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Place of a Cow Among Pre-Colonial Kipsigis of Rift Valley Region in Kenya: Appreciating Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Pastoral Economy

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Abstract
The precolonial pastoral economy is mainly subsumed to comprise of a community of people wandering with their drought-stricken cattle in search of pastures and water over long distances. The Kipsigis, who were initially a purely pastoral community and finally settled in a well-watered area around Kericho, gradually adopted crop production and supplemented their diet with agricultural produce, thus becoming mixed farmers. They nevertheless retained their indigenous knowledge in cattle herding and before the advent of colonialism, they were well known for their great attachment to and love for their cattle. The 'cow' was a central defining feature in their socio-cultural, economic and political organization and relations. This paper seeks to provide historical insights on the knowledge and practice of animal husbandry among the precolonial Kipsigis community in the Rift Valley to underscore the importance and resilience of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a pastoral setting. It examines the variety of pastoral systems, the diversity on animal production and the dynamic animal-based food processing and storage techniques in forestalling food scarcity. It also examines the broad social mechanisms concerning animals in alleviating food shortages and famines. It is demonstrated that the Kipsigis precolonial pastoral systems were dynamic, innovative, diverse, efficient, self-reliant and suited to the needs of the people involved. It is argued further that the Kipsigis pastoral organization was sound, resourceful, and rational and based on the people's knowledge of their environment.
Key words: *Cow, cattle, raiding, Kipsigis, indigenous, knowledge, pastoral, economy*

1. Introduction

Perhaps animal husbandry was one area in which the Kipsigis knowledge, efficiency, diversity and adaptability was unsurpassed. Known for their love and devotion to animals, the Kipsigis demonstrated a deep understanding and knowledge in animal husbandry, in such fields as grass types, animal types based on colour, sex and formation, diseases and forms of treatment, milk and meat preservation. Being the backbone of the Kipsigis precolonial economy, animal husbandry, inhere subsumed under the rubric of a "cow", had a multitude of functions in the Kipsigis life. Animals were the source of milk, meat, blood, bedding and clothing. They were used to solve disputes, pay fines, bride wealth and for sacrificial purposes. An elaborate system of sharing animals and animal products existed and afforded all people an opportunity of getting milk even when they did not own any animal. Such stock-associateship, or *Kimanagan* as locally called, also enabled individuals to widely disperse livestock among finials to guard against instant decimation of livestock by ecological disasters, such as epidemics and drought. It also enabled individuals to establish social bonds and reciprocal relations between contracting parties. Raiding for animals from neighbouring communities became institutionalized in the community with the *laibons* playing a pivotal role in giving the blessings and predicting the outcome of raids. But the ultimate objective of every Kipsigis man was to own a cow - crop cultivation and the herding of goats and sheep were geared toward accumulation of wealth to enable one to buy a cow. Thus animal husbandry appears to have remained the most lucrative enterprise in precolonial Kipsigisland. Even labour organization within the family was geared toward the sustenance of the pastoral economy. The head of the household performed a supervisory role of herding, branding and watering animals. Women did the milking and

watering of animals besides *wimbi* production. Young girls fetched water, did cooking and herding of goats and sheep while young boys were entrusted with herding of calves and lambs.

2. Historical Background

Many a times, researchers have tried to portray traditional knowledge systems as totally different and opposed to the so-called modern and western knowledge systems. Nothing could be further from the truth. Some aspects of traditional knowledge systems contain most of the elements that make a scientific proposition valid. At the same time, many scientific institutions use traditional cultural symbols and practices to generate an extra ounce of confidence or certainty. For instance, when a farmer decides to sow his crop at a particular time, taking various factors such as meteorological conditions, soil, moisture, temperature, etc., he/she is using his/her empirical knowledge which generates replicable, refutable, and verifiable results. No matter who sows crops at that time under the given conditions, other things remaining the same, he /she should get the same result. Likewise, every time the same crop is sown with similar conditions, it should give similar results and if one wanted to prove this wrong, it should be possible to sow early or late and get different results Okagbue, 2003).

Indigenous fermented foods in Africa have usually been derived from cassava tubers, cereal legumes, oil seeds, palm tree sap, milk and various other local products. Evidence abounds almost everywhere where products such as sorghum, maize, or other cereal were fermented and made into alcoholic beverages. Food processors became aware of the significance of the various agencies by virtue of trial and error experimentation. Metallic objects or certain plants were sometimes used to hasten fermentation and in this case serve as trace elements, thus promoting the growth of the relevant micro-organisms. This knowledge, as scientific as it sounds was indigenous to Africa. According to Okagbue (2003).

> African civilization may be associated with specific methods of preparing and even consuming food items in ways which reflect some measure of relative uniformity throughout the continent. Fast food items ranging from couscous to "gari" (sic) or cassava granules; various types of cereal-based flour, pulverized tubers of various kinds and a wide variety of vegetable-based soups have given African culinary traditions a distinct character which may also be discussed in discussions on micro-biology and food processing. It has to be stressed that food preparation involves hypothesis formulation; the assumption of regularity in nature and a measure of logical consistency in thought in such a way as to facilitate repeatable and predictive capability on the part of the food processor or agent associated with food preparation.

This attests to the scientific, applicability and crucial importance of African indigenous knowledge systems which Africans had evolved over a long time. This paper tells the story of the Kipsigis people of Kenya.

3. Who are Kipsigis?

The Kipsigis, who belong to the Highland Nilotic group of peoples, inhabit the Counties of Kericho and Bomet, formerly Kericho district. The area occupied an area of about 4,984 square kilometres, 90% of which is suitable for agricultural production. The area enjoys ample rainfall, undulating topography, and varied types of soils suitable for both agricultural and pastoral farming. The Kipsigis who have been recorded in history as people with large devotion to pastoralism had descended from early communities of mainly gatherers and hunters who supplemented their livelihood with crop production. According to J. Sutton the only cultivated plant of which there is archaeological evidence around the Kipsigis land is the gourd (Sutton, 1973: 81). The gourd was used as a milk container, implying that the inhabitants of the land were pastoralists. Equally, Mwanzi (1976: 33) contends that cattle husbandry for the Kipsigis became a practice within about the last 200 years or so when they acquired cattle through institutionalized raiding of the neighbouring Gusii and Maasai.

This paper sets to unravel the traditional methods of livestock management among the Kipsigis in the pre-colonial period. The paper posits that the Kipsigis society had an internal social organization, which established types of relations of production that governed the pastoral economy and the distribution of pastoral resources. The paper is predicated upon the fact that the Kipsigis pre-colonial pastoral economy was dynamic, diverse, efficient, productive and aimed at self-sustenance. Most studies in Africa portray pastoral farmers in the pre-colonial period as nomads roaming throughout Africa haphazardly in search of water and pastures. Imperialist writers have always wanted Africans to accept that the continental pastoralists moved haphazardly or irrationally from one place to another only in search of pastures and water. Specifically

Rigby (1964) gives an anthropological account of the Maasai as a wandering community and Dyson (1966) further gives justification for the pastoralists love and devotion to large herds. Such works, therefore, tend to show little change among pastoral communities and do not appreciate the pastoral peoples' understanding or their adaptation to their local environmental conditions. The implication of such writers was that African pastoralists were ignorant of their ecological and physical conditions. This cannot be any further from the truth. And in the case of the Kipsigis (who inhabited a well-watered region) and indeed many pastoral communities, Africanist historians such as Allans (1965), Kjekshus (1977) , Nyanchoga (1999), and Lemoosa (1999), affirm that pastoralism manifested diverse, dynamic and unique characteristics worth noting in this paper. Besides, the Kipsigis who were sedentary cattle-keeping cultivators have been overshadowed in pastoral studies by such nomadic pastoralists as the Maasai, Turkana and the Samburu.

4. **Animal Husbandry**

The Kipsigis are known in history for their love and devotion to animals. "In Kipsigis life, tradition and mythology, the cow has a place of its own and occupies in the minds of the people, a position next in importance to that of their children" (Peristiany, 1939:151). The entire Kalenjin groups were nomadic pastoralists, who used to move from place to place to graze and water their herds. However, when compared with the nomadic Maasai, the Kipsigis were not as mobile as the former. When circumstances and geographical conditions favoured them, the Kipsigis people would stay in a place for a good number of years. Since inhabiting the Kericho area, which is relatively wet, the Kisigis could easily be referred to as being semi-nomadic pastoralists (Toweett, 1979:8).

Animal husbandry was the most lucrative enterprise in precolonial Kipsigisland. Since land was abundant, and therefore communally owned, cattle remained the single most cherished item of ownership and inheritance. "A man who had neither a cow nor a goat was considered to be a pitiable poverty-stricken creature of God whom nobody would dream of paying even a day's visit (Toweett, 1979:56). Economically, cattle were the "only form of investment possible" (Peristiany, 1939:149). All the cattle, sheep, donkeys and goats belonged to the man as head of the homestead. However, some animals, especially heifers were associated with individual households of wives and in some instances, women owned a few goats and sheep. While the head of the homestead retained the overall claim of ownership to the cattle, wives who during this period resided in different localities had animals associated with their individual households. This association did not necessarily mean that in the event of death of the husband wives automatically inherited animals associated with them. As will be seen later in the paper, clear and elaborate rules of inheritance existed among the Kipsigis.

Cattle were the main source of prestige and power, and numbers were cherished since they indicated a man's wealth. "Cattle, sheep and goats constituted a complete form of wealth to any Kipsigis man" (Toweett, 1979: 56). Their possession does not only increase the material wealth of a man but also enhances his social position. Through the complicated system of *kimanagan* such a man gained for himself reliable friends and spread the fame of his name among the people living even very far from his home (Peristiany, 1939:150, Kirui, J., Tanui, K., O.I., 1997).

5. **Cattle Acquisition Methods**.

The Kipsigis acquired their livestock through numerous ways. Some received it as bride price for their daughters or sisters, while others acquired it as indemnity paid for murder of a man or as a settlement for a dispute. But the most common ways of acquiring animals were through exchange, inheritance, raiding neighbouring communities and the system of *kimanagan*. Those families without livestock could start by cultivating a lot of *wimbi* which they then exchanged for goats and sheep. The exact terms of exchange are hard to determine here but most of the respondents quoted two to three baskets of wimbi for a goat or sheep (Togom, P., Miruka, W., Koske T., O.I., 1997). Sheep and goats were also kept in large numbers by the Kipsigis as in most important ceremonies a goat was sacrificed, and its entrails were used for haruspication. But due to their destructive nature the sheep and more especially the goats were very unwelcome factors in Kipsigis economies. The only redeeming feature in favour of the goats was that "it was regarded as the poor man's cow". In order to acquire cattle such poor men could exchange about 14 goats or sheep for a heifer in the ratio of 1 to 2 male. A cow in-calf could go for 20-22 goats or sheep. A cow with calf fetched about 30 goats or sheep. But a bull fetched 8-9 goats or sheep since they had limited use. It is therefore evident that 'the cow' was the best medium of exchange and a standard of value. Two people could combine resources to buy, say, a heifer. The one who gives less takes the calf, the one who gives more remains with the mother. Either of them could claim a heifer from each other if theirs died (DC/KER/4/1; Togom, P., Miruka, W., Koske T., O.I., 1997).

Mwanzi (1977a: 164) traces the establishment of pastoralism among the Kipsigis and posits that it was a gradual process. Some clans had goats and sheep before they traded them with cattle. Such clans were those who inhabited the southern fringe of the country which is close to southern Mau escarpment. The spread of cattle was also helped by the Swahili traders who brought cattle from Maasai and other places to Kipsigis country and exchanged them with ivory.

When a man died, his property was inherited by his wives (if more than one) equally, irrespective of the number of children each wife had, and the property assigned to any one household. These principles ensured that there was no discrimination in favour of seniority, either in the case of widows or the children. But whatever was allocated to the sons was not really their personal property but the entailed property of all his descendants. The sons had the right only to use this inherited property. They could not dispose of it without the consent of the family, except as marriage gifts (Orchardson, nd; 3).

The chief form of inheritable property was, of course, cattle, sheep and goats for there was no property in land. Land belonged to everybody, and everyone had land to cultivate, graze, or build a house and so livestock remained the single most cherished and inheritable assets. The property of a man was composed of three distinct elements according to the source from which the livestock was acquired. The first was that belonging to the whole family because it was inherited by the father, *tugab geny chebo boyot*. The second was that which was acquired by the father's own prowess and industry or *tuga che kibaru*. Then lastly was that which belonged to individual households- that is- the children of one mother. That included cattle received on the marriage of the daughter of the household or obtained for compensation for wrongs committed against a member of the family. Such wrongs could be infliction of serious injury like breaking one's bone or adultery committed against a married woman of the household (Orchardson, 1971:109).

The only property over which a man had complete control was that which he had acquired by his own effort. This, he would sell, barter, slaughter or give away during his lifetime if he wished to do so, but on his death, they became a part of the inheritable property as much as the property which he had received from his own father. And so, when a man died such property was shared equally between his wives except for that which belonged to individual households. Usually, the stock being shared was left with the elder brother, if married, until other sharers married when they took their portion and its progeny (DC/KER/4/1). Neither inherited nor presented cattle could be sold except by agreement among all members of a family. Sometimes such an agreement was made when excess male stock was slaughtered or sold. The proceeds were used in such a way so that none of the heirs suffered any loss from the transaction. The most common option was the purchase of a female stock, (the cow), whose calves were shared out equitably (Orchardson, 1971:110).

A woman would also acquire property in her own right, which she could dispose of herself outside the family if she thought fit to take such unusual course of action. Such property was acquired when the women did any work which was outside their family duties-the care of initiates earned them a goat or sheep, the practice of *sageyuwek* (herbal treatment tinged with divination) for which they would receive grain; the manufacture of ornaments and baskets; the baking of pots, an industry carried out only by women (*Ibid*). On the death of a woman her sons and daughters divided her ornaments, but if the husband was living, he took his choice from these. Nevertheless, he would not however give them to another wife or any other women. The deceased's household utensils went to her sons and failing them to her daughters as also *tabut* (the food in her store). Similarly, the standing crops in the field that she had cultivated were divided between her husband and sons. The last-born son of a woman, who invariably buried her took his choice of these presents of goats and the like that she had received from her husband when a bride and so were her hoes, her milk gourds, and her grinding stone (*Ibid*). It was therefore possible for a boy to inherit the family stock as well as stock associated with his mother's household; although these could not be disposed of or slaughtered - they only had the right of use, such as for marriage or acceptable activity.

There was various stock presents made to a son by his father after the conclusion of ceremonial seclusion after circumcision. His maternal uncle-ka*mama,* also gave the initiate presents when the former extracts the latter's lower incisors teeth and pierced his ears. These were the absolute property of the recipient. The eldest son was awarded the *chemusit* for the unpleasant duty, *sutet*, of carrying out his father's corpse. Failing the son, the reward was given to whoever did it. His half-brother (that is, the eldest son of the second wife) received a male animal. A rich man in such

instances could give a heifer and bull respectively. But poor families gave a goat and sheep -female for the elder and male for the young brother (Orchardson, 1971:111).

Raiding neighbouring communities was also one avenue for acquiring livestock. All respondents indicated the importance of raids. As a rule, no Kipsigis man raided or stole animals from a fellow Kipsigis. This, *chorset*, was an abomination punishable with death and rarely took place. But a cattle raid on their neighbours was a past-time sport and was in fact institutionalized. Cattle theft from outside the community was a very different matter as it was not *chorset* to the Kipsigis but was the object of their active lives and a test of their military prowess. There was no death penalty for a successful raid, but death was often the penalty of failure (Orchardson, 1971:116).

Mwanzi (1977a:163) attempted to show that not all those who became Kipsigis took to cattle keeping at the same time, and gave as an example, the people who lived in the vicinity of Molo forest who did not have cattle. He countered Peristiany (1939) and Orchardson (1971), who contend that the Kipsigis initially acquired animals when they were living near Lake Baringo, by asserting that they actually acquired animals from the Gusii when the latter were settled on the Kano plains, near the Lake Victoria. The story suggests that every day a man who lived near a lake saw cattle coming out from its direction. Eventually he made traps and caught some of them and this marked the beginning of cattle keeping among the Kipsigis. Be it as it may, it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the Kipsigis really evolved into a cattle culture supported by institutionalized raiding and military organization. The main task of the young warriors was to raid the neighbouring Gusii for cattle. Clashes with the Maasai over cattle seem to have been a more recent phenomenon, just as clashes with the Luo.

Other than during peacetime when trade and exchange flourished, in most of the time the Kipsigis and Gusii were locked in combat over cattle. This was mainly a phenomenon of the second half of the nineteenth century. A number of battles between the two communities are remembered in Kipsigis traditions: Chemoiben battle and the battle of Ngoina. But the obviously remembered is the battle of Mogori. On one side were the Kipsigis and Nandi warriors against Gusii, Kuria and Luo warriors in the alliance. The battle seems to have taken place about 1890, and the Kipsigis suffered the worst defeat ever remembered in the history of cattle raids (Mwanzi, 1977a: 85-86).

Perhaps the most important system of owning and sharing cattle within the community was that of *kimanagan.* This was the system by which Kipsigis distributed his cattle among different friends living very far from each other. *Kimanagan* (lending of a cow) was farming out of cattle and was based on two reasons. First, first, in the case of cattle raids, the losses would be less severe if the cattle were not concentrated in one location. And secondly, in the event of a cattle plague like rinderpest, the losses would again be less severe. Cattle were given to relatives and friends after a household had attained a sufficient number of them. When a man married for the second time, he usually sent his first wife to live in a distant place with her eldest son, so that they would both keep for him part of his cattle. With every subsequent marriage he built a new hut at a different *kokwet*, and he thus succeeded in having his cattle scattered over a wide area, covering several *kokwetinwek* so that no misfortune would wipe out his cattle-wealth in a stroke (Sillattee, A.; Belion, E.; Koech, A; O.I., 1997, Peristiany, 1939:150).

When all the households of a man had a sufficient number of cattle to provide them with milk and blood, they then gave out half of the newborn calves as *kimanagan*. Usually, their friends and relatives requested them a long time beforehand for a calf and as soon as it had grown big enough, they came and took it if it was their turn, for several friends requested a calf from one household. If the calf happened to be a bull, they waited until it was two to three years old and then exchanged it for a heifer. Cattle given as *kimanagan* were cared for and fed by the recipients as their own and as recompense they were allowed to use the milk. The calves they had from *kimanagan* cows were kept by the recipients until the second or third generation and then they began distributing them in their turn to their own friends as *kimanagan* without consultation with the previous owners and this process went on and on *ad infinitum*. When the owner reclaimed his cattle, he could, if he so wished, leave a calf with the person to whom he had lent the beasts as reward for keeping the animal (Peristiany, 1939:150; Toweett, 1979:58; Orchardson, 1971).

The system of *kimanagan* did not just entail that rich households lent out their cattle to poor households, but rather it was also a reciprocal exchange amongst the rich and poor households. In such a case the man who had put his calf out will now ask another of his friends for a *kimanagan*. However, it was not a custom to ask the same man to whom one had given the *kimanagan*. It was therefore common that a man received as many cattle as he had given out as

kimanagan- thus the number of cows in his kraal would be approximately the same as if he had not been continually putting some out to others. The wealthier a man was, the easier it was for him to give and receive a *kimanagan.*

A wealthy man, with many cows who did not easily refuse a *kimanagan*, was greatly respected; he was referred to as *Neo*-big; but if he kept his cattle without giving out to others, he was *kipmouket*, that is, a mean and unpleasant being in the eyes of the Kipsigis. If a man wanted to keep a calf for himself, he produced *Kipuser*, an artificial sore on its nose. This was to deter friends and relatives from bothering him for the calf. The sore was made to prevent the calf from drinking the mother's milk but was also a sign that there was no *kimanagan* to be given in the form of that animal (*Ibid*).

Cattle once given out as *kimanagan* could not be redeemed without an exceptional reason. Even when the giver wanted his son to marry a girl, or if his other cattle died, he could not take all the *kimanagan* back but had to leave behind at least one calf. The only valid reason for asking for the complete return of the *kimanagan* cows was that the calves born to a cow in its new kraal had died. At the death of the original owner, his sons would ask for *kimanagan* cattle to be returned, but one of the last commands of a good father was always said to be "Do not take all the [*kimanagan*] cows from my friends. Leave [for] him at least one to remember me for it" (Peristiany, 1939:151).

The man who took the *kimanagan* was under no obligation to the man who had given it to him. The milk of the cow belonged to him, but if the cow or one of its calves died, he had to send back the skin to the owner to confirm that he was under no obligation as the cow or calf was dead. The *kimangan* transactions were kept as close secrets and usually wives were not even freely informed. This was because it was feared that wives might force their husbands to disown their transactions in case of economic hardships. The men considered it a disgrace to ask for the return of their *kimanagan*, even if this meant great hardship to themselves and their families when there was scarcity of food (Peristiany, 1939:152; Talan, J.; Bet, F., Ngeno, M., O.I., 1997).

6. Animal products: Processing and Preservation

As already noted, cattle provided the Kipsigis with the nourishing elements of their diet-milk, blood and meat. So were goats and sheep. Donkeys were used to transport goods. Cattle, sheep and goats also provided skin for clothing and as beddings. But there were elaborate roles and customs observed in relation to pastoral farming. The cattle were kept in the *piut ap tuga*, - place of cattle, a very roughly fenced kraal. A hut of a man who looked after the animals at night was built on the eastern side of the kraal. The daily routine in keeping the livestock was simple. The cattle were taken out by the younger boys to graze at about six o'clock in the morning and then returned to the kraal at about eleven o'clock for milking, which was usually done by women and young boys. They were then returned back to graze until sunset.

Drinking milk and eating meat in the same day was prohibited on the believe that this will make the milk of the cow dry up by hardening its udder. A man who was guilty of this offence was *pitorindet* and could be publicly thrashed if found out. The milk was stored in a calabash. Mostly it was mixed with ashes and charcoal of a special burned wood to give it flavour. Equally the ashes and charcoal of the tree in question had medicinal value. The Kipsigis had a way of fermenting and preserving the milk so that it could last for a long time. Three or four days after milking the Kipsigis took the *sumarariet* (skin) from the milk and thoroughly shook the calabash until all the water came out. This process was repeated about a week later and the milk thus obtained became as hard as yoghurt. Such milk could be left in such a state for a month or two and after that time had elapsed, it assumed a green colour and had a very strong and sharp smell (Mabwai, J., O.I., 1997).

Butter was also made by constantly shaking a calabash half full of milk until butter was formed. Such butter, *mwaita ab chego*, was cooked together with vegetable or herbs for consumption and women could use it to smear their bodies to provide soft skin (arap Barta, S., O.I., 1997). Women and children only drank the skimmed milk that was left over. Blood, an important ingredient of Kipsigis diet, was drawn from the cattle's neck veins using *loynet*, a small bleeding arrow. Such blood could be drunk raw or mixed and boiled with vegetables. Bleeding of animals was frequently done but on different animals. Animals are bled not merely for the sake of blood but also to improve their health condition, especially at the beginning of the dry weather (Orchardson, 1971:96).

Meat was obtained by slaughtering bullocks, goats and sheep. Cows could not be slaughtered for meat unless they were suffering from a disease, (which could not affect human beings), were barren, had attained old age. Such animals could be sacrificed for the spirits of the dead or simply killed and its meat shared out.

7. Dispute Resolution Involving Cows

Disputes did occur over livestock, and these were resolved by the *kokwet* elders, led by the *kiptayat ab kokwet*. The disputes mainly revolved around trespass over cultivated land, trespass over individual grazing grounds (a few of these existed especially around the household such as *kanusta*). Cattle theft within the tribe was rare and uncommon as it would be considered the worst insult that could be committed by a man to a fellow *Kipsigindet*. A habitual thief of goats and sheep or beehives would bring upon himself a form of mob justice, known as *njoget*. Every man in the community would make a sharpened stick and surround the thief. After a signal was given all could then throw their sticks maiming and even killing the man. Sticks were used because they were anonymous, whereas spears could always be identified with particular persons (Peristiany, 1939:151).

Disputes over the inheritance of cattle were not uncommon. Although the principles controlling the division were clear and not very intricate, difficulties and disputes sometimes arose in practice owing to such factors as indivisibility of animals, differences between male and female, young and old stock and their potential fertility (Orchardson, 1971:109). So, brothers could differ over the number and type of animals each could take in determining the progeny of a certain cow. The responsibility of acting as executor and administrator lay with the eldest son of the first wife. This son therefore inherited the right to distribute his father's property, including cattle, goats and sheep, equitably amongst his brothers and to make provision for his sisters. Quite often such a system was not abuse-free as some brothers complained of impartiality and unfairness. But the elders stepped in to advise on livestock inheritance disputes.

The system of *kimanagan* was also beset with a few problems that led to disputes. Some people could refuse to return the cattle given to them; others secretly sold such animals without the owner's consent, while others, knowing how such transactions were secret, outrightly refused receipt of such animals. In such extreme cases, *mumek,* oathing, was carried out and whosoever took a *mumek* unscrupulously brought a curse upon himself. If sheep, goats or cows were stolen, the owner would curse the unknown thief, the curse being carried out in his home. The idea was that the family of the thief would then be suffering, dying from a disease and his wife would tell him that "you must have done something wrong to another man who has cursed you". The man would go and confess if indeed he had committed such an offence. There was another custom whereby a thief could confess immediately after stealing and the theft was thus transformed into a loan (DC/KER/4/1).

Further, disputes involved allegations of witchcraft and sorcery on animals, division of cattle obtained in a raid, payment of bride price and disputes between co-wives (Saltman, 1971:53). On the other hand, it was not uncommon for individuals to put special marks on their animals to ensure against theft and loss of such animals. If found, such animals were easily identified. Such marks included the piercing of ears, branding or cutting the ears or tails (Tanui, K., Labos, K., O.I., 1997).

8. The Knowledge of a Cow.

The love of Kipsigis men and women for their cattle can be demonstrated by the knowledge pertaining to the animals. Toweett (1979:58-59) tells us that the Kipsigis knew their cattle well and they could tell which ones of them were good for milk, meat and other uses. Their knowledge about cattle characteristics was almost unsurpassed. They gave names to their cattle according to behaviour, colour and occasionally their place of living. When a Kipsigis skins a killed animal, he could divide and subdivide all the meat and name them accordingly. The Kipsigis people knew all the anatomical parts of any domesticated animal. All the bones had names given to them. All the intestines had different names one from the other (Toweett, 1979:58-59). To demonstrate their resourcefulness and dynamism in evolving different vocabularies to distinguish various aspects of their animals based on sex, colour, formation and other unique features, is the list of more that forty Kipsigis names provided in Appendix I below.

The Kipsigis kept the indigenous zebu cattle that were adapted to the local conditions and were resistant to many diseases. They knew the diseases that infected their cattle, and some of these were treated by herbalists, using certain medicinal plants. Some of the diseases known were *burasta* (anthrax), *cheptigonit* (East Coast Fever), *kusto* (black

quarter), *kipkutungit* (foot and mouth), *konyek* (eye-sore), *kipkeita* (red water), bloat (accumulation of NH2 gas), bracken fern poisoning, rinderpest, anaplasmosis, dysentery and many more. For most of these diseases, expert herbalists used herbs either in raw form or processed powder or ash for treatment. But some animals had to be isolated, for example anthrax victims; or given a dose of the local brew (*maiywek*) for foot and mouth disease or the carcass burnt to prevent further spread of the disease like for anthrax. Some diseases, however, needed mechanical treatment as was the case of bloat in which an animal had to be chased around so as to release excessive gas in the stomach (Sillattee, A., arap Kirui K., arap Chumo, C., O.I., 1997). The treatment of rinderpest showed that Kipsigis used a form of immunization similar to that used in modern medicine; the sick animal was bled and blood allowed to settle; it was then decanted, and the serum was fed to healthy animals.

Tiriiyta, a grassland or grazing area was common land and the stock belonging to the public had the right to graze there. If any person cultivated such land without the consent of the public the crops could be destroyed by public stock and there could be no claim for compensation (DC/KER/4/1). *Tulonok* (hills) were also considered to be public land for grazing purposes only. Places along rivers where animals could get drinking water, *ainet,* were also considered public lands. No one was allowed by Kipsigis custom to prevent access to it. Anyone refusing public access to the *ainet* was cursed. Equally used as public land were *ngeny* (salt licks) *Orap too*, (public roads), to both *ainet* and *ngeny* were well secured and it was against Kipsigis customary law to block any public roads. If they were blocked the passers-by would curse the person who did so. But it was customary to open a new road when the old one was blocked (*Ibid*).

As the Kipsigsis country is well provide with water supplies, there were a few hard and fast rules regarding the usage of water, especially rivers. A general rule was that one could not be forbidden access to water and this was ensured by the *kokwet* elders. There was *togomnda,* a custom whereby a person could construct in a river a small dam to build up the head of water for his cattle. He then had prior but not exclusive right to water his cattle at that spot (DC/KER/4/1,1911).

9. Recommendation

Indigenous Knowledge systems are manifested in a plethora of human fields from each and every African community, to varying degrees. The Kipsigis knowledge in pastoral farming is far from being researched and documented. A glimpse of their knowledge on pastoral farming, though a sedentary and mixed economy community inhabiting a wet area, is rich and resourceful. The place of a cow in determining social, cultural and economic relations and structures of most African societies is undeniably evident from the Kipsigis case. Many more such studies should be done in other communities to unravel, situate and appreciate the place of a cow in traditional pastoral and mixed economy communities.

10. Conclusion

The intricate and symbiotic relation between the Kipsigis and their neighbours as seen from their pastoral economy reinforced the interdependence of African communities, given differences in resource endowment and showed a diffusion of ideas, goods and other forms of co-operation or conflict resulting from such resource bases. Cattle rustling emerged as one of the common factors in the interaction between the Kipsigis and their neighbours, though intermarriages, trade and cultural exchanges also took place. Raids and counterraids became a common feature in the relations between the Kipsigis and their neighbours on the eve of colonial rule and subsequently thereafter.

The Kipsigis pre-colonial pastoral economy as the basis of subsequent changes has been well captured in this paper. The Kipsigis productive pastoral activities, including, agriculture, hunting and gathering demonstrates their response to the constraints imposed by their physical environment. The Kipsigis emerge as a resourceful people, well versed with their environment and knowledgeable in their economic pursuits. Their innovativeness, dynamism, efficiency, diversity and self-sustenance are reflected in all aspects of their economic endeavour. One colonial administrator, after working in the Kipsigisland came to the realization that "...in Kipsigisland, development was tied to the tail of a cow'. This will form the basis of a subsequent paper, and I trust the basis of the love and devotion for the cow among the Kipsigis is well laid.

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