take hold was the main reason why there were so many of them.

This combination of opportunity and motive that was inadvertently created by British policies is reflected in rates of marriage between Mukogodo and non-Mukogodo. While Mukogodo have no memory of marriages with non-Mukogodo before 1900, in the first four decades of the twentieth century six times more
Mukogodo women married non-Mukogodo men as Mukogodo men who married non-Mukogodo women (42 vs. seven, respectively). Non-Mukogodo men made attractive sons-in-law in part because they were able to offer livestock as bridewealth, while most Mukogodo men could offer only the traditional beehive bridewealth. The number of Mukogodo women married in exchange for livestock bridewealths began to exceed those married in exchange for beehive bridewealths in the decade following 1909, and the last beehive bridewealth was paid around 1931. After that date, only livestock were acceptable to Mukogodo parents as bridewealth for their daughters. This represents not only a shift in the type of bridewealth but actual bridewealth inflation because the exchange value of the livestock given in a typical livestock bridewealth was much greater than the value of the beehives given in a typical beehive bridewealth. The traditional exchange value between hives and livestock was one hive for one head of small stock (a goat or a sheep), and one head of cattle was worth several head of small stock. For many Mukogodo men the problem contained its own solution in that a simple way to obtain livestock was to marry one’s daughters and sisters to non-Mukogodo pastoralist men. Nonetheless, many Mukogodo men during this period had to delay marriage until late in life due to a lack of livestock, and between a quarter and a third of the men who entered the marriage market during this period never married. Colonial-era census data show that one result of this pattern of out-marriage was a very unusually male-biased sex ratio in the adult population. While the adult Mukogodo population was only 28.6 per cent female, the adult populations of the non-Mukogodo groups in the area (Mumonyot, Digirri, and Ilng’wesi) were approximately balanced between men and women, with between 48.4 per cent and 51.9 per cent females in their adult populations (District Commissioner 1934).

The predicament of Mukogodo men was made doubly difficult because, on average, they had to pay a higher bridewealth to marry a non-Mukogodo. According to Mukogodo informants’ recollection of bridewealth paid in 32 interethnic marriages between 1900 and 1939, Mukogodo men marrying non-Mukogodo women paid, on average, more than eight cattle and six sheep and goats, while non-Mukogodo men marrying Mukogodo women paid, on average, less than six cattle and only about one sheep or goat. This discrepancy may be the result of a variety of factors. For example, among Maa-speakers the bridewealth payment is usually considered just the beginning of a man’s payments to his affines, who may continue to request further gifts for years to come. Non-Mukogodo parents may have considered Mukogodo men a poor risk for such continued prestations and demanded a higher initial payment as a result. Also, il-torrobo women have a reputation as unruly wives, and so they may have not been able to attract bridewealth payments as large as those attracted by non-Mukogodo women. Finally, Mukogodo were simply in a worse negotiating position than non-Mukogodo because they were so desperately in need of livestock.

Another effect of the transition to pastoralism and the high rates of intermarriage with neighboring groups was the creation of a sharp contrast between the marital prospects of Mukogodo women and men. While virtually all Mukogodo women get
married, often to relatively wealthy men from neighboring groups, some Mukogodo men never marry and others frequently must delay marriage until middle age. Mukogodo parents appear to be responding to this situation by favoring girls over boys. My research in the 1980s and 1990s indicates that Mukogodo caregivers stay closer to infant and toddler girls, hold them more, nurse them more frequently and longer, and take them for medical care more often than they do infant and toddler boys. As a result, Mukogodo girls show better growth performance and higher survival rates than their brothers (see Cronk 1989b, 1991b, 1993, and 2000 for details).

ETHNICITY MANAGEMENT

Anthropological understandings of ethnicity have tended to range between the view that there is something basic, even primordial, about ethnic identities (Geertz 1963) and the contrasting view that ethnic identities are best understood as instruments used in the orchestration of social life (Barth 1969; Cohen 1974). Both poles of this continuum are easy to criticize. An extreme primordialist view of ethnicity, for example, has been undermined by demonstrations of how recently so many of the world's ethnicities were created, often in the midst of local and regional political struggles (e.g., Anderson 1983; Bowen 1996; Vail 1989). An extreme instrumentalist view is undermined by observations of how heartfelt ethnic identity is for many people, however recently it may have been constructed, and how difficult it often is to switch from one ethnic identity to another. Somewhere between these two extreme positions has emerged a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of ethnicity as a multifaceted phenomenon that can appear in one instance as an instrumental social construction and in another as an obligatory fact of existence (e.g., Fischer 1999). Perhaps the easiest path through this conceptual maze is to recognize that, in accordance with the instrumentalist view, markers of ethnic identity are indeed instruments used in social interaction; specifically, they are signals of ethnic group membership. But markers of ethnic identity are not just any sort of signal. Rather, signals that are reliable markers of ethnic group membership must be difficult to fake (see Cronk 1999:99-100; Zahavi et al. 1997; and Frank 1988 on hard-to-fake signals). If they were not hard to fake, they would be useless as markers of group membership, people would be free to change them at will, and ethnicity would lose most or all of its importance to people. Thus, as signals of group membership, markers of ethnic identity have an instrumental quality, but they are only reliable as markers of group boundaries to the extent to which they also have a hard-to-fake quality that may give them an appearance of being primordial or essential.

It is clear from the colonial records that Mukogodo and their neighbors were well aware of the instrumental qualities of ethnic labels. The testimony of representatives from the Mukogodo area before the Kenya Land Commission in the early 1930s is particularly revealing. Apparently appreciative of the protective attitude of British
administrators toward Dorobo, the Digirri, Ilng’wesi, and Mukogodo representatives went so far as to use this hated term for themselves in their testimony. The Digirri representative testified, “We are pure Dorobo—not Masai” (KLC 1934b:1571). Similarly, the Ilng’wesi representative reported, “We are not Masai or Meru” (KLC 1934b:1571). The Mukogodo representative agreed that the Mukogodo, Digirri, and Ilng’wesi “are all Dorobo” and even “clans of the one tribe” (KLC 1934b:1571), emphasizing that “by race we are Dorobo” (KLC 1934a:88) and that the Mukogodo “have no affinity with the Masai and speak a different language” (KLC 1934b:1571). The instrumental quality of such declarations of Dorobo status is made clearer when we realize that the Mukogodo representative, Silangei Ole Matunge, unlike almost all other Mukogodo and also unlike the Digirri and Ilng’wesi representatives present at the Commission native evidence session at which they all spoke, could have legitimately claimed to be Maasai, not Dorobo. This is because his lineage was one of two of the thirteen Mukogodo lineages to have been founded by impoverished Maasai individuals who took refuge among the Mukogodo in the nineteenth century (see above). The fact that he chose not to do so and instead identified himself as a Dorobo is testimony to his appreciation of the importance of that label in the minds of the British administrators. It should be noted that it was not enough to claim Dorobo identity to avoid deportation to another tribal reserve. In addition to the non-Mukogodo peoples of the Mukogodo area, other Dorobo groups in other parts of Kenya were also moved to areas where they were believed to have greater cultural affinities, including areas set aside for Kalenjin-, Kikuyu-, and Maa-speakers (KLC 1934b:527; see also Breen 1972, 1976).

Much of the strength of the Mukogodo case for Dorobo status lay in their possession of a unique language, which, ironically, was rapidly being lost in favor of Maa. This shift from Yaaku to Maa indicates that the transition was much more than simply an economic affair, including not only subsistence practices but also language, religious beliefs and practices, and many other aspects of Mukogodo culture. The language shift and the subsequent death of Yaaku have been documented by Heine (1974-75), Brenzinger (1992), and Brenzinger, Heine, and Heine (1994). Bilingualism is common in sub-Saharan Africa, and it is quite likely that many Mukogodo could speak some Maa even before the transition. The loss of Yaaku was swift. While reports from early in the century (Hobley 1905, 1910) indicate that the language was still very much alive, by 1969, all Mukogodo spoke Maa and no more than 28 per cent had even a rudimentary knowledge of the old language (Heine 1974-75:32). Heine’s informants told him that the decision to drop Yaaku in favor of Maa was made at a public meeting in the early 1930s. My informants in the 1980s remembered no such meeting, though memories could easily have faded in the intervening years. If indeed the loss of Yaaku was a deliberate act and not simply a side effect of intermarriage with Maa-speakers, it makes practical sense (Heine 1974-75:33-34). First, the number of people who could speak Yaaku was quite small, necessitating that everyone be at least bilingual. Second, Yaaku was a language well suited to
hunting and beekeeping, with, for example, five different words for beehive, while Maa may have been better suited to their new pastoralist economy. Third, and most significant in this discussion of ethnicity management, the retention of a language other than Maa and an inability to speak perfect Maa would have been significant impediments to Mukogodo efforts to claim Maasai status.

If Mukogodo and their neighbors were enthusiastic about being Dorobo when the audience consisted of British administrators, they were equally enthusiastic to avoid being labeled il-torrobo by fellow Maa-speakers. The desire to be Maasai rather than il-torrobo manifests itself in many ways. While Silangei Ole Matunge described himself and other Mukogodo as “pure Dorobo” to the Kenya Land Commission, members of his lineage now take every opportunity to emphasize their Maasai roots. Other Mukogodo, with no Maasai heritage to draw upon, redefine the word il-torrobo in a way that excludes them and their ancestors. Some insist that because they always had beehives, they were never really il-torrobo, their bees being the equivalent of livestock. One Mukogodo man, who had just answered, “I don’t have any” to all my livestock census questions, pointed at a beehive and explained in self-defense, “Those are my herds.” In this view, only those people who once had neither livestock nor bees can really be considered il-torrobo. Thus, while Mumonyot would count as il-torrobo because they went through a period in the late nineteenth century when they had neither livestock nor bees, Mukogodo were never il-torrobo because they always had bees. Others insist that in order to be il-torrobo, a people must have eaten zebras. Eating zebras is seen as a sort of hunter-gatherer analog of eating donkeys, which Maa-speakers consider a disgusting famine food, at best. By that light, Mukogodo and their ancestors were never il-torrobo, but perhaps other groups in the area, less choosy about their prey, would qualify. Even in the realm of female-biased parental behavior there is evidence of the Mukogodo desire to be taken seriously as Maasai. Although there is abundant evidence of a tendency among Mukogodo parents to treat their daughters better than their sons (see above), they do not recognize such a preference verbally. Instead, most Mukogodo parents say that, like typical Maasai, they prefer sons to daughters. One interpretation of this disparity between statements and behavior is that the statements are better indicators of Mukogodo aspirations than of actual parental behavior (Cronk 1991a, 1991b, 1993, 2000).

The Mukogodo practice of clitoridectomy (Cronk 1999:112-13) may also be a reflection of their aspirations to Maasai status. Worthy (1959a:2.2) wrote that Mukogodo had adopted the practice only recently as a result of Maasai influence. My Mukogodo informants, on the other hand, for the most part vehemently denied that their ancestors had ever failed to perform clitoridectomies, finding the suggestion insulting and disgusting. At least two interpretations of these conflicting accounts are possible. Clitoridectomies could have long been performed by Mukogodo, but individuals sought favor with British administrators who opposed the practice by suggesting to them that it was not a quintessentially Mukogodo custom. Or perhaps Worthy’s information is correct and it really is a relatively new practice among Mukogodo, one that became necessary in order for Mukogodo women to marry Maa-
speakers. In either case, the revulsion of my informants to the idea that their ancestors may not have performed clitoridectomies may best be seen as part of their very self-conscious emulation of Maasai behavior and aspirations to Maasai ethnicity.

MAASAINESS VS. SAMBURUNESS

In order to better understand why Mukogodo are trying to be Maasai, it is important also to understand what they are not trying to be: Samburu. Although being Maasai does not appear at first glance to be much different from being Samburu, to Maa-speakers themselves there are important differences. For example, their languages, while similar, are not identical, and it is easy for a practiced listener to tell a Samburu from a Maasai after a few brief remarks. Other classic ethnic markers, such as jewelry, are strikingly different.

Despite the proximity of Samburu and the remoteness of Maasai, Mukogodo consistently proclaim themselves to be Maasai, never Samburu, and their use of ethnic boundary markers reflects this choice. For example, although the way Mukogodo speak Maa is certainly influenced by Samburu, it is nonetheless a variety of the southern dialect of the Maasai, not the northern Maa dialect of the Samburu (Brenzinger, Heine, and Heine 1994), making the peoples of Mukogodo Division the only ones left in northern Kenya who speak the southern dialect. Their identification with the language of Maasai rather than that of Samburu is evident in how Mukogodo area people choose to write their names. They follow the style of the Maasai, which, in the case of a man, includes the full word ole (of) between the personal name and family name (e.g., Kosima ole Leitiko). Samburu, in contrast, typically drop the initial “o” of ole and make le the first two words of the last name (e.g., Kosima Leleitiko). This is done despite the fact that in their everyday speech the people of Mukogodo Division typically break with Maasai speech and follow the Samburu pattern of dropping the vowels at the start of most nouns (e.g., ol-ayioni [boy] becomes layioni), which supports the idea that the way they write their names is a deliberate attempt to identify more closely with Maasai than with Samburu. Furthermore, Mukogodo women wear jewelry that much more closely resembles the styles worn by Maasai women in distant southern Kenya than those of their Samburu neighbors (see Klumpp and Kratz 1993 for another case of jewelry as ethnic boundary marker).

On the face of it, it might seem more sensible for Mukogodo to aspire to be Samburu because Samburu are the highest-status people around. On closer inspection, though, it is clear that the proximity of Samburu is precisely why Mukogodo, along with their Mumonyot, Digirri, LeUaso, and Ilng’wesi neighbors, say they are Maasai and not Samburu. As the local elite, Samburu treat the peoples of Mukogodo Division, particularly Mukogodo, with disdain and contempt, unhesitatingly referring to them as il-torrobo. Mukogodo, for their part, often avoid Samburu individuals they do not know well, finding them haughty and difficult. Sometimes Mukogodo deliberately mislead unfamiliar Samburu, privately referring to them as il-mang’ati
Were Mukogodo to claim to be Samburu, Samburu would find this laughable. Better, then, for Mukogodo to emulate a distant elite that is not around to deny their claim.

Surprisingly then, the very absence of Maasai in the Mukogodo area may be necessary for Mukogodo and others in Mukogodo Division to be able to claim Maasai status. It is as if the forced movement of the Maasai from the Laikipia Plateau in 1912 created a local vacuum of Maasainess, which the peoples of Mukogodo Division have sought to fill. This is yet another way, along with the population displacements and forced movements that encouraged marriages between Mukogodo and Maa-speaking pastoralists, that British colonial policies set the stage for the Mukogodo shift from foraging to herding and from Yaaku to Maa.

**MUKOGODO MAASAI: AN EMERGING ETHNIC IDENTITY**

Since the Mukogodo transition to pastoralism, ethnic categories in their area have continued to evolve. Two broad and complementary trends are apparent: 1) a diminishing importance for the divisions within Mukogodo Division between Mukogodo, Mumonyot, Ilng’wesi, Digirri, and LeUaso; and 2) an increasingly widespread acceptance of the relatively new idea of a common Mukogodo Maasai identity. These changes are partly a result of a reduction in the economic discrepancies among the peoples of Mukogodo Division in the decades since the Mukogodo transition to pastoralism. Although Mukogodo remain among the poorest stockholders in the region, their economic situation has improved vis-à-vis their neighbors. This has enabled Mukogodo men to marry earlier and more frequently and increased the likelihood that they will marry non-Mukogodo women. While the proportion of Mukogodo women marrying non-Mukogodo men has remained steady at about 50 per cent since 1910, the proportion of Mukogodo wives coming from other groups has gone from a low of zero in the 1920s to around 50 per cent in the decades since 1960. The discrepancy between bridewealths received and paid by Mukogodo in marriages to non-Mukogodo appears to be diminishing as well (Cronk 1990:105). These high rates of intermarriage have led to a situation in which virtually everyone has relatives, often very close ones, among other ethnic groups.

Intermarriage also often leads to coresidence, and some Samburu, Mumonyot, and Ilng’wesi families that have lived alongside Mukogodo for decades are now considered Mukogodo by most people in the area. At the same time, a few Mukogodo families have lived for so long among the neighboring groups that they are no longer considered to be fully Mukogodo. The increased importance of residence, rather than ancestry, in ethnic identification may reflect the fact that while such labels as Mukogodo, Mumonyot, Ilng’wesi, and Digirri have long been passed down through membership in particular patrilineages, they are now also official names for administrative jurisdictions. Although the association of particular lineages with particular ethnic groups is still an important principle, for some people in some circumstances the fact that one resides in, say, Mukogodo Location may be more
significant than whether one has Yaaku-speaking, rockshelter-dwelling patrilineal ancestors. For example, some families belonging to Mumonyot patrilineages but living in Mukogodo Location objected when, in 1993, I limited participation in a study of parental behavior to people patrilineally descended from families with a history of speaking Yaaku and living in rockshelters as foragers (it is surely not insignificant that I was paying people to be part of my study). The fading of memories also plays a part in the blurring of the distinction between Mukogodo and non-Mukogodo. Many Mukogodo children are no longer aware, for example, that their ancestors lived in rockshelters or spoke a different language. Some young people who do know that the local rockshelters once harbored a hunting and gathering people do not realize that they are descended from those same people.

What appears to be taking the place of the former ethnic labels is a new one that covers all Maa-speakers in Mukogodo Division: Mukogodo Maasai. This new label is the deliberate creation of a small number of politically engaged and savvy individuals in Mukogodo Division who know enough about the wider world to realize that the distinctions made locally among the various groups are of little importance outside the Division. In 1971, a coalition of Mukogodo Division politicians successfully lobbied the government to agree to refer to the people in the Division as Mukogodo Maasai rather than Mukogodo Dorobo. For the most part, the Kenyan government has lived up to its commitment to drop that offensive name, although it is still possible to buy maps produced by the Kenyan government with the word DOROBO superimposed over the Mukogodo area, and Kenyan journalists still often refer to the people of Mukogodo Division as Dorobo (e.g., Mathenge 1999). The most successful Mukogodo area politician is undoubtedly Francis ole Kaparo, the Speaker of Kenya’s National Assembly. It is worth noting that although Kaparo is a member of a Digirri family, he is known in Kenya not as a Dorobo or a Digirri, but as a Maasai.

It may not be long before labels such as Mukogodo, Mumonyot, Digirri, Iling'wesi, and LeUaso lose most of their meaning and importance as the Mukogodo Maasai label gains acceptance both locally and more broadly in Kenya and among other Maa-speakers. The quest of the peoples of Mukogodo Division for Maasai status may be aided by a tendency toward ethnic coalition-building in recent Kenyan political history (see Haugerud 1995:38-45). Most important for the aspirations of Mukogodo Maasai may be the emergence of Kamatusa, a coalition of four Nilotic groups (Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana, and Samburu) supported by the current Kenyan administration as a counter to Gema (Gikuyu [Kikuyu], Embu, and Meru Association), a coalition of Bantu-speaking groups that forms part of the current political opposition. The identification of some prominent Mukogodo-area politicians with Kamatusa may make sense not only as a reflection of their personal political aspirations but also as a manifestation of the aspirations of the peoples of Mukogodo Division to full Maasai status (see Little 1998:452-53 for more on Kamatusa). Unfortunately, however much help the Kamatusa label may be to the creation of a
Mukogodo Maasai identity, any further politicization of ethnicity is likely to create difficulties for the development of a fully functioning democracy in Kenya.

CONCLUSION

As Comaroff (1996:166) has pointed out, “Ethnic identities . . . are always caught up in equations of power at once material, political, symbolic.” During the colonial period, Mukogodo confronted two superficially similar but actually competing views of their ethnic identity. One, promulgated by the British, saw them as downtrodden Dorobo, and that was a good thing. Had the British instead seen Mukogodo as a type of Maasai, they would have been forced to move to the Maasai Reserve in southern Kenya along with their Mumonyot neighbors. Although British colonialists had hopes of maintaining the poorly understood but distinctive identity of the Mukogodo, their policies had the unintended effect of providing Mukogodo and their neighbors with both the opportunity and the motive for increased rates of intermarriage, which quickly led to the economic, cultural, and linguistic transformation of Mukogodo. Another view of Mukogodo ethnicity, one promulgated by Maa-speakers, saw them as il-torrobo, and that was a bad thing. It stigmatized them as little better than wild animals. To be Maasai would have been much preferable. The Mukogodo response to this situation confirms Comaroff’s (1996:166) generalization that the “making of any concrete ethnic identity occurs in the minutiae of everyday practice; most notably in the routine encounters between the ethnicizing and the ethnicized.” When British colonialists were doing the ethnicizing, Mukogodo were enthusiastically Dorobo. With the British gone, the ethnicizers are other Maa-speakers, and Mukogodo sensibly eschew the il-torrobo label, insisting that because they have livestock and speak Maa, they are really Maasai. The history of Mukogodo attempts to manage their ethnic identity for different audiences demonstrates the range of the phenomenon of ethnicity. On one hand, many of their attempts to embrace the British Dorobo label and at the same time to lose the Maasai il-torrobo label are quite transparent in their instrumentality. On the other hand, the difficulty they have experienced in convincing Maa-speaking pastoralists of the validity of their claim to Maasai status, despite their enthusiastic adoption of so many of the cultural traits of Maa-speakers, shows how difficult it can be to change ethnic identity at will. Ethnicity may be an instrument, but, at least for the Mukogodo, mastery of the instrument of Maasai ethnicity has proven to be a bit more like learning to play the oboe than the tambourine.

NOTES

1. My research in the Mukogodo area has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Population Council, the Institute for Humane Studies, a Fulbright Grant, Texas A&M University, and Rutgers University. I thank the Mukogodo for their cooperation and hospitality and D. Bruce Dickson, John Galaty, Angelique Haugerud, Dorothy Hodgson, Beth Lecch, Paul Spencer, and Larry Yarak for their comments on earlier drafts of this article. Of course, I retain responsibility for any errors or shortcomings.
2. The timing of the transition was determined by examination of written sources and interviews with Mukogodo individuals who witnessed it. The settler Raymond Hook testified in 1932 that when he first met Mukogodo in 1915 they were purely foragers and beekeepers, but that since 1920 they had obtained some livestock (Kenya Land Commission 1934a:1464, 1476). In 1932, a group of settlers described Mukogodo as being “stock owners in a very small way, the remainder being bush and cave people pure and simple” (Kenya Land Commission 1934a:1471), indicating that by the early 1930s the transition had begun but was not yet complete. This was corroborated by Mukogodo individuals who were alive during the transition. A key indicator of a particular family’s subsistence practices during the transitional period was whether they lived in a rockshelter. While it is possible to keep a few small stock in a rockshelter, the Mukogodo rockshelters, mostly small and inaccessible, are not good places to keep cattle. Therefore, a movement out of the rockshelters and into houses indicates a new reliance on livestock in general and cattle in particular. Individuals who were about ten years old when their families moved out of their rockshelters were about 65 years old in 1986, indicating that this occurred in about 1931. Slightly younger individuals have no memories of life in a rockshelter. Considering the evidence, it seems clear that the transition occurred during a brief period lasting roughly from 1925 to 1936.

3. Galaty’s association of pastoralism with manhood and hunting with womanhood, while accurately reflecting the Maasai worldview in recent decades, may have rather shallow historical roots. Hodgson (1999) argues that these associations, rather than being longstanding elements of Maasai thought, are instead a product of colonial policies that had the effect of dispossessing Maasai women of their rights over livestock.

4. This attitude of protectionism toward Dorobo groups lives on in a nonprofit development organization called the Dorobo Fund for Tanzania, founded by a safari operator and based in Minnesota. In an echo of the colonial-era documents, the group contends that Dorobo “were gradually pushed out [by] overpowering intruders” and are now under the influence of “the stronger and more dominant Maasai culture,” according to the fund’s Web site (http://www.planetexploration.com/dorobo.htm).

5. The dates of these moves are taken primarily from D. G. Worthy’s (1959b) report on the area and Paul Spencer’s (1973) appendix to Nomads in Alliance on “The Dorobo and Elmolo of Northern Kenya.” These two sources mostly agree with one another, but there are a few discrepancies. Spencer lists two moves of Samburu, one in 1912 and another in 1921, not listed by Worthy. Spencer also lists a Samburu move in 1955, but Worthy writes that it was not successfully completed. Spencer lists a Mumonyot move in 1935-36 not listed by Worthy, and a 1929 Mumonyot move listed by Spencer is described by Worthy as involving only livestock, not people. Otherwise, the two sources agree. Even if we ignore all moves not listed by both sources, there would still have been three forced moves of Mumonyot and one each of Samburu, Digirri, LeUaso, and Ilng’wesi before the late 1930s.

6. Blackburn (1982:296) reports that the Okiek also extend the Maasai prohibition on donkey eating to zebras, explaining that zebras are very much like donkeys, and donkeys are very much like women in that they routinely carry things, so eating a donkey, and hence a zebra, is tantamount to cannibalism. This is similar to the logic used by most Mukogodo (except for those in the Sialo clan) to explain why they do not eat elephants: elephants, like women, have two mammary glands arranged side by side between their forelimbs, so eating an elephant is equivalent to eating a person.

7. In this regard, they also contrast with Il Chamus of the Lake Baringo area. Although Il Chamus are often referred to as Maasai, they, like Samburu, speak the northern dialect of Maa and write their names in the Samburu style (Little 1998:449, 454). As Little (1998) notes, Il Chamus also engaged in some ethnicity management in their testimony before the Kenya Land Commission, including using the Maasai “ole” style of writing their names.

8. Spencer (1959) provides a glimpse of the Samburu side of such interactions in an unpublished report prepared for the colonial administration. After traveling through the Mukogodo area accompanied by a Samburu elder, the Samburu man returned home with “a collection of shocking tales to tell.” For example, he was once offered a cup of milk but not asked if he would like another, a complete stranger
once took his stool from him, and one night he was asked to sleep in an empty hut. Samburu view such lapses in etiquette as distinguishing il-torrobo such as Mukogodo from true Samburu.

9. Even the writings of anthropologists may be contributing to the formation of a Mukogodo Maasai identity, or at least the blurring of the distinctions among the various peoples of Mukogodo Division. The Swiss anthropologist Urs Herren (1990, 1991) has conducted economic and historical research among the non-Mukogodo peoples of Mukogodo Division (i.e., Mumonyot, Digirri, Ilng’wesi, and LeUaso), but not among the Mukogodo proper (Herren 1991:29). Presumably to avoid awkward lists of ethnonyms, he often refers to “Mukogodo Maasai” and uses “Mukogodo” as an adjective (e.g., “Mukogodo households”) to refer to all the peoples of the Division, not just Mukogodo.

10. In an unusual turn of events, Little (1998:444) reports that in other parts of Kenya, though certainly not in the Mukogodo area, the Dorobo label is being resurrected by some groups to support their claims to certain parcels of land.

11. Aspirations to Maasai or Samburu status are not limited to Mukogodo. Other such transformations of ethnicity include Sonjo who became Maasai (Jacobs 1968), Saleita who became Maasai (Waller 1985:148), Lanat who became Samburu (Waller 1985:148), Turkana who became Ilgira Samburu (Hjort 1981), Rendille who became Ariaal to become Samburu (Fratkin 1998), Akie who became Maas-speaking pastoralist Kinyalang’at (Kaare 1997), and the various groups who have become II Chamus Maasai (Little 1998).

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